

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE MEETING

October 6, 2008 – 3:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Hunter; Supervisors Jenkins, Raymond, Sausville, Southworth; Thompson; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Mark Rider, Co. Attorney; Joe Ritchey, Rick Gardner, Tom Speziale, DPW; Frank Zilka, Toney David, Bob Dewitt, North American Flight Services; Ann Marie French, The Saratogian

Chairman Hunter called the meeting to order.

Ms. Southworth moved to approve the minutes of the September 8th meeting. Mr. Jenkins seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Ritchey discussed possible participation in MEGA (Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance) and to purchase electricity from Integrys Energy Services of New York and to purchase natural gas from Hess Corporation of Woodbridge, New Jersey at the terms and prices offered to MEGA. He said NYSAC initiated a group energy buying program, and they partnered with MEGA. They go out to bid and get the best price, and Tompkins County is heading this. County Law allows other municipalities to join in and use those bids, he said. We saw a possible savings of 7% in electricity and 6% in gas, he stated. He said next month, he will come back and answer questions or bring in representatives.

Ms. Raymond requested Mr. Ritchey to provide to Committee members copies of information from NYSAC about MEGA, what they are and who they are, and what our obligations would be before next month's meeting. Mr. Ritchey said they will get that in written form for the Committee. He said they were told there were no obligations. MEGA has been in existence for 10 years, he added. Ms. Raymond said maybe it would be helpful if someone from NYSAC could come up and talk to us about this. Mr. Gardner said the contracts Tompkins County has are two year contracts. Mr. Ritchey said they will bring in a representative from NYSAC.

Mr. Ritchey stated Buildings & Grounds supplies all vehicle fuel to County departments. We project a \$75,000 shortfall through this year, he said. He requested a **resolution to amend the Buildings and Grounds budget as follows:**

Appropriations:

Increase Acct.: #1-50-521-8611 Vehicle Fuel \$75,000.00

Revenues:

Increase Acct.: #1-50-1219 Gas/Oil \$75,000.00

Mr. Ritchey said this satisfies their account to purchase gas that they supply and distribute and bill to other departments for their use. **Mr. Jenkins moved to approve this resolution. Mr. Sausville seconded. Unanimous.**

Mr. Zilka said they took over the lease for the other side of the Airport in late May. A few months ago, there was an incident that happened where a Learjet approached when it was raining, and the pilot went through trees on approach on Runway 5. The airplane sustained \$300,000 in damage, but there were no injuries to the pilot, he said. He stated that was a catalyst for a number of events involving the County Attorney's office, FAA and Supervisor Thompson. We lost our ability to operate after dark, he said. A good bulk of our business is not only selling fuel, but our charter business, and we are unable to return to our home airport because we have no nighttime approaches, he stated. He said they have had a tree issue out there for some time. I was unaware of this until we had that consequence, he stated. We are limited during the day because of a mismeasurement by the State Aviation Authority. There are three types of approaches in Saratoga County, and we are limited to one, he said. He stated someone mismeasured by 500 feet.

Mr. Zilka said there is an opportunity to open up nighttime approach with higher minimums if we remove some trees. He said a 2001 map identified trees that had to be removed, and he asked if the trees on Runway 5 had been taken down? Mr. Speziale said some trees were removed, but he would have to compare that to the map. He said on September 4th, FAA gave us 16 points as obstructions that would have to be removed to reinstate the circling approach. Nine of those points are currently on Airport property, and seven are off Airport property, he said. In order to reinstate the VOR circling approach, all 16 obstructions have to be removed, he said. Mr. Zilka said they asked FAA to give them the 16 points, and he contacted C.T. Male to map these 16 points to see what we were dealing with, and this was done. He said they received a price of \$25,000 to cut these trees, and he said he is willing to have this done. He stated his Manager went out to talk to the private owners. He mentioned three to four of his key customers have left

the Airport. He said his CFO and corporate attorney sent a letter to Mark Rider asking for a rent reduction, but that is not what he is after; he just wants to be able to operate this Airport. He stated he has the 16 points mapped, and they had a survey done by a licensed engineer. We can have Runway 23 open for circling approach by taking these trees down, and in conjunction with that, let's clear off runway 5. He said he is willing to take all trees down and then maybe working it out to reduce the rent. Mr. Speziale said the County is currently under contract with Edwards & Kelcey, and they are getting us a package to remove all obstructions. If any work is done prior to construction phase of that grant being issued, we cannot do any work and expect to get reimbursed, he said.

Mr. Zilka mentioned the damaged airplane belonged to Brad Paisley, the country singer. Ms. Raymond asked if we have the right to get on the seven private parcels. Mr. Speziale said that the County did not have that right. Mr. Zilka said they personally went to those people to tell them what was going on. Mr. Speziale said if North American removes these 16 points, we need a professional to certify that this has been done according to FAA standards. Mr. Ritchey said we are not going to be in a position to tell FAA that all of these trees are cleared. We would have to rely on somebody, he said. Ms. Raymond said C.T. Male would have to certify that. Mr. Zilka said they received information from State Aviation that \$2.4 was spent at the Airport since 2001, and a lot had to do with tree removal. He said this has been an on going thing with the trees growing.

Mr. Zilka said on Runway 5, the lights were shut off, because unknown to them, somebody did a fly over and told the Airport manager then to shut them off because they were out of compliance. Mr. Speziale stated FAA did the fly over, and they ordered the shut down of these lights April 6, 2006. He said their obstruction removal grant is for 2½% local share. The estimate from our contractor to do the construction phase of tree removal is \$700,000. We would clear cut the properties that we own, he stated. Ms. Sausville asked if we could accelerate this grant process? Mr. Speziale said he already had a conversation with FAA, and they cannot guarantee us if or when we will see the grant for the construction phase.

Ms. Raymond moved to proceed as soon as possible to work with North American Flight Services to have them arrange for tree removal at a cost of \$25,000 plus the cost of certification from C. T. Male. Ms. Southworth seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Ritchey said they will continue their work. If FAA is satisfied, we will take care of clear cutting our own property, he stated. He said the real issue is the verification, as he does not want to put the County in a liability situation.

Ms. Raymond moved to authorize the Chairman of the Committee to work with the Milton Town Supervisor, North American, Public Works Department and the County Attorney to come up with a permanent recommendation as to how to manage this situation long term. Mr. Sausville seconded. Unanimous.

Mr. Zilka said he will come in quarterly and report where they are with the Airport. He mentioned 25% of their business goes to Albany, and 25% goes to Warren County. We have to look at this as a revenue producer for the County, he said.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann