

Legislative and Research Committee Minutes

April 5, 2010 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Wright; Supervisors Hargrave, Lawler, Rowland, Southworth, Collyer, Grattidge, and Thompson; David Wickerham, County Administrator; Michael Valentine, Planning.

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mrs. Southworth, seconded by Mr. Hargrave the minutes of the February 2, 2010 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Valentine gave a brief overview of the NYS Snowmobile Trail Fund as follows: Every year snowmobiles are registered and generate money into the state system to pay for snowmobile programs. In 2008 there was a threat to take \$1 million out of the funding, which the State is authorized to do to use for public safety on state lands. There was a lot of resistance from snowmobile clubs, and members and municipalities. In 2008 the Governor released a press release stating that they would not do that again. In 2009, with the State's financial situation, the Governor has stated that they are going to take another \$1 million from the snowmobile fund again. This is no different than what the state has been doing in taking money from other programs across the State. The fiscal year just ended and the \$1 million was not taken out of the budget, but the language still remains that for projects of public safety they can take out \$1 million a year for four years. There is current legislation to remove the language that states that 30% can be taken for public safety on state lands. The Senate and Assembly have both passed legislation that the language be removed; however, the budget has not passed as yet, and there is no assurance that the money won't be swept away from the funding that is set up for the snowmobile clubs. Mr. Valentine is requesting a letter of support from the Board of Supervisors urging the NYS Legislation to remove language that would allow the removal of funds from the snowmobile fund.

Mr. Valentine said there are 130,000 snowmobile registrants across the state, which generate approximately \$5.5 million. After removing \$360,000 for insurance and \$350,000 for Administrative costs for safety, education, maps and Parks and Recreation Staff the balance would be approximately \$4.8 million, which is the point where the 30% would be taken leaving \$3.5 million. The snowmobile program needs \$4.3 million in order to pay for local trail maintenance. The state also uses approximately \$150,000 for law enforcement across the state leaving a total of \$3.2 million to operate a \$4.3 million program, based upon the existing trails, number of counties and local clubs. If the State were to take 30% and then also go after the \$1 million, you will have a system that will not be able to operate, particularly in the northern part of Saratoga County where there isn't a suburban or dense population.

A motion was made by Mr. Rowland, seconded by Mr. Hargrave to urge the New York State Legislature to remove budget language that would remove funds from the Snowmobile Trail Development and Maintenance Program, upon approval from the County Attorney. Unanimous.

Mr. Grattidge presented three resolutions and requested the committee's support in passing them.

- **Resolution urging the New York State Legislature to support the State's Farmland Protection Program and Environmental Protection Fund.**

This resolution was prepared by American Farmland Trust which is the program that the state runs that has to do with purchase and development rights. A lot of farms in Saratoga County that have benefited from the county plan have also applied for the state funding and been granted funding from the State to purchase development rights.

Mr. Grattidge said the program has gradually been reduced down to a proposed \$10.5 million.

A motion was made by Mr. Hargrave, seconded by Mr. Wood to approve a resolution urging the New York State Legislature to support the State's Farmland Protection Program and Environmental Protection fund upon approval from the County Attorney. Unanimous.

- **Resolution urging the New York State Legislature to support the New York State Farm Viability Institute's Cornell Cooperative Extension Dairy Program**
- **Resolution urging the New York State Legislature to support the New York State Farm Viability Institute's Cornell Cooperative Extension Equine Program**

Mr. Grattidge said Saratoga County has the largest equine population in the state, with Economic Development putting this in the hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

A motion was made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mr. Rowland to approve the above resolutions upon approval from the County Attorney. Unanimous.

Mr. Wood said these are outstanding programs and the staff at Cooperative Extension has done such an outstanding job delivering these services. It would be a terrible setback were this funding not put in place. This is a strong program and it needs to continue.

Chairman Wright said the Hudson River/Black River Regulating District had a grievance day last week. The following comments were made.

Mr. Wickerham said the resolution to approve an apportionment for the Hudson River Area had already been written out, and upon the completion of the meeting it was immediately voted on and adopted.

Mr. Lawler said Mr. Rider was extremely well prepared and gave a great presentation. The only response that was made to the many arguments was, well if you think the state is responsible and you sue us, then maybe the Judge will agree.

Mr. Wickerham said that the Board of Supervisors has already authorized the County Attorney to take legal action. Right now it is a matter of what jurisdiction to file in, and they are working with the other four counties on that.

Mr. Wickerham said one of the important issues that Mr. Rider brought up was that they said here is the flood plain, so any of the parcels that are affected by this get made up in the total percentage. For Saratoga County they used the entire Saratoga National Cemetery and Battlefield which only have very small parts that hook up to the river.

On a motion made by Mr. Rowland, seconded by Mr. Hargrave the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom