

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: JOINT MEETING - PUBLIC WORKS, OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION COMMITTEES**

**DATE: APRIL 8, 2009**

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**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS BELDEN  
BENTLEY  
TESSIER  
CHAMPAGNE  
TAYLOR  
PITKIN

**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SUPERVISORS STEC  
MERLINO  
GOODSPEED

**OCCUPANCY TAX COORD. COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS KENNY  
SIMMES

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

WILLIAM LAMY, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
DON DEGRAW, AIRPORT MANAGER  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISORS THOMAS  
SOKOL  
STRAINER  
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM  
REPRESENTING THE ADIRONDACK BALLOON FESTIVAL COMMITTEE:  
MICHAEL MCCARTHY  
MARK DONAHUE  
JOAN GRISHKOT  
WALTER GRISHKOT  
ALYSON MARTIN, *THE POST STAR*  
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Belden called the joint meeting of the Public Works and Occupancy Tax Coordination Committees to order at 8:00 a.m.

Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, advised that the joint meeting had been scheduled to discuss the proposed Sunday afternoon balloon launch at the Airport and that representatives of the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee were present, as well. He explained that it was the consensus of the Public Works Committee not to authorize the Sunday afternoon launch at the Airport and the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee wanted clarification on how the special event funds that were requested would be used. Mr. Champagne interjected that the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee was concerned that if the funds requested were for the Sunday afternoon launch that may not occur then it was not necessary to award the funds. Mr. Kenny advised that the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee had decided to delay awarding the funds to the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee until an agreement could be reached on whether the Sunday afternoon launch would take place.

Mr. Belden queried whether the \$10,000 that the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee had requested was for the overtime of the Department of Public Works (DPW) employees for the traffic operations. Mr. Payne explained that the Balloon Festival Committee proposed using volunteer organizations such as local fire departments, to whom they would make a monetary donation in exchange for traffic operations under the direction of DPW employees.

Mr. Champagne requested that a representative from the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee address what the funds would be used for.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Michael McCarthy, who was present representing the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee. Mr. McCarthy advised that his understanding was that the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee could apply for \$10,000 in Special Event Funding, \$5,000 of which would be used as a donation to pay the volunteer organizations for their assistance in traffic operations and the other \$5,000 was available to assist with the cost of the Festival. He stated that the funds were necessary as it was becoming increasingly difficult to generate

revenue, while the expenses were increasing. He advised that some of the funds would be contributed to the volunteer organizations to conduct traffic operations which would offset a portion of the costs of the DPW, while the other portion would be used to pay for the direct Festival costs.

Mr. Champagne questioned whether the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee had organized the traffic operations with the volunteer organizations and Mr. McCarthy responded that they had not had any direct discussions with any organizations because they were waiting to see if the occupancy tax funds would be awarded. He explained that Mr. Payne had suggested that they consider using local volunteer firefighters to conduct the traffic operations. Mr. Payne advised that he had discussed with Amy Manney, Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Services, the idea of using volunteer firefighters to assist with parking for the Balloon Festival and she had provided him with a list of all the local Fire Departments. Mr. Champagne suggested contacting the local Kiwanis Club, as they had been involved in traffic operations at the Adirondack Balloon Festival in prior years.

Mr. Belden asked Mr. McCarthy how he felt about the Public Works Committees desire to not have the Sunday afternoon launch at the Airport and Mr. McCarthy responded that they would prefer to have the launch at the Airport; however, he stated that he understood the cost restraints of the County and other arrangements could be made if the Airport was not available. Mr. Champagne stated that his concern was that approximately 10 to 12 balloons were launched on Sunday afternoon and he did not feel that it justified the overtime costs incurred by the County. Mr. McCarthy countered that although the Sunday afternoon launch had fewer balloons, in prior years the attendance had been the highest of all days.

Mr. Taylor queried whether the revenues collected versus the expense of the Sunday afternoon launch was available to aid in making a determination. William Lamy, Superintendent of Public Works, stated that the Sunday afternoon launch cost approximately \$5,000 in overtime. He apprised that for the prior year the launches on Friday evening, Saturday morning and evening and Sunday morning resulted in a total overtime cost of approximately at \$20,000. He advised that if the Sunday afternoon launch was added it would cost the County approximately \$5,000 more. He added that the total cost was approximately \$35,000, which included the rental fees for the port-o-johns, lighting, generators and food expenses.

Mr. Kenny advised that the Adirondack Balloon Festival attracted more people to the area than any other event held in Warren County. Mr. Belden stated that due to budget restraints it was necessary to cut overtime costs for the Festival from the DPW Budget. Mr. Geraghty suggested looking for funding elsewhere, as it had been necessary to eliminate the overtime from the budget.

Mr. Pitkin questioned Mr. Lamy on what type of impact the occupancy tax funds would have on the DPW overtime expense, as well as using the volunteers for traffic operations and Mr. Lamy responded that for minimum staffing with the Sunday afternoon launch without using volunteers, the cost was estimated at \$25,000. He said that if volunteers were used and fewer DPW staff were required the cost could be reduced in half; however, he stated that using volunteers for traffic operations may create more problems, as they did not have the crowd control experience for the traffic operations to be run smoothly. He noted that when the Adirondack Balloon Festival had used volunteers to manage traffic in prior years, many problems were encountered such as lights being knocked over and grass being driven on.

Mr. Taylor stated that there was enough of a benefit to the County from the Balloon Festival to justify spending the additional \$5,000 for overtime to have the Sunday afternoon launch. Mr. Tessier stated that he felt it was necessary for the DPW to remain in control of traffic operations due to his prior experience with volunteers conducting traffic at the Festival and the many problems it created. Mr. Lamy interjected that the DPW employees were trained to

move the cars where it was necessary for them to go. He pointed out it would only take one car parked in the wrong place to create problems.

Mr. Kenny commented that the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee may be willing to contribute an additional \$5,000. Mr. Pitkin advised that he felt it was necessary for the DPW to remain in charge of traffic operations at the Adirondack Balloon Festival; however, he requested that Mr. Lamy make suggestions on where County costs may be decreased.

Mr. McCarthy advised that if the County could award the Adirondack Balloon Festival more funds, he suggested that the County bill them for services. He commented that it may be possible to arrange for the vendors to supply the County employees with meals at no cost to the County. Mr. Belden queried if the County issued the Adirondack Balloon Festival an invoice for the County employees time, would they reimburse the County. Mr. McCarthy replied that they would reimburse the County up to the amount of funds awarded; however, he stated that he hoped the bill would be for less, as some of the funds were necessary for their increased costs, as well.

Mr. Payne advised that he did not think that it was legal for the County to bill the Adirondack Balloon Festival for their overtime costs; however, he added that the County may be able to bill for expenses such as lighting, port-o-john rentals, etc.

Mr. Champagne suggested getting more vendors or having a home show where an admission fee could be charged to generate more revenue. Mr. McCarthy advised that they did not have a sufficient amount of volunteers to coordinate an event like that. He pointed out that when individuals left the Airport they patronized the local restaurants and shops, which was generating revenue in the community.

Motion was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried by majority vote to authorize the Adirondack Balloon Festival to have their Sunday afternoon launch at the Warren County Airport, with Mr. Champagne voting in opposition.

Mr. Kenny advised that the occupancy tax application from the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee would be amended to request \$20,000 rather than \$10,000.

Mr. Champagne asked Joan Grishkot, representing the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee, to elaborate whether the parking problems were as severe as Mr. Lamy had stated when volunteers were in charge of traffic operations for the event. Mrs. Grishkot advised that the reason the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee had requested the aid of the DPW staff was due to traffic issues. Mr. Champagne suggested training the volunteers this year on traffic operations so that the following year the number of DPW employees required could be reduced. Mr. Kenny advised that it would be more difficult for the County to provide the DPW employees for future events due to budget restraints. He added that if the volunteers were trained it would alleviate some of the traffic issues. Mrs. Grishkot pointed out that it was getting more difficult to recruit volunteers, especially, she noted, for the early morning launch.

Mrs. Grishkot advised that the Sunday afternoon launch was critical, as many visitors would travel to the area for the morning launch and then patronize local stores and restaurants prior to the afternoon launch. She stated that these individuals would not visit the area if there was no afternoon launch.

Mr. Kenny emphasized the importance of the Adirondack Balloon Festival to the County. Mr. Lamy interjected that the County had received positive publicity by having traffic operations run smoothly in prior years. He noted that

if the management of the traffic operations was changed it may cause issues that would have a negative impact.

Mr. Payne apprised that the Moon Glow Event in Lake George had been cancelled and he wondered if it may increase the number of visitors to the Airport. Mr. Bentley questioned why the Moon Glow was cancelled and Mark Donahue, representing the Adirondack Balloon Festival Committee, advised that it was cancelled due to scheduling and safety issues.

As there was no further business to come before the Joint Meeting of the Public Works and Occupancy Tax Coordination Committees, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Champagne, Mr. Belden adjourned the meeting at 8:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan