

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	OTHERS PRESENT:
SUPERVISORS TAYLOR	PATRICIA TATICH, DIRECTOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BELDEN	REPRESENTING WARREN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MERLINO	CORPORATION:
SOKOL	LEONARD FOSBROOK, PRESIDENT
PITKIN	JOHN WHEATLEY, PROJECT MANAGER, QUEENSBURY INDUSTRIAL
	PARK
COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
SUPERVISORS CHAMPAGNE	HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL SERVICES
STEC	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
	FISCAL SERVICES
	NICOLE LIVINGSTON, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
	SUPERVISORS GIRARD
	STRAINER
	TESSIER
	THOMAS
	MIKE BORGOS, PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
	DON LEHMAN, <i>THE POST STAR</i>
	CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Planning & Community Development Committee to order at 10:15 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Patricia Tatich, Director of the Planning & Community Development Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Tatich requested to extend the current contract with Systems Development Group, Inc. for Imagemate online information service, commencing October 1, 2009 and terminating September 30, 2010, for a lump sum amount of \$3,600. She noted that the Multiple Listing Service provided the County with \$4,000 for access to the Imagemate service; therefore, she added, there was no cost to the County.

Motion was made by Mr. Pitkin, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to extend the current contract with Systems Development Group, Inc., as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the October 16, 2009 Board meeting.*

Ms. Tatich requested to amend the 2009 County budget to establish the Restore Program 2009 Code (CD70) in the amount of \$70,000. She noted that the Restore Program was grant funding

from the Office of Housing and Community Renewal for critical housing improvement needs for senior households.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to amend the 2009 County budget as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Tatich requested authorization to submit a grant application to the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) for funding assistance from the 2010 Census Complete Count Grant in the amount of \$50,000, commencing December 31, 2009 and terminating May 31, 2010. She said that the deadline for the application was October 16, 2009 and the grant offered 100% assistance for public relations work. Mr. Taylor inquired as to the benefits of a census for the County. Ms. Tatich responded that the last census had been completed ten years ago and there had been an 8% increase in the population as compared to the previous census. She noted that a letter from the Secretary of State pertaining to the program was included in the agenda packet.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to authorize the submission of a grant application to the NYS DOS as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the October 16, 2009 Board meeting.*

Ms. Tatich said that the next item on the agenda was an update for the Committee on the status of the Broadband Study. She advised that Warren County had a contract with the SUNY (State University of New York) Research Foundation utilizing technical assistance, as well as a contract with CBN Connect for a needs analysis and conceptual design. She stated that the purpose of the project was to increase the connectivity of the County for portions that were currently not being serviced. She added that the County would attempt to secure funding from the Federal Stimulus Funds. She advised that Hamilton and Washington Counties had joined in the Study, which had decreased Warren County's share of the costs to \$40,000, as opposed to \$60,000. She explained that the broadband network would add 1,000 miles of fiberoptic cable to the existing coverage area. She said that the Planning & Community Development Department would assist CBN Connect with the application for funding and they would apply for \$7 million. She advised that with the assistance of CBN Connect, \$675,000 had been earmarked by Congressman Murphy's Office for the technical design of the broadband study. She said that Phase 1 of the contract was the assessment workshop which had been held on Tuesday, September 22, 2009. Mr. Pitkin said that he had attended the assessment workshop and was pleased to see the fine imaginations that were presented pertaining to the connections to the small towns. Ms. Tatich apprised that the fiberoptic cable was the 'spine' of the broadband network and it was possible that the cable could be placed within the railbed from the Town of North Creek south.

Mr. Strainer entered the meeting at 10:27 a.m.

Chairman Monroe interjected that he felt it was favorable that Warren, Washington and Hamilton Counties were working jointly to complete the Broadband Study. He added that there was strong support from Congressman Murphy and there was a good chance that Warren County would be awarded Federal Stimulus Funding for the final design. He said that he had

received a phone call from Mark Luciano, from Congressman Murphy's Office, and had been informed that there was a wireless company that was interested in expanding in the Lake George area. He stated that Clarkson University had started an initiative entitled 'Forever Wired', which pertained to expanding broadband access. Mr. Taylor noted the foresight of the Warren County Board of Supervisors in beginning the broadband study.

Referring to the Small Business Assistance Program, Ms. Tatich reported that the Business Training Program would begin on September 28, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Crandall Library in the City of Glens Falls. She added that the Program would be held on Mondays through December 7, 2009 and there would be no class on Columbus Day. She noted that anyone interested in further details should contact Jamie White, Small Business Development Coordinator. She added there were twelve people currently registered for the Program.

Ms. Tatich reported that staff from the Planning & Community Development Department had attended other meetings, including; the Forever Wired Conference at Clarkson University on September 8, 2009; and the New York Planning Federation in Lake Placid, New York on September 14, 2009.

