WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **INVASIVE SPECIES SUB-COMMITTEE**

DATE: **MARCH 6, 2014**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	**OTHERS PRESENT:**
SUPERVISORS DICKINSON	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
CONOVER	SUPERVISOR MERLINO
MONROE	JEFF ANTHONY, THE LA GROUP
BEATY	KEVIN FRANKE, THE LA GROUP
SIMPSON	LARRY EICHLER, DARRIN FRESH WATER INSTITUTE
STROUGH	WILLIAM A. SCHEW, O'BRIEN & GERE
	KYLE W. BUELOW, O'BRIEN & GERE
COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:	TONY EALLONARDO, O'BRIEN & GERE
SUPERVISOR FRASIER	SARAH MCLENITHAN, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD

Mr. Dickinson called the Invasive Species Sub-Committee meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Mr. Dickinson advised the purpose of the meeting was to conduct interviews with two respondents to the RFP (Request for Proposal) for SEQRA/EIS (State Environmental Quality Review Act/Environmental Impact Statement) document preparation. He stated the first interview would be with representatives from The LA Group. He said the Committee had been surprised by the cost of the proposal received from the LA Group and asked them to provide any suggestions and or alternatives to reduce the costs.

Jeff Anthony, President of The LA Group, apprised Tracey Clothier, Senior Planner of The LA Group would serve as the Project Manager, Kevin Franke, Director of Resort Client Services, from The LA Group would prepare the EIS and Larry Eichler of the Darrin Fresh Water Institute would provide technical consultation, as they had imminent knowledge of the water bodies located in Warren County, as well as extensive experience with aquatic invasive species. He said they would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have or they could review the proposal in detail.

Mr. Dickinson queried whether any mistakes were made with the RFP, as he thought the cost of their proposal would be substantially less since they had completed a similar project for the Lake George Park Commission (LGPC) and Mr. Anthony replied in the negative. He explained he felt the RFP was relative to the scope of work required to the goal of enacting a law with regards to invasive species. Mr. Franke added since the project was related to a County-wide initiative there was not a great deal of data that could be referenced for the LGPC project. He explained that although the project for the LGPC would provide a suitable baseline for the County project, updates were required and the scope of work was expanded. He continued, the focus for the County study was County-wide and included which invasive species were being transported from lake to lake; whereas; the LGPC project concentrated on boats coming to Lake George. He added he agreed with Mr. Anthony that the scope of work was compliant with the RFP goal of enacting a law regarding invasive species.

Mr. Anthony stated he felt the process could be reduced by implementing internal milestones and breaking down the work scope into phases. He said he felt it was too early to determine whether the end result required enacting a law, as the possibility existed of identifying ways to control invasive species without requiring a law being adopted. He apprised he felt the foundation for the study would rely upon completion of steps A through C which were comprised of: developing a scope of work, list of tasks and schedule; identifying the water bodies; and performing a needs and benefit assessment. He said other factors may be useful such as monitoring the results of the mandatory boat washing and inspections on Lake George, which would commence on May 1, 2014 and would

be in its first year of enforcement. He added other elements to consider were the stewardship program on Loon Lake, as well as the steps being taken by Lake Luzerne, Brant Lake and any other water bodies throughout the County that may have measures in place they were unaware of.

With regards to the needs and benefit assessment, Mr. Anthony advised this was a major contributing factor to the program. As an example he stated, he felt the public outreach completed by Dave Wick, Executive Director of the LGPC, contributed to the success of the Lake George Program. He said he was unsure whether the program would have commenced had Mr. Wick not been so diligent with the public outreach. He apprised he felt the County-wide program would involve attending a number of public meetings, as well as Town Board meetings to ensure everyone was educated about the severity of the invasive species issue and was aware a plan for control was being developed.

Mr. Anthony stated he believed when steps A through C were completed, an analysis as to what direction should be taken to control invasive species County-wide should be realized. He said this could include an expanded and enhanced stewardship program, providing the funds necessary for Municipalities to implement boat inspection/wash stations or to enforce a County-wide law. He said he was unsure whether a County-wide law was necessary, as the data gathered may discover a more efficient way to implement a County-wide process without requiring the adoption of a law that would work properly with the program utilized on Lake George.

