

**October 26, 2006
Meeting Minutes****Location**

6th Floor Legislative Conference Room, Broome County Office Building, 44 Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY

Attendance

Constituent Members: Supervisor Debbie Preston, Town of Conklin; Supervisor Mike Marinaccio, Town of Dickinson; Supervisor Margaret Turna, Town of Chenango; Mayor Gerald Mackey, Village of Lisle; Supervisor Peter Andreasen, Town of Vestal; Mayor Harry Lewis, Village of Johnson City; Supervisor Ed Banks, Town of Fenton; Supervisor Timothy Whitesell, Town of Binghamton; Patrick Brennan, Broome County

Associate Members: Mr. Jim Dimascio, Greater Binghamton Coalition

Other Attendees: Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo; Louise Vanderkulk, League of Women Voters; Henry Weissmann, Broome County Public Works; David Hamlin, Town of Fenton; Jeremy Evans, Rita Petkash, Broome County Department of Planning & Economic Development; Jim Dessauer, City of Binghamton; Lois Andrascik, Diana Nogaret, Lance Bowe, Jim Trevitt, Greater Binghamton Association of Realtors, Bruce King, Village of Johnson City; Jim Rooney; Walter Smith; Dave Hamlin, Town of Fenton; John Solak; Mary Pines, John Sejan, Broome County Board of Elections

Convene

Supervisor Debbie Preston convened the meeting at 4:01PM.

Aging Futures Initiative

Supervisor Preston welcomed everyone to the meeting and turned the time over to Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo and the Aging Futures task force.

Assemblywoman Lupardo began by saying that the Aging Futures committee was trying to begin a conversation in the community about the concept of making Broome County an active living community. After convening a group of stakeholders to discuss the issues facing seniors it became apparent that housing is a serious concern.

Assemblywoman Lupardo continued by saying that the concept of elder-friendly communities is a catching on in many places and is a quality of life issue and an economic development tool as

well. Elder-friendly communities and businesses cater to and accommodate seniors. She said that Broome County communities should look at opportunities to build low maintenance single floor homes that seniors want. She suggested that abandoned sites could be redeveloped into new urban neighborhoods that have senior housing. She then turned the time over to Kathy Bunnell, Director of the Broome County Office for Aging.

Ms. Bunnell described the activities of the Aging Futures Partnership and some characteristics of the senior population in Broome County. A lot of attention is paid to community members that are 75 and older and in frail health but Broome County has a large number of baby boomers who are healthy and active. This population wants to contribute to the community and they have money to spend.

Ann McNichols followed Ms. Bunnell. Ms. McNichols and her husband decided several years ago that they wanted to retire and remain in the area. It has everything they need and it is where there friends and organizations are. They looked for a house because they wanted to downsize but could not find anything like what they wanted. They wanted a newer home that did not require a lot of upkeep. They want a home with one story and a two car garage. They ended up building what they wanted. She said that a lot of her peers are looking for similar housing.

Mike McGowan, President of the Southern Tier Home Builders and Remodelers Association, also addressed the Council. He says that home builders have recognized the need for elder-friendly housing. There are various certification programs for builders interested in specializing in senior housing. He mentioned that there are drawbacks to building the type of housing described by Ms. McNichols. Some of the costs of building make it difficult to build more affordable senior housing. He said that one technique that municipalities can use to help reduce the development costs of senior housing is clustering. Clustering allows a builder to concentrate lots and buildings on one part of a property. This reduces the costs of infrastructure and allows much of the land to be dedicated as open space.

Lois Andrascik from the Greater Binghamton Association of Realtors followed Mr. McGowan. She confirmed that if elder friendly housing is built, baby boomers will buy them. She said that they are willing to live in mixed neighborhoods with younger couples and families where they can interact.

Ms. Andrascik was followed by Mark Bowers from the New York State Department of Transportation. Mr. Bowers said that he got involved in the initiative because of his work on bicycle and pedestrian issues. Construction of sidewalks and rail trails improve the quality of life of everyone including seniors. These types of amenities are necessary to attract baby boomers.

Assemblywoman Lupardo concluded by thanking the Council for listening and asking the supervisors and mayors to take the conversation about creating elder-friendly communities to their respective towns and villages.

Board of Elections

Supervisor Preston thanked John Sejan and Mary Pines from the Broome County Board of Elections for attending the meeting to talk about new voting machines and the proposed chargeback to municipalities.

Mr. Sejan passed out a letter from New York State regarding the status of new voting machines. The letter outlined which machines New York State will be testing. Mr. Sejan said that Broome County cannot choose a voting machine vendor until the State certifies machines for use. He doesn't know when the certification process will be completed and does not know from one week to the next what rules the State will require the counties to follow.

When asked about it, Mr. Sejan wasn't sure if the State would lose the money the Federal Government offered to the states to pay for new voting machines. He said that there was a good chance New York State would still be using the mechanical machines next year.

Mr. Sejan continued by saying that there are a lot of new requirements regarding elections and the County is taking quite a financial hit to comply. He said the County is going to move forward with its plans to take over control of all of the voting machines from the municipalities with or without the new machines.

Ms. Pines addressed the letter that municipalities received regarding the proposed chargebacks for elections costs. She said that elections cost over \$1,000,000 to run. The proposal is for the municipalities to cover 20% of the overall cost. That cost will be divided between the municipalities based on the number of election districts in each. She said that many towns already had funds in place in their 2007 budgets.

Supervisor Preston, along with several other Council members, voiced disappointment with the County Administration for not communicating with the supervisors and mayors about the proposal. She said that the supervisors and mayors just want to be part of the discussion and she urged the Administration to simply communicate with them.

The Council also discussed the agreement regarding elections that municipalities were asked to sign last spring. Some municipalities signed it in good faith but many did not. Supervisor Timothy Whitesell said that the agreement was flawed.

The Council also asked the Board of Elections Commissioners why the rates for Election Day volunteers and custodians were higher this year. Mr. Sejan said that they have not been able to find enough people in recent years to staff each polling location. The higher per hour rate offered this year has resulted in an increase in workers trained for Election Day.

Shared services update

Supervisor Preston reminded the Council that there would be a flood recovery task force meeting on November 1 at 3:30 PM. She then turned the time over to Deputy County Executive Pat Brennan for an update from the county on shared services.

Mr. Brennan said that the county has officially taken over tax collection and administration of delinquent properties from the City of Binghamton. He is hoping that other municipalities will turn over tax collection duties to the County within the next year. He said that the agreement between Endicott and the County for labor relations work is going well and that the City may seek a similar arrangement.

Mr. Brennan also reported that work on a health insurance consortium with the school districts has hit a dead end because the consultant cannot get sufficient health insurance information about employees from each municipality due to privacy laws. He mentioned that the county has contracted with CANUSA Health Group for administration of its prescription drug plan. CANUSA distributes prescription drugs from Canada and the county is going to save \$200,000 this year. He suggested that the municipalities look into CANUSA as a way to save money. [Information about CANUSA was mailed with the minutes]

The Council discussed health insurance for several minutes. Several municipalities have switched to Excellus EPO and have saved significant money.

Mr. Brennan updated the Council on the police consolidation plan. He said that he had presented the plan to the mayors and supervisor of the municipalities with police forces and will be presenting the plan to the village and town boards.

Jeremy Evans told the Council that the Shared Municipal Services Incentives Grant application for the Shared Services Internet Matrix was submitted again and confirmed that no one from Broome County received a grant from the first round.

Broome County Public Works Commissioner Henry Weissmann announced that the County received a grant to build the Whitney Point multiuse trail. Several other municipalities received grants through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund grant program.

Supervisor Preston went over the proposed changes to the Greater Binghamton Council of Governments bylaws. She asked the Council members to review the changes. [A copy of the revised bylaws was mailed with the minutes]

Jim Dimascio, Executive Director of the Greater Binghamton Coalition, told the Council that data centers were a targeted industry in the BC Plan and that the industry would be targeted in the Greater Binghamton marketing plan.

Supervisor Banks mentioned that the Southern Tier Home Builders and Remodelers Association is concerned about the lack of appropriate housing for prospective Lockheed Martin employees.

Mr. Dimascio agreed and said that there are jobs available in the Southern Tier now but it brings challenges. The Convention and Visitor's Bureau will be working to court prospective employees by providing them with information and showing them the attributes of the area when they visit.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 PM

Recorded and edited by: Jeremy Evans

Approved by: Debra A. Preston