Mr. Girard entered the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Ms. Tatich apprised that the last item on the agenda was to respond to the Budget Committee position elimination proposal. She distributed a handout to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She read and reviewed the handout, which outlined three possible alternatives to the elimination of the Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development Department position. She explained the three alternatives as follows:

- ▶ Alternative A would cover the expense of the Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development's salary (\$62,290) with an increase in Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) grant funding of \$32,240; funding from the New York State Home Program Award and the CDBG-HHHN Project (Community Development Block Grant-Hudson Headwaters Health Network) of \$11,200; and funding from the Department of State Census Complete Count Grant Program of \$18,600, for a total amount of \$62,040. With this alternative there would be a request to the Tourism Department to contribute \$5,000 to \$8,000 for work completed on the Annual Tourism Study;
- ▶ Alternative B would cover the expense of the Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development's salary with funding from existing contracts for LWRP in the amount of \$32,240; \$8,000 from the Tourism Department for work completed on the Annual Tourism Study; and revenue from the Warren County Local Development Corporation (LDC) for loan portfolio management and small business assistance in the amount of \$23,000, for a total amount of \$63,240; and
- ▶ Alternative C would request that the Warren County LDC create a full-time position and have the current Small Business Development Coordinator assume the duties as an employee of the LDC; or eliminate a staff member from a position with little or no revenue generated. This alternative would eliminate one position from the Department's Table of Organization.

Ms. Tatich stated that she had been informed that the Tourism Department would seek a

request for proposal from the Technical Assistance Program at SUNY Plattsburgh for the Annual Tourism Study which had been completed by the Planning & Community Development Department in the past. She noted that the \$23,000 in funding from the Warren County LDC would be pending their approval as well as the approval of the County Attorney.

Mr. Belden noted that the County had recently learned of an additional \$500,000 shortfall in the Department of Social Services due to the State no longer funding the mandatory Food Stamp Program. He said that he was unsure if the Tourism Department would be able to allocate \$8,000 to the Planning & Community Development Department for the Annual Tourism Study and noted that occupancy tax collections had decreased by 10%. Mr. Pitkin advised that the Planning & Community Development Department was not decreasing their budget but was merely passing the costs on to other entities or departments. He said that the same thing had been done with the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Coordinator position, where the expense had been passed on to the Towns.

Ms. Tatich stated that the majority of the employees in the Department were long-term employees who were Tier 3 or higher in the Retirement System. She said that she had heard that the fringe benefits rate in the County was 40% and added that the fringe benefit rate in the Planning & Community Development Department was 29.2%. Mr. Sokol asked if fringe benefits were included in the \$62,290 that was quoted as the salary for the Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development and Ms. Tatich replied in the negative.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Tatich stated that if the Assistant Director position was eliminated, the skill set of the remaining employees would not be sufficient to administer the LWRP. She said that the current projects would need to be consolidated or reduced in order to compensate for the loss of the position. She noted that the Warren County Planning & Community Development Department had generated \$26.2 million in revenue in the last twenty five years.

Mr. Sokol stated that in the case of another department, the Director was requested to decrease her budget by \$8,000 and had found alternative budget codes to decrease other than personnel. He asked if there were any other codes in the Planning & Community Development budget which could be decreased in order to compensate for the salary of the Assistant Director. Ms. Tatich responded in the negative and added that the funding that was generated by the Department was either allocated to the improvement of County assets or to the individual Towns.

Referring to the \$8,000 which had been mentioned as possible revenue from the Annual Tourism Study, Ms. Tatich explained that Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, had requested a proposal for the Study. She stated that she had been upset to discover that the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS) had included revenues from the Planning & Community Development Department in the DSS budget for use of the conference room in the Human Services Building.

Mr. Taylor asked for a timeline for decisions on the proposed positions for elimination and Chairman Monroe responded that it would most likely be at least a month before final decisions would be made. He advised that he felt the Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development was critical to the Towns and if Ms. Tatich was able to find a way to fund the position through the administrative portion of grant funding it was a good alternative to terminating the position.

Mr. Merlino apprised that the County should have increased the sales tax in April when the option was available. He noted that the morale of County employees was low. He advised that the 1% increase in sales tax would impact everyone uniformly. He said that he was opposed to eliminating the position of Assistant Director and added that revenue generating positions should not be eliminated.

Mr. Tessier entered the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Referring to the GIS Coordinator position, Mr. Belden noted that the solution which allowed the Department to retain that position had transferred the burden of the salary to the Towns. Mr. Sokol agreed that revenue generating positions should not be eliminated. He said that he was one of the Supervisors who voted against the increase to sales tax in April; however, he added, given all the reductions and eliminations that have taken place since then, it might be time to revisit the concept of increasing sales tax. Mr. Pitkin stated that unless they wanted to dismantle the County government, it would be necessary to revisit the concept of increasing sales tax.

Referring to the \$8,000 in revenue for the Annual Tourism Study, Mr. Payne stated that the Tourism Department budget would have a \$400,000 shortfall and added that if other departments kept allocating funds from the Tourism budget there would be no Tourism Department left. Ms. Tatich responded that the Planning & Community Development Department had been completing the Annual Tourism Study for years and she had discovered that there was an intent to issue a request for proposal for the Annual Tourism Study. She added that if the Tourism Department was going to expend funds for the Study, she saw no reason why the project could not be completed in-house.

Referring to the Small Business Assistance Program, Mr. Payne asked how many new businesses were starting, given the current economic status, and how many people had signed up for the classes. Ms. Tatich responded that twelve people had signed up and they anticipated up to three walk-in registrations.

Mr. Taylor asked if the concepts requiring funds from the LDC had been discussed and Ms. Tatich replied that she had spoken with Mike Borgos, President of the Warren County LDC. Mr. Borgos said that the LDC would take whatever steps that they could to retain the position within the confines of the law and pending the approval of the County Attorney.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to approve Alternative B, excluding the \$8,000 from the Tourism Department, with the termination of the

position when there was no longer grant funding available to cover the cost, pending approval of the County Attorney.

This concluded the Planning & Community Development portion of the Committee meeting, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) portion began at 11:20 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Len Fosbrook, President of the Warren County EDC, who distributed the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Fosbrook reported that he and Jennifer Switzer, Director of Finance/Empire Zone Specialist, would attend the 2009 Empire Zone Conference in Watkins Glen, New York on October 4 and 5, 2009. He added that the Chairmen of the Senate and Assembly Economic Development Committees for New York State would be present, as well as Dennis Mullen, President of the New York State EDC. He said the Conference would be a good opportunity to discuss some of the plans and programs that the State was considering to assist businesses.

Mr. Fosbrook stated that he and John Wheatley, Project Manager, Queensbury Industrial Park, had visited the Office of Empire State Development in Troy, New York last week. He added that they had an opportunity to discuss Warren County's plans and programs.

Mr. Fosbrook said that the Hickory Hill Ski Center would be open this winter, which would mean there were three ski areas to promote within Warren County. He added that the EDC was working with the new investor to obtain Adirondack Park Agency approval. He advised that Mr. Wheatley was researching a possible National Grid grant to offset the cost of electricity to operate Hickory Hill Ski Center. He stated the EDC would promote all three ski areas together to attract more skiers to Warren County.

Mr. Fosbrook explained that the Warren County EDC had been researching the EB-5 Program, which was a program operated by the Department of Naturalization & Immigration on a Federal level to assist in luring foreign investments. He added that the Program required the establishment of a regional center and added that the regional center in the western portion of New York encompassed 23 counties. He advised that the cost of establishing the regional center would be approximately \$125,000. He added that the EDC wanted to establish a regional center with counties within the blue line. He said that the incentive for foreign investors would be that they would earn a temporary green card in order to establish their business in the United States.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Fosbrook distributed copies of the Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project Executive Summary to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.* He said that he would like to schedule Jim Martin, Project Manager of the LA Group, to give a presentation to the full Board of Supervisors. He added that the presentation had been given to the Board of Directors of the EDC, who found it enlightening and useful. Chairman Monroe stated that he felt that a presentation by Mr. Martin would be a good idea and could be arranged.

Mr. Fosbrook reported that information gleaned from the Executive Summary had been useful. He advised that the Adirondack Park consisted of 5.6 million acres and 76% was forest preserve, forever wild or restricted land. He added that .3% was in commercial use and .2% was in industrial use. He apprised that at the 2009 Empire Zone Conference the Warren County EDC would lobby for a carve-out in any government program that considered the economies to scale for any communities inside the blue line.

Mr. Fosbrook noted that Mr. Wheatley had been working on a concept for the Exit 18 Project and the goal was to meet with real estate developers to try to interest private sector development to the Exit 18 area. Mr. Wheatley displayed a map that detailed the Exit 18 Project specifications for the Committee members. He said the map showed the investments that were already made, both public and private, and listed some as Tribune Media, the Dome, and Hudson Headwaters Health Network. He added that the investments totaled approximately \$20 million. He advised that the map also detailed imminent projects such as Main Street, the infrastructure improvement project for Tech Meadows and a hotel proposed by Richard Schermerhorn, real estate developer. He added that the imminent projects totaled approximately an additional \$20 million. He apprised that the map also detailed project development opportunities.

There being no further business to come before the Planning & Community Development Committee, on motion by Mr. Pitkin and seconded by Mr. Belden, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist