

## LEGISLATIVE AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MINUTES

FEBRUARY 14, 2011 – 3:30 p.m.

Present: Chairman Veitch; Supervisors A. Johnson, Raymond, Rowland, Wormuth, Wright, Yepsen, Grattidge and Southworth; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator; Press.

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

**On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Rowland the minutes of the December 14, 2010 meeting were approved unanimously.**

Mr. Veitch announced the appointment of Mo Wright as Vice Chairman of the Legislative and Research Committee.

Mr. Veitch distributed a copy of the Saratoga County 2011 Legislative Program to all committee members for their review and comment.

Mrs. Raymond suggested giving Mr. Veitch and Mr. Hellwig the ability between now and when the committee goes to Albany to react to what is going on. Mrs. Raymond said there were memos out today about cutting funding to Youth Programs across the State. We should have flexibility if something comes up, she said.

Mr. Hellwig said 2008 was the last year that the County and City of Saratoga Springs received money. We are still maintaining that there are costs that both communities have incurred, especially in the City of Saratoga Springs because the facility is located there.

Item two was in the Chairman's budget this year, the 9 for 90 campaign, which is a high profile item for the New York State Association of Counties. Essentially it is nine mandates that constitute 90% of the tax levies for most communities in the state.

Item eight is addressing the property tax cap because it is the only tax that local communities have to generate income to cover the mandates. In the case of Saratoga County the tax rate has been stable for thirty years. This is a pretty good sign that we have done a good job managing it, and to have the State come in and impose their will just seems a little challenging.

Item three is something that came up last year in an effort to try to gain more control or more information from the State. The State is very secretive and a lot of it is driven by regulation, and what information they are willing to share with the Board of Supervisors and the Administrator. Right now the only individual that has any real information in terms of the source of the revenues and the amounts is the County Treasurer. Mr. Hellwig said, Mr. Pitcherelle, Mr. Martin and he went to a meeting in Albany with the State Department of Tax and Finance, and tried to make a case with them as to what we

needed and why we needed it. This was an opportunity for them to give some insight in to what their projections are so we can budget accordingly. Up to this point that has been unanswered. We are hopeful that at least some concession will be given by the State to give more information, but right now those reports are running six months behind.

Mrs. Raymond said there is also an issue of the State Department of Taxation and Finance using postal service zip codes for apportioning sales tax. A lot of the retailers use a canned software that automatically says, type in the zip code which then kicks in the name of the town, which in her case it will say Northville, which is Fulton County. She said not only will she be charged 7 ½ % instead of 7%, but also the money that is paid will go to Fulton County. She said there is no way to access that information to see if the software that the vendors are using is accurately reporting the location, and maybe there should be, in the long term, be a different way in apportioning sales tax.

Ms. Yepsen asked if continuation of the property tax on the racetrack property should be included? Should we be proactive or wait until they haven't paid it? Mrs. Wormuth said if it is not an issue now, and they still plan on paying it, she recommended that it not be brought to their attention. I don't think that we are going to get a lot of pro-activity, guarantees and promises, so if it has been coming and just been coming late than let it come, she said.

Mr. Veitch said he agreed. If they don't pay and are late then the committee can reconvene and form a resolution.

Mrs. Yepsen asked if the committee was just dealing with State Legislation? Mr. Hellwig said this is just for the State Legislature and the Governor.

Ms. Yepsen asked if the committee would be dealing with Fmap, and Homeland Security? Mr. Hellwig said all of that is on the table on an as needed basis, including any of those issues, we receive on a regular basis with correspondence from other counties, including the State and Federal Government or Supervisors.

Ms. Raymond said generally federal issues most often generate up through the particular committee that it affects. The other place you will often receive things from is either NYSAC or NACO, saying this is a priority today.

Mrs. Wormuth said Naco is where we need to take the message and as we move forward this year we need to be cognizant of our involvement with that. We need to use that as the tool to move our message forward.

Ms. Raymond said as issues come to the table that is the time to become proactive with our representatives.

Mr. Veitch said he is completely open to any suggestion that any supervisor has, whether they are on this committee or not.

Ms. Raymond said there will be an issue coming out of the New York State Association of Towns meeting next week that deals with the EPA's regulatory attempt to impose very strict pollution regulations regarding the Chesapeake Bay.

Mrs. Wormuth said that she agreed that certainly we have our local and our federal people that we can reach out to, but we have developed this program for our State people. There is a point for developing one for our federal people. Just as we use the Association of Counties to move these things forward, it is just as important to look at Naco as a vehicle to move some of these things forward through that, and not just rely on our local representatives. Our issues certainly meld into issues that several other counties have throughout the country. When we are looking at issues of national proportions, it is important to utilize everything you can in order to show a presence.

Mrs. Raymond suggested that people in counties should invite their Federal representatives and State representatives to their county committee meetings, as they represent us. This may be a very good place to begin with some of the federal representatives, she said.

Ms. Yepsen said, why not when we present this issue have our State representatives come to us.

Mrs. Raymond said we can do both. She said at the meeting in Albany, we could issue an invitation to them, telling them that we are inviting our State representatives and we will be inviting our Federal representatives to come to a specific meeting.

Mr. Wright suggested including the 911 surcharge to the legislative program.

Mrs. Raymond suggested putting some money numbers into the regulating district where it states there is a revenue shortfall of several million in its annual operating budget. This is approximately \$4.5 million that they are trying to redistribute to five counties, and every one of our legislators has constituents that will be affected by it.

**On a motion made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Rowland the 2011 Legislative Agenda was approved unanimously.**

Mr. Veitch said the additions that were discussed today will be added to the 2011 Legislative Program and forwarded to the Special Law and Finance meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Grattidge distributed a copy of a draft resolution urging the New York State Legislature and Governor Cuomo to support the Farmland Protection Program and Environmental Protection Fund.

Mr. Grattidge said the county Planning Department was asked if they would add some of the Saratoga particulars to the resolution. This supports the program that the Farmland Protection Plan had been rolling along a few years ago, and at one time they had been

putting \$28 million into the program. They had also over a of years accepted a lot of farm projects into the program and had the people with commitment letters that they were going to fund these programs. In the last two years the Governor swept a lot of this money out of their funds. This will most likely affect projects in Saratoga County that have been under commitment and have not received funding, he said

Ms. Raymond suggested changing the second Resolved section to read as follows: RESOLVED, that the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors does hereby urge state lawmakers and Governor Cuomo to support New York State farmers, the state's agricultural economy and the protection of valuable farmland by supporting \$22 million in funding for the Farmland Protection Program and restoring funding to the Environmental Protection Fund dedicated to the purpose of preserving land through conservation easements.

**A motion was made by Mrs. Wormuth, seconded by Mrs. Raymond support a resolution in support of the Farmland Protection Program and the Environmental Protection Fund. Unanimous.**

Mr. Grattidge said there was discussion on working on a resolution for encouraging the county, whenever possible, to be buying through local producers. The Governor has recently come out with some guideline changes that would allow a little more latitude when you are looking to buy local. Albany County has passed a resolution on trying to prioritize some of their purchases to be done locally. If the committee is interested, Mr. Grattidge said he would be agreeable to doing some research and come back to the committee with information.

Mr. Veitch said he is more than will to accept and consider for the committee any issue that any Supervisor may have.

Mr. Veitch said when he received the chairmanship of the committee he looked briefly at what the charge of the committee was. It looks as though the committee also has charge of the counties operations. As things come up throughout the year he suggested that the committee look at those issues to see what they can do to help the county operate better.

**On a motion made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Rowland the meeting was adjourned unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Sansom