

# Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive · Rita M. Petkash, Commissioner



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## Broome County Council of Governments

### January 27, 2005 Meeting Minutes

#### Location

Exhibit Room, Broome County Library, 185 Court Street, Binghamton, NY

#### Attendance

**Constituent Members:** Kevin Burke, Village of Port Dickinson; Ed Banks, Town of Fenton; Margaret Turna, Town of Chenango; Randy Williams, Town of Windsor; Gordon Kniffen, Town of Kirkwood; Tim Whitesell, Town of Binghamton; Barbara Fiala, Broome County Executive; Debbie Preston, Town of Conklin; Mike Marinaccio, Town of Dickinson; Anndrea Starzak, Town of Vestal

**Associate Members:** Frank Kelley, Greater Binghamton Coalition; Joe Busch, Broome-Tioga BOCES

**Staff:** Rita Petkash, Jeremy Evans and Chris Burger, Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development

**Visitors:** Alex DePersis, Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce; Donald Brown, Town of Fenton; William Smith, Town of Fenton; Ron Lake, Binghamton-Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant Board; Louise Vanderkulk, League of Women Voters; Jean Gow, League of Women Voters; Emil Bielecki, Town of Vestal; Richard Jones, Town of Kirkwood; James Smith, Town of Kirkwood

#### Convene

The meeting convened at 4:06PM. President Debbie Preston called the meeting to order.

#### County Executive Barbara Fiala

Debbie welcomed new County Executive Barbara Fiala to the COG and invited her to take the floor.

Barbara Fiala thanked the COG for the opportunity to speak and was happy to find out that she is a constituent member of the COG. Although there seems to be mistrust between the municipalities and the county, she believes everyone must work together to improve Broome County.

Barbara described some of the reasons that she is concerned about the county budget. The budget outlook is not bright and there might be a deficit. In addition, the Medicaid relief promised from the State may only save Broome County \$800,000 because the County will have to pick up additional costs for the Nursing Home.

Barbara is very interested in looking for more ways for governments to share services. She cited the example of the new agreement where the County will provide human resource services to the Village of Endicott for a nominal charge. The Village of Johnson City is consolidating its emergency dispatch operations with the County in June. She reiterated her desire to hold a shared services summit near the end of February and praised municipalities for the cooperation that already exists. She stressed that everything should be put on the table and looked at when it comes to sharing and/or consolidating services. She wants to change the “do nothing” image that Broome County seems to have.

Debbie opened the floor to questions.

There was some concern and questions about how the State’s Medicaid plan would affect local property and sales taxes and there was agreement that it was too early to tell.

The discussion turned to the issue of the municipality/county sales tax split. COG members agreed that municipalities should get back the 5% of sales tax that they agreed to temporarily give the county to cover Medicaid cost increases. The time for municipal officials, the County Executive, and the Legislature to negotiate a new sales tax distribution formula is now since the one year agreement is over and the county must give municipalities six months notice of any formula changes.

Several COG members agreed that they are open to ideas of how to share services better. They also pointed out that municipalities are distrustful of the County Legislature, not of county government itself.

More discussion about the County budget ensued. There was agreement that there are many unknowns when formulating a budget.

There was more discussion about the sales tax issue. COG members seemed to agree that all municipalities have been negatively affected by the formula. Members reiterated their distrust in the Legislature for knowing that municipalities would be negatively affected but not addressing the problem.

Debbie noted that COG members will be anxiously waiting for March to be able to sit down with the County and discuss the sales tax issue again. The Council agreed that they would hold another meeting on March 24, 2005 at 4PM.

Emil Belicki asked if the county would be ready to work with provide services to other municipalities like it is with the Village of Endicott. Barbara said that she would be willing to sit down with anyone to look for ways to help out.

## **Binghamton - Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant Board**

Debbie Preston introduced Ron Lake from the Binghamton - Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant Board. She pointed out that municipalities saw another unexpected sewer rate hike. She mentioned to Ron that at a previous meeting, there was agreement that supervisors and mayors would receive advanced notice of rate increases so that they could plan for them.

Ron Lake agreed with Debbie's assessment and then explained that the rate increase was unexpected yet necessary. He suggested that the COG invite Tom Augustini and Beverly Palmer come to the next meeting to better explain the sewer rates. They will be invited to the next meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

The Council discussed the plant and sewer rates in general while Ron pointed out that the new Board is trying hard to be open in their operation of the Plant and trying to fix the mistakes of the past.

There was discussion about the role that the County should have in sewage treatment.

### **Adjournment/Announcements**

Debbie thanked the League of Women Voters for their unwavering attendance and interest at COG meetings and she announced that the League would be holding a meeting on wastewater management on Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7:30PM at the Vestal Public Library.

The Council formed a committee to look at revising the Bylaws. The committee will include Debbie Preston, Mike Marinaccio, and Tim Whitesell.

The Council will be developing a simple website that will have meeting announcements and minutes posted.

Mike Marinaccio announced that a committee has formed to look at fire district consolidation amongst several fire districts in the area. Mike said that he will keep the council informed on its progress.

Debbie adjourned the meeting at 5:35PM