In reference to the program enforced on Lake George, Mr. Anthony advised The LA Group proposal included meeting with the LGPC as he felt it was necessary to determine how the Lake George program could co-exist with the County-wide program. He said it was necessary to establish whether one program outweighed the other, if both programs respected each other, if one program could replace the other or could they perform a joint venture. He noted if the program garnered enough attention it could be adopted as a State-wide plan.

Mr. Dickinson questioned how many bodies of water The LA Group anticipated including in the plan and Mr. Eichler replied he estimated there to be about 25 bodies of water with public boat launches for powered vessels; however, he added, he felt car top launches for canoes and kayaks should be considered, as well. Mr. Strough asked whether the Hudson River was included and Mr. Eichler replied affirmatively. Mr. Franke noted water bodies located on forest preserve lands were not included because they felt they were not applicable to the plan.

Mr. Conover advised he agreed the public outreach portion would play a major role in developing a plan, as there were many municipalities in Warren County that were unaware of the severity of the issue with invasive species. He questioned whether The LA Group believed the plan should be broken down into phases. Mr. Dickinson interjected he would like to refine Mr. Conover's question and queried how much work could be completed by the end of the year and how much money they felt would be necessary to complete this work. Mr. Franke apprised it was not a matter of how much of the work could be completed prior to the end of the year but rather setting key benchmarks or milestones. He said he felt it would be possible to accomplish steps A through C, as well as some additional public outreach within the calendar year if not before. He said it was an achievable benchmark for 2014 to finalize the needs and benefit assessment and establish the direction the project would take, such as enacting a County-wide law or selecting a more cohesive approach such as utilizing stewards, and decontamination stations that provided education for the public.

Mr. Dickinson asked The LA Group to provide an estimate of the cost to achieve that benchmark and Mr. Eichler replied he projected the cost to be between $75,000 and $80,000, not including the

expenses and funds for additional public outreach. He said if The LA Group was selected as the contractor they would work with the County to determine the cost for the appropriate level of public outreach required. He stated they had included having separate meetings at each individual municipality; however, he advised, this may not be necessary.

Mr. Anthony added The LA Group was willing to negotiate with the County and modify the scope of work to achieve the aforementioned benchmark without losing the ability to build upon the suitable baseline. He said he thought once steps A through C were completed they would have a better idea of the locations and types of invasive species present in the water bodies in Warren County. He continued, they would be able to determine the threat of invasive species traveling from outside of the area, as well as the potential for in-County migration which would assist them in developing a plan for control. He reiterated he felt that adopting a local law may not be necessary, as they may discover an alternative method for invasive species control.

In regards to public outreach, Mr. Anthony advised they may determine the enhanced public outreach program was not necessary until after all the data was compiled about the locations and types of infestations. Mr. Dickinson apprised he agreed Steps A through C, with some enhanced public outreach, would provide a solid basis for the plan. Mr. Anthony added he had been surprised with the pushback received from the fishing organizations when The LA Group performed the study for the LGPC.

Mr. Simpson questioned whether the process included collecting data from every body of water located in Warren County to determine what types of invasive species were present. Mr. Eichler advised the intent was to collect survey information from the lakes. He explained they would prioritize it by lakes that had fairly current surveys and review the lesser known lakes first. He said there was plenty of survey data on plant life in the lakes; however, he stated, there was very little survey data available on animal species in the lakes. Mr. Simpson asked whether they would interact with the different associations on the lakes and Mr. Eichler replied affirmatively. He said they anticipated corresponding with groups that had management programs or efforts to inquire whether their management teams could assist with the surveys. For instance, he stated, they could develop a protocol for Aquatic Invasive Management, LLC on Brant Lake to identify the invasive species located there.

Mr. Monroe queried at what phase The LA Group could provide the anticipated economic impact of a "no action" alternative and Mr. Franke replied that would not be addressed until the Feasability Study of Improved Spread Prevention Measures phase of the project. He explained it was necessary to have an updated idea on what the options were for control before they could compute the cost of a "no action" alternative. He added he felt there would be a sufficient amount of general information when the outreach was occurring to use an example. He said they provided a detailed analysis for the LGPC Project that depicted the percentage that property values would decrease when the "no action" alternative was utilized. He stated he thought this project would provide similar results. He apprised having these figures available for the public outreach seemed to have a significant impact on the public's perception of the project.

Mr. Anthony advised the LGPC project included national research as to how invasive species not only effected property values but also how they impacted the tourism industry. He stated it had been necessary for the public to understand the impact on the tourism industry if Lake George was no longer usable. He said some of the data collected could be applied to the County-wide study. Mr. Monroe added since the tourism industry was a major economic contributing factor in Warren County, he felt it was vital to demonstrate the cost of "no action" was considerably more than

undertaking an action plan. He advised there were other studies being conducted with regards to the economic impact of invasive species; however, he noted, they did not address the impacts on sales and property tax. He suggested implementing the no cost alternative earlier in the project, as he felt it provided the justification required for expending funds on the project. Mr. Anthony interjected that property and business owners had defended The LA Group's actions when they received pushback from the fishing groups about the LGPC Project, as they were aware of the negative impact invasive species would have on the local economy. Mr. Beaty said it was important for the public to understand the potential economic impact of invasive species, as they would require justification of the funds expended. He apprised it had been pointed out at the recent Economic Growth & Development Committee meeting that 18-20% of the workforce in Warren County was employed by the hospitality and tourism industry. He stated the result of Lake George and other County lakes becoming unusable would be an increase in unemployment and a decrease in sales tax revenues and occupancy tax collections. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Conover apprised Lake George was one of the most studied, organized lakes with several environmental protection groups. He referred to the LGPC as Lake George's "Division of Natural Resources". He questioned the responsible entity for the other Warren County lakes and opined it would be the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC). He advised there were municipalities in Warren County that had been fighting the invasive species issue for several years and had expended a lot of money doing so. He said it was critical to organize the steps of the process and to determine important matters, such as where staff for a mandatory inspection program would come from. He stated the step-by-step approach outlined by The LA Group was the type of approach the County needed to take. Mr. Monroe pointed out that Warren County had a Planning & Community Development Department and access to the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District; he questioned if there was any way to integrate staff in order to reduce some of the costs associated with the proposal. Mr. Eichler responded the County had a very good GIS (Geographic Information System) in place and there were several steps in The LA Group's proposal which required GIS Services. He noted there was a potential for savings by having the County GIS Specialist be on call to assist the LA Group. Mr. Eichler said he could not think of any direct services which could be performed by the Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District in order to realize a cost savings. Mr. Anthony added there would be a potential for cost savings during the inventory phase if there were capable people, such as the boat stewards who could assist with inventory of the existing infestations. He apprised that during the LGPC Project, the LGPC had handled all of the bookkeeping, secretarial and management duties associated with the EIS and Warren County could potentially realize a cost savings in this area, as well. He commented that 1/3 of the associated costs were due to the approval phase and there was a potential for cost savings by having the County Attorney handle some of this work. Mr. Franke mentioned the proposal included a separate cost proposal relating to the SEQRA work and The LA Group had envisioned the County Attorney would participate in these efforts. He noted if the County Attorney wanted to take the lead and do the leg work for the SEQRA work there could be potential savings. Mr. Anthony commented that if the LA Group was selected as the consultant they could reorganize and recompute the proposal as needed and he said it would take a couple of meetings to accomplish this.

