

LEGISLATIVE & RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

February 13, 2007 – 2:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Grattidge; Supervisors DeCerce, Keyrouze, Peck, Richardson, Sausville; Trottier; Wood; David Wickerham, Co. Administrator; Mark Rider, Co. Attorney; Bruce Cadman, General Code; Ann Magnuson, LWV; Press

Chairman Grattidge called the meeting to order.

Mr. Peck moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 4, 2006. Mr. Sausville seconded. Unanimous.

Chairman Grattidge appointed Mr. Lucia as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Chairman Grattidge said everyone should have received a memorandum regarding the meeting with the State Legislative delegation in Senator Bruno's office which will be on March 7th at 3:00 p.m. If you plan to attend, please RSVP with Pam in the County Administrator's office, he said. We will be leaving the Supervisors' parking lot at 1:45, he stated.

Chairman Grattidge reviewed the Draft Saratoga County 2007 Legislative Program:

1. Rejecting the provisions in the Governor's 2007 budget that would eliminate assistance to certain municipalities who host video gaming facilities based on the wealth of their populations.

Ms. Keyrouze said Ken Crannell, of NYSAC, said he will make that a priority to push the State to move on that.

2. Calling on the State to address the short term and long term fiscal stability of County operated nursing homes.

Mr. Wickerham said we get the worst case mix because we are the nursing home of last resorts.

3. Supporting a seamless change of the racing franchise that will allow the Saratoga Race Course to remain the premiere racing facility in the nation.

Mr. Wood said last year, we endorsed the nine points supporting the franchise at Saratoga as well as recognizing significant impacts on the economy. We are in the final stages of getting our racing brochure ready for print, he said. Mr. Wickerham said if nothing is done, the Oversight Board becomes the operator of the facility, but it is likely an operator will be chosen in the next four to six months. He said NYRA could be extended for a year or two, but he has not heard anything on that. Ms. Keyrouze asked if the Governor

will open this again to another committee. Mr. Wood said all he knows is what he reads in the paper.

4. Supporting tougher measures for the control of convicted sex offenders to include a statewide ban on such people's ability to live or work within 1,000 feet of schools, playgrounds, or other places where children typically gather.

Mr. Sausville mentioned the Town of Malta has gone beyond the 1,000-foot threshold to 5,000 feet. Mr. DeCerco said he believes the County went for 1,000 feet because there was a restriction on how far we could go. Mr. Rider said we thought that would withstand Constitutional challenges. The farther out you go, the more unreasonable it is, he said.

5. Opposing the retroactive increases to the County cost of the use of State Training Schools and banning any future attempts to enforce retroactive rate increases.

Mr. Wickerham said a resolution on this was passed at the December meeting. These are essentially jails to house youthful offenders, he said. Chairman Grattidge said this is one of NYSAC's priorities.

6. Supporting increased funding for Open Space initiatives, purchases of development rights, and other farmland protection initiatives.

Chairman Grattidge said we have had development right purchases through the State that has taken up to three years. We are looking to get these programs streamlined and funded a little better, he said. Mr. Sausville stated the Community Preservation act was passed by the Assembly last year. It allows a town to impose a real estate transfer tax of up to 2% that could be put into a dedicated fund for the purchase of open space, he said. He said he would urge the County to get behind this, and there are no financial implications for the County. It is not only permissive, but a town can set the rate up to 2%, he said. He stated this is a great proposed law. It protects the average homeowner because there is an exemption for any median house. Ms. Keyrouze asked if the County could do that. Mr. Rider said it depends on whether the law gets written. Chairman Grattidge requested Mr. Sausville to bring this up again next month and supply copies of that program for the Committee's review.

7. Requesting special member items for local emergency services organizations to acquire equipment compatible with the new County Radio System.

Mr. Wickerham said Senator Bruno expressed a willingness to get involved in this. We will advise him this will be the year to get that going, he said. Mr. Peck asked if there was any idea of the expenses at the local level. Chairman Grattidge said the Public Safety Committee is starting to work on that. Mr. Trottier stated the Committee will get together to discuss what is more feasible – leasing or buying. Mr. Wickerham stated the plan was to give a base to each company. Mr. DeCerco said we may have lost the window of opportunity, but the most important thing is getting the system set up. Ms.

Keyrouze asked if we could go through Congresswoman Gillebrand for funding. Chairman Grattidge stated their request form didn't feel there would be money for Homeland Security or agriculture in the 2008 budget, but we can certainly request that. Ms. Keyrouze asked if she should pursue this, and Chairman Grattidge said absolutely.

8. Requesting increased incentives to citizens who volunteer for fire department and ambulance corps service.

Chairman Grattidge said this will also be dealt with by the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Sausville mentioned Malta put together a classy brochure to help motivate people to join the volunteers corps. He said they would like to approach their Assemblyman on a home rule bill, because they think it is wrong for these people to be charged for that tax associated with fire protection. Mr. Peck said his volunteers cover two departments, and some attend more calls than others. Mr. Sausville said Malta has a Service Award Program to ensure volunteers are being trained and attending meetings that they need to. Mr. DeCerce said one individual per year can get tuition assistance, and he believes this should be made available to more than one.

Mr. Sausville asked if the concepts will be worked into this legislative program. Mr. Wickerham said typically, we use this as a way to speak to the Legislators. We try to put this on one page. Mr. Sausville said we will not be able to talk about these in any great depth, and he said he is concerned about follow through. Is there a follow through mechanism in place so that our interests are advanced, he asked. Mr. Peck said we would have to pass resolutions at the County level. I am comfortable moving at this pace, and home rule legislation would have to be brought to the full Board, he said. He said he would have to look at his two volunteer fire departments, and he agreed it is a great recruitment tool. Chairman Grattidge said it ends up shifting the taxes.

Mr. DeCerce said the Senator is so inundated, so we just need to get these things bulleted. Too much detail probably wouldn't go any farther, he said.

9. Support legislation to enable County Social Services to reimburse vendors for day care and other vital services electronically.

Chairman Grattidge said we are under rules and regulations from the State agency. Ms. Keyrouze said she has been bringing this to the attention of two different State agencies, and the League of Women Voters may be doing research on this. She pointed out that Nassau County and another county are doing this electronically, and she would like to see this done Statewide. Chairman Grattidge said in Social Programs, we had a presentation done by Bob Christopher on the process. Our Treasurer indicated these checks could be issued electronically if the State allows this to take place. Ms. Keyrouze said at that time, they didn't know those two counties are doing it electronically. The mechanism is already in place for us to follow that, and that is what I am doing research on, she stated. Chairman Grattidge requested her to bring it back to Committee once she gets the information.

10. Support efforts to make High Speed Internet access available to all Saratoga County residents, including those in remote, rural areas.

Ms. Keyrouze said all Supervisors in the County are interested in putting trails in their towns, and she would like to propose research on how the County could fund money to these towns.

Mr. Sausville said the Hudson River Greenway legislation should be added to our legislative program. It is easy for things to fall through the cracks, he said. He stated 90% of the bills down there never get passed. Chairman Grattidge said this one could be a reminder as a bullet point.

Mr. DeCerce moved to adopt the County's 2007 Legislative Program. Mr. Sausville seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Cadman discussed a plan to consolidate all of Saratoga County's Local Laws as well as important resolutions. He said General Code works with 2500 communities throughout the country and close to 20 in the County providing records management. He said it's a process of reviewing minutes to find out anything administrative or regulatory in nature and taking that data and organizing it, putting in amended sections, making revisions and changes that need to be made and actually publicizing books accessible electronically and on paper. We will actually go back to 1900 and pull all legislation the County has adopted since then. He said the County already has Laser Fiche where they have scanned and indexed over 100 years of County Proceedings. He said they will put together all of the legislation that was adopted. The project takes about one year from beginning to end. He said they have worked with several other counties codifying their laws. In the future, we can maintain it and keep it updated, and that is the goal of this particular project, he said. Chairman Grattidge stated last year's Committee was in favor of this project at a cost of \$18,250. **Mr. DeCerce moved to approve supporting this project and moving it on to the Law and Finance Committee. Mr. Richardson seconded. Unanimous.**

Mr. DeCerce asked if we still have to keep a hard copy, and Mr. Cadman said yes.

On a motion by Mr. DeCerce, seconded by Mr. Sausville, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann