

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES

DATE: JUNE 30, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS BELDEN
HASKELL
BENTLEY
THOMAS
MERLINO
GOODSPEED
STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

MICHAEL SWAN, DIRECTOR, REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF
ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISOR CHAMPAGNE
SUPERVISOR SOKOL
SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Belden called the meeting of the Real Property Tax Services Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 30, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Michael Swan, Director of Real Property Tax Services, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Swan noted that there had been no corrections to the tax rolls from the Warren County Treasurer's Office this month.

Mr. Swan advised the Committee that Item Two on the agenda referred to a resolution request authorizing the Chairman of the Board to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between New York State Office of Real Property Tax Services and Warren County governing the electronic transfer of sales information from the County to the State. He stated that \$0.50 would be received for each parcel that was entered into the system and the total estimated revenue to be received was \$2,000. He then added there would be no start-up cost to the County because the State would be implementing the necessary software on the computer systems in the Real Property Tax Services Office.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the resolution request authorizing the Chairman of the Board to sign the Memorandum of Understanding as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the next Board meeting.*

Mr. Swan apprised the Committee that Item Three on the agenda dealt with the list of vacant County owned properties. He noted that the properties marked with a surplus could be sold and the properties marked tax sale were left over parcels from the last County Land Auction. He then went on to point out that the County Fairgrounds were not on the list because the vacant parcel

there was reserved for the new Soil and Water building that would be constructed and the parcel of land on Route 9, across from the Municipal Center was part of the County property and would require that the Town of Queensbury approve the subdivision of the land.

Mr. Belden inquired how much it would cost to have the properties appraised and Mr. Swan replied that his Department could do the appraisals. He asked for clarification which properties the Committee would want appraised. He then added that there were currently five to six properties on the list that were not in use by the County. Mr. Geraghty corrected Mr. Swan, stating nine properties were not in use by the County.

Mr. Goodspeed entered the meeting at 9:33 a.m.

Mr. Swan informed the Committee that some of the properties were for canoe and lake access, railroad properties and airport property. Mr. Strainer asked whether the airport property was inside or outside the fence, and Mr. Swan replied both. Mr. Belden asked the Committee what properties they wanted appraised. It was the consensus of the Committee that properties not in use by the County be appraised.

Chairman Monroe asked whether the Real Property Tax Services Department had aerial photos of the properties and Mr. Swan replied affirmatively. Chairman Monroe added that the Committee should look at these photos and see if the properties were worth auctioning to return them to the tax rolls.

Mr. Swan advised the Committee that agenda Item Four referred to the current list of parcels that had delinquent taxes. There were approximately one-hundred forty parcels on the list; Mr. Swan noted that on June 12th and 13th he posted fifty-five parcels and served six people in person.

Mr. Merlino questioned if the County sold properties that were in disrepair was there anything that could be done before the auction to get properties up to code. He referred to a property that was currently in litigation in the Town of Lake Luzerne due to the fact that the owner had bought the property at the foreclosure auction in 1997 and it had been in a state of disrepair and nothing had been done to improve the condition of the property. He then went on to explain that the Town Engineer had condemned the property, and in turn, the owners had their own engineer inspect the property and disagreed with the findings; therefore, it had been tied up in litigation, costing the Town of Lake Luzerne thousands of dollars.

Mr. Swan replied that all properties were sold "as is" and the County had no say after they turned the parcels over to the new owners. Mr. Belden noted that at one of the Inter County meetings, Fulton County had mentioned that they had demolished some dilapidated buildings in the Town of Johnstown; however, he continued, he was unsure of where the funds had been received to cover the cost of the demolition.

Mr. Swan apprised that Warren County had last demolished a building in the Town of Warrensburg because the County had been cited by the Town for the building not being up to code. He noted that the total cost of the demolition had been \$7,000 and the parcel only sold for \$4,500. He stated that Warren County had several properties that contained buildings in need of demolition; however, he added, it was unknown where the funding would come from to cover the cost of demolition.

Chairman Monroe advised that once the County took title, they had the right to demolish buildings; however, he added, if the owner wanted to redeem the property at the last chance meeting that the County could run into legal problems.

Mr. Merlino suggested adding in a clause that stated that the purchaser of the property had sixty days to get the property up to code. He added that this would prevent people from buying property for very little cost and leaving it in disrepair.

Mr. Goodspeed advised the Committee on two properties in the Town of Johnsbury that were threatened by the Town with litigation more than once to get the buildings up to code. He also acknowledged that this had cost the Town \$70,000 each in litigation fees.

Mr. Belden asked whether the DPW (Department of Public Works) had the equipment and manpower to do demolition work on the dilapidated properties and Mr. Swan replied in the negative. Mr. Belden then added if the County had to hire an outside contractor, it would cost three times as much as if the DPW did the work.

Mr. Belden questioned whether the County could turn over the costs of demolition to the Towns where the properties were located. Mr. Taylor noted that the Towns were citing the County for the properties that were not up to code, in turn, putting the costs back on the County.

Mr. Strainer inquired on whether properties received the minimum bid owed to the County when they went to the auction and Mr. Swan replied in the negative. Mr. Swan clarified that in the past properties in the auction that received above the minimum bid owed on them offset the costs of the properties that were below the amount owed to the County.

Chairman Monroe suggested that the issue be referred to the County Attorney for further review.

Motion was made by Mr. Goodspeed, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to consult with the County Attorney to determine what options the County had with regards to purchasers of foreclosed properties being held responsible for bringing the property up to code and maintaining it, and to contact Fulton County to determine how they funded the demolition of dilapidated properties.

Mr. Swan informed the Committee that agenda Item Five was a request to attend the New York State Association of County Directors Summer Conference at the Holiday Inn, in Saratoga Springs, New York from July 27 through July 30, 2008. He pointed out that the State had approved reimbursement for the event in the amount of \$636.00 and the total cost for the three nights of hotel lodging was \$638.00. He added that the cost to the County would be for the tuition of \$150, plus the \$2 that was not covered by the State. He further added that the funds were available for the Conference within the departmental budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to authorize Mr. Swan to attend the New York State Association of County Directors Summer Conference as outlined above. *A copy of the Request to Attend a Meeting or Convention is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Swan advised the Committee that Item Six on the agenda was in reference to clearing up

pending items. Mr. Swan referred to Item Two, the Mullen property, as having been dealt with at last months meeting. Mr. Swan noted that Items Three, Four, Five, Six and Nine had also been addressed and could be removed from the pending items list.

Mr. Swan noted that pending Item One had been particularly difficult for him as it pertained to setting up a meeting with Assemblywoman Sandy Galaf and Senator Elizabeth Little to discuss County -wide assessing. He noted the difficulty was due to the Legislature being in session and that once it was out he would be able to get in contact with their offices to schedule a meeting.

Chairman Monroe asked about the Countywide Assessment Grant and Mr. Swan replied he was halfway through and would have it available for the Committee to review at the September meeting. He noted that he had received the first installment funding of the grant in the amount of \$25,000 and after he submitted the final assessments he would receive an additional \$25,000.

As there was no further business to come before the Real Property Tax Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. Belden adjourned the meeting at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan, Legislative Office Specialist