

**May 25th, 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 Margaret Turna, Town of Chenango; Supervisor Peter Andreasen, Town of Vestal; Tim Whitesell, Town of Binghamton; Supervisor Mike Marinaccio, Town of Dickinson; Lois Dilworth, Town of Barker; Ed Banks, Town of Fenton

Associate Members: Jim Dimascio, Greater Binghamton Coalition

Other Attendees: Darcy Fauci, Broome County; Rita Petkash and Jeremy Evans, Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development; Louise Vanderkulk, Mary Johnson, League of Women Voters; Tom Sinclair, Binghamton University MPA Program, Nathan Hilburger, Binghamton University MPA Student; Gary Leighton, Town of Union

Convene

Supervisor Debbie Preston convened the meeting at 4:06 PM and turned the time over to Commissioner Rita Petkash.

Code Enforcement

Commissioner Petkash explained that there have been a lot of changes to the New York State building codes. Changes to the manufactured homes section have already been put into effect. She said that by January 1st, 2007, all municipalities that administer code enforcement need to pass local laws that incorporate additional changes to administration and enforcement. She passed out several documents [Editor's Note: Copies of these documents were sent out to supervisors and mayors that were not in attendance] including the following:

- Code enforcement E-bulletin
- Code enforcement in-service training schedule
- Code enforcement basic training schedule
- Sample code enforcement administration and enforcement law
- Uniform code with changes highlighted
- Text of rule that requires changes to administration and enforcement law
- Manufactured homes regulations

Commissioner Petkash also pointed out that all code enforcement officials must have in-service training regarding the changes by June 2007 in order to stay certified.

Supervisor Ed Banks mentioned that if a town wants a full time code enforcement officer it must be a civil service position. He expressed concern that when it comes time to replace a CEO it will be competitive and no longer by appointment.

Supervisor Preston said that Conklin's CEO had to take a civil service test.

Commissioner Petkash said that a municipality can hire a CEO under contract, share a CEO with another municipality, or hire a private firm that specializes in code enforcement in order to avoid creating another civil service position.

Supervisor Banks said that the Broome County Personnel Department was urging Fenton to create a civil service position for code enforcement and deputy highway superintendents.

Supervisor Preston pointed out that the State is the pushing the initiative and the County is stuck as the middle man.

Supervisor Peter Andreasen asked if there was a grandfather clause for existing employees and Commissioner Petkash said that there wasn't one.

There was general discussion about how some mandates from the State don't seem to take the realities of the numerous small towns throughout New York into account.

Shared Services Studies

Supervisor Preston then thanked Dr. Tom Sinclair and his students for coming to present their findings regarding shared services. She said it was clear that they spent a lot of time working on the project. She turned the time over to them.

Dr. Sinclair thanked the Council for allowing them to present their findings. He introduced Nathan Hilburger, a Master's of Public Administration student, who was going to present the findings of the student project and passed out copies of the report [Editor's Noter: A copy of the report was sent out with the minutes].

Nathan Hilburger began his presentation by thanking the Council for the opportunity and mentioning the students who comprised the group that completed the report. He said he would speed through the presentation since Council members are aware of shared services its benefits.

Mr. Hilburger described the methodology the group used for the study. First they defined which services to study and then combed through the budgets for each municipality. The calculated the per capita costs of providing each service by municipality. In their analysis they found many disparities in the per capita costs of services provided between municipalities. He said that the

group tried to determine why such large differences existed but ran out of time to do a complete analysis. One obvious source of the discrepancies is that the group looked only at general funds and some municipalities group the same costs in different sections of the budget.

Dr. Sinclair addressed some of the disparities. He said that there are certainly limitations to the study but it raises questions and prompts further study. He suggested that the Council look at costs more closely. Municipalities could learn from each other. If one municipality provides a service much cheaper than other the reasons could be studied and implemented elsewhere.

Dr. Sinclair noted that municipal budgets do not break down individual employee costs. To discover the true costs of a service they need to know what employees there are and what they are doing.

Supervisor Mike Marinaccio said that the report would be a great tool to use to get a better understanding about municipal service costs. He said that municipal officials don't always know what services are being provided and how much they actually cost.

Dr. Sinclair asked if Council members would allow him to sit down with each of them to review figures and analyze employee costs and develop true costs of providing different services.

The Council general thought that that would be a good idea.

Executive Assistant Darcy Fauci if the work proposed under the Shared Services grant would build upon the project and Dr. Sinclair said yes.

Supervisor Tim Whitesell asked if the County would also be looked at in future studies.

Dr. Sinclair said that the students did not look at the County because it is so different in type and size of services provided but that the County could be looked at in the future. He also said that it would be very beneficial to track changes in costs of services over time.

Shared Services Update

Jeremy Evans gave the Council an update on county shared services efforts. He said that the county was still waiting a final determination from Mr. Brigatti about whether it makes sense for the County to join the school district health consortium. Deputy County Executive Pat Brennan is still working on options for police consolidation. The County is also working on several projects with the City of Binghamton. County court security officers will soon become state employees. This will result in short and long term savings for the county.

Mr. Evans also informed the Council that he was working on a detailed municipal court survey to send out. He said he wanted to make sure that it asked for all of the information that was needed.

Supervisor Preston said she was anxious to get the survey out and see the results because Conklin will be deciding on whether or not to have only one justice.

Supervisor Banks said that it made sense for Fenton to go to one justice.

Mr. Marinaccio said that Dickinson needs two justices and that case work has doubled over the last couple of years.

Supervisor Dilworth noted that Barker has two justices because there is a lot of activity in the town since drivers think that they are home free once they are out of the urban area.

Supervisor Turna reminded the Council that District court judges, like those proposed for the Town of Union, only work 9-5 people that get arrested will have to spend the night in jail.

Other Items

Supervisor Preston asked Jim Dimascio for an update from the Greater Binghamton Coalition.

Mr. Dimascio said that the Coalition was no longer advocating for funding through an increase in the sales tax. He also said that the Coalition is focusing on executing its project plan and getting results. The Coalition is about to unveil its new one stop website for economic development. Mr. Dimascio is very encouraged by the amount of cooperation from different organizations, including Tioga County, which has occurred in development of the website. The website is meant as tool for local companies but also for companies looking to expand into the area. The Coalition is also working hard to promote redevelopment of brownfields in the area.

Supervisor Andreasen expressed concern about the state of infrastructure in the county, particularly the Binghamton-Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant.

The Council discussed the Joint Plant and agreed that action needed to be taken to address the sewage capacity of in the county. Many in attend

Supervisor Banks updated the Council on the local home builders concerns about the lack of housing and high taxes in the area that are driving new residents to Pennsylvania. There are reports that Lockheed Martin is encouraging people to move to Pennsylvania because the taxes are so much lower. He also said that inconsistencies in assessments between new housing and older housing is frustrating home builders and realtors. New residents are looking for residential developments with newer homes and they aren't finding them.

Supervisor Banks advocated a countywide school district. He said that it would be a hard sell but it would be an important step.

Supervisor Andreasen noted that in Rensselaer County a school district is getting a new high school paid for by a developer. The school district needs only lease the new building from the developer. He said that school taxes made up 66% of taxes in Vestal but that he and the town

board get the calls about high taxes, not the school board. He said that mandates on the schools were part of the problem and needed to end.

Dr. Sinclair asked if municipal leaders regularly met with school leaders and several Council members said yes.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM

Recorded and edited by: Jeremy Evans

Approved by: Debra A. Preston