Mr. Conover opined one of the key elements towards the Lake George initiative had been the SAVE Lake George Group (Stop Aquatic Invasives from Entering Lake George) and he noted municipalities had come together in order to finance the efforts. He mentioned there had been discussion from SAVE Lake George pertaining to expanding to a County-wide basis. He commented the cooperation and participation of the NYS DEC would be required at some point. He apprised that entities, such as the Lake George Association and the Fund for Lake George did not have a comparative

counterpart on a County-wide basis. Mr. Franke said Warren County was being proactive and taking the lead, as he was unaware of any other County that was attempting a County-wide program for invasive species. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Strough questioned whether the Hudson River should be included in the bodies of water to be included in the study and Mr. Franke replied it had been included in the proposal, particularly the launch areas in Lake Luzerne and Queensbury. Mr. Anthony noted the Schroon River had also been included. Mr. Strough clarified that his question was if the Hudson River should be included and Mr. Franke explained boaters often traveled from the rivers to the lakes and back. Mr. Anthony commented that Dave Wick had been the point person for the LGPC Project and he questioned if there would be a person or Department in Warren County that would be capable of assuming that role. Much like Mr. Wick had, he continued, that person or Department might take a critical role in some of the outreach efforts. Mr. Anthony explained that although the LA Group had prepared the materials used, Mr. Wick had completed many of the outreach efforts without the assistance of the LA Group.

Mr. Conover stated the time and money expended on the initial step of determining the scope of work would determine the success or failure of the project. He noted the demands of the remediation program for lakes containing milfoil would need to be dealt with. He apprised that bringing the NYSDEC into the equation might result in some State funding being received. Mr. Anthony commented on the possibility of receiving grant funding through the next round of funding for the CFA (Consolidated Funding Application).

Mr. Monroe advised with the assistance of the SAVE Group the County was able to secure political support from the Governor's Office and the NYSDEC for the Lake George Project. He added he thought the State should contribute a portion of the funding to the County-wide project, as it could be used as a model for similar projects across the State and demonstrate that the funding was comprised of a contribution from the State, as well as a local share.

Mr. Conover apprised he thought the approach taken in the preliminary stages of the project would dictate whether the State would consider contributing funds to the project. He stated he felt something similar to the wash station on Loon Lake that was projected to become a regional wash station to tag vessels that would be honored at any of the other lakes within the County was required. Mr. Monroe said they were considering synchronizing the color coding system for the tags from the Loon Lake wash station and those located on Lake George to streamline the process.

Mr. Conover reiterated the initial step of determining the scope of work was required to assist in identifying where other wash stations were required. He said he thought individuals would become more aware of the program when they observed the tags on a regular basis. He said he felt they were providing the State the layered tagging program they would require.

Mr. Anthony restated it may not be necessary to adopt a law if a County-wide process was established. As an example, he said, wash stations could be implemented on the critical water bodies located in the County that were respected and coordinated so the tags could be accepted by each other.

Mr. Dickinson advised the voluntary wash station/inspection program on Lake George was a failure last year, as they had difficulty getting individuals to participate. He anticipated this year would be a success, as participation was now mandatory. He said he felt it should be extended County-wide to persuade everyone to participate He stated about 80%-90% of the traffic coming to Warren

County would be covered if a few wash stations were located along the Adirondack Northway.

Mr. Anthony interjected steps A through C would allow them to analyze what direction should be taken to control invasive species County-wide. Mr. Monroe added he felt a major goal should be to position the project to be eligible for a CFA Grant. He repeated he felt it was necessary to include the economic ramifications of the "no action" plan, as he felt this would position the County better to receive grant funding. Mr. Dickinson added he believed demonstrating they were working on an action plan would provide them an advantage on their grant funding application and Mr. Anthony concurred.

Mr. Conover pondered whether the connection with the Lake George program for preventing invasive species from traveling to nearby water bodies was sufficient basis for a CFA application through the Lake George Watershed Coalition. Mr. Monroe added the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages had been successful on a few recent applications that encompassed all of the Adirondacks and he felt they would consider being the applicant for a grant on behalf of Warren County to provide a model program for the remainder of the Adirondacks.

Mr. Dickinson thanked The LA Group for their time and stated he was impressed with their response to the RFP. He said a decision would be rendered soon after the interviews concluded and noted he would keep them apprised throughout the process.

Mr. Dickinson suggested a short recess prior to commencing the next interview for the SEQRA/EIS document preparation. The Committee recessed from 10:09 a.m. to 10:20 a.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Dickinson introduced William Schew, Kyle Buelow and Tony Eallonordo, representing O'Brien & Gere Engineers, Inc., one of the respondents to the request for proposal (RFP) for consulting services for SEQRA/EIS document preparation. He requested they provide a summary of their proposal and whether any other options existed, as he was concerned with the proposed cost. Mr. Schew stated he was not surprised there were concerns with the cost, as he felt some adjustments could be made to the scope of the work to reduce the price. He advised O'Brien & Gere was a moderate sized employee owned company that had been in existence for around seventy years. He said their philosophy was about cultivating relationships to ensure they provided their clients with the most efficient team available. He apprised on this particular project they would partner with the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI)to provide them with the local knowledge and familiarity.

Mr. Strough asked which bodies of water in Warren County AWI was involved with and Mr. Buelow replied he was unsure. He stated he was aware that AWI was extensively involved with aquatic invasive species in the region and noted he felt their research would serve as the basis for the project. Mr. Schew advised he attended the meeting to represent O'Brien & Gere as an Officer of the Company and demonstrate their commitment to these types of projects.

Mr. Conover questioned whether they had any thoughts as to how they could modify the proposal to reduce the costs and Mr. Eallonardo replied affirmatively. He explained he felt the needs and benefits assessment and feasability study of improved spread prevention measures could be revised to lower the proposed cost of the proposal. Mr. Buelow added any relative data that had been previously collected could be applied to the project rather than exhausting their financial resources searching for data that was readily available from existing resources. He said they could rely upon the research AWI was completing on water bodies in Warren County rather than perform expensive additional research. He apprised the scope of work and proposal price could be reduced if it was the

desire of the County to implement a County-wide wash station program.

Mr. Conover advised the program on Lake George had focused on data from the program at Lake Tahoe, as the majority of the illustrations were similar. He queried whether they projected any issues with receiving the support of the New York State Department of Parks and Recreation and Mr. Buelow said he was unsure. He explained he felt the NYSDEC would be an active participant, as they shared the same goal of minimizing and/or controlling the spread of aquatic invasive species and recognized the economic loss it could create for the County, as well as across the State.

Mr. Buelow advised he felt they would be able to achieve their task of providing a SEQRA/EIS document, as well as provide the research and knowledge necessary to garner political and public support.

Mr. Monroe questioned whether in-house resources such as the GIS Unit in Planning could be incorporated into the project to reduce the proposed cost and Mr. Eallonardo replied affirmatively. He explained that one area of reduction was relative to scoping out construction costs, operational costs, staffing, etc, as they could utilize the start-up costs of the Lake George program as a model. Mr. Buelow added he felt implementing AWI's programs into the project could reduce the cost, as well. He said there were other areas he felt had been covered by the Lake George process that could be implemented into the SEQRA/EIS process to further reduce costs.

Mr. Monroe pointed out they were considering applying for a CFA grant to assist with financing the project and noted the applications were due in August. He stated he felt the cost of the "no action" alternative would increase the prospects of being awarded the grant and he queried where that analysis factored into their proposal. Mr. Eallonardo advised they could implement this in the early stages of the process, as he felt this was relative to the work performed for the needs and benefit analysis.

Mr. Buelow queried if the County had any experience with the CFA grant and Mr. Conover replied affirmatively. He stated the Lake George Watershed Coalition was awarded grants through the CFA for work that included an invasive species component. Mr. Conover asked whether they had any experience with the invasive species initiatives within the Finger Lakes Region and Mr. Buelow replied affirmatively. He explained they were working on a project with the NYSDEC to dredge Cayuga Lake. Mr. Conover asked whether the dredging was directed at navigation or invasive species and Mr. Buelow replied it was focused on both. He stated they received funding to investigate potential disposal measures and/or locations for the sediment being removed from the Cayuga Inlet. He added they were also funded for researching the means of reducing sediment from the tributaries that ended up in the Cayuga Inlet.

Mr. Buelow apprised before the above aforementioned projects commenced they were tasked with hydrilla prevention. Mr. Eallonardo advised the discovery of hydrilla in the inlet posed a significant threat to both the Finger Lakes and the Great Lakes, as it was one of the most dangerous aquatic invasive specie in the world and had the ability to spread by a variety of means. He said the concern was how the inlet could be dredged for navigational and flood control purposes but limit the spread of the hydrilla. He stated he developed a document with guiding principles that outlined the ecology of hydrilla, how it grows and spreads, how to manage the spoils of the dredging, as well as how to utilize the dredging to limit and/or eradicate the hydrilla. Mr. Buelow added the preliminary work was completed so they were aware of how to manage the sediment in such a way that it would not result in the spread of the hydrilla. Mr. Eallonardo noted they were also involved in a number of restoration projects where they were developing plans to control and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive

species.

Mr. Buelow advised community involvement, education and public relations played a major role in their work. Mr. Eallonardo stated he felt the public engagement portion of the project should not be reduced, as it was a major contributor to the success of the project. He said he felt the public should be educated about aquatic invasive species, as there were several species they should be mindful of to prevent them from spreading to the water bodies in Warren County such as the hydrilla plant.

Mr. Conover apprised Lake George had spent over $5 million on milfoil eradication, which would not be near the amount of funds required for combating hydrilla should the lake become infested with it. He said he felt this would far exceed the resources available and they would ultimately lose the use of the lake. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Schew questioned whether the County perceived sending out another RFP since the scope of work was being revised and Mr. Dickinson replied in the negative. He stated they were considering completing steps A through C which was comprised of: developing a scope of work, list of tasks and schedule; identifying the water bodies; and performing a needs and benefit assessment and compiling the information to determine what direction they anticipated going in. Mr. Schew said they would be happy to assist the County in determining what the best approach would be, as they wanted the project to be successful whether they were selected or not.

Mr. Dickinson advised the County was interested in pursuing a county-wide project, as the lakes contributed considerably to the economy in the region; however, he said, there was a limited amount of funds available. He pointed out of the three Counties that bordered Lake George, Warren County had carried the financial burden of prevention and eradication of invasive species on the lake. He said Lake George was fortunate to have many different associations assist with the funding, such as the Fund for Lake George and the Lake George Association, as well as the State. He apprised because of the limited funding available they were considering accomplishing steps A through C by the end of the year along with some additional funds for public relations.

Mr. Schew suggested reviewing steps A through C to look for areas where costs could be reduced. Mr. Dickinson stated the County was reexamining the scope of work to determine where in- house services could be used to lower the costs such as using the County GIS Unit and possibly appointing an individual from the County as the Project Coordinator to prepare the EIS. Mr. Schew advised they would be more than willing to work with the County on adjusting the scope of work to assist in achieving their goal more efficiently. He noted they maintained a local presence, as they had an office in Albany with many employees that lived in the region. He stated the goal to control and/or eradicate the invasive species was essential to them as noted by some of the other projects they were working on with their clients.

Mr. Dickinson apprised they had not discussed redoing the RFP; however, he said, he would welcome suggestions on how to facilitate this should they have any. Mr. Schew proposed they compile a list of recommendations as a starting point, as well as any suggestions of other contractors under consideration to assist the County in developing a more efficient plan.

Mr. Monroe asked them to include in their recommendations any thoughts they may have as to how the County could position themselves to be eligible for grant funding to assist with the cost of the project next year. Mr. Conover advised the State did not have any program in place for invasive species. He noted the importance of implementing a County-wide program to protect the local water bodies, as they were a major driving force for the tourism industry in the region which contributed

substantially to the economic climate of the area.

Mr. Dickinson thanked the representatives from O'Brien and Gere for their time and noted they provided an impressive presentation. He stated a decision would be made shortly after the interviews concluded and he would keep them apprised throughout the process.

As there was no further business to come before the Invasive Species Sub-Committee, on motion made by Mr. Conover and seconded by Mr. Simpson, Mr. Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McLenithan, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board