

Human Resources & Insurance Committee Minutes
December 2, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Tom Wood; Committee Members Alan Grattidge, Jack Lawler, Dick Lucia, Bill Peck, Sandra Winney, Mo Wright; Supervisors Phil Barrett, Tara Gaston, Ed Kinowski, Todd Kusnierz, Dan Pemrick and Chairman of the Board Preston Allen; Spencer Hellwig, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, Hugh Burke, County Attorney; Marcy McNamara, Adam Kinowski, Wendy Tennant, Stephanie Monaco, Human Resources; Karen Heggen, District Attorney; Andrew Blumenberg, Public Defender; Penny Heritage, Animal Shelter; Bill Fruci, Roger Schiera, Board of Elections; Scott Brackett, CSEA.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mrs. Winney, the minutes of the November 4, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

The monthly workers compensation report for November 2020 was distributed and Mrs. McNamara gave a brief overview. For the month of November there were 28 new cases with a total payout of \$168,788. The budget is currently at 60% with only one month left. The remaining funds will be transferred into the reserve fund. The county's actuary recommends that the reserve fund be at \$21M, that fund is currently at approximately \$13M.

A motion was made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Wood, to adopt the 2021 Saratoga County Compensation Schedule and providing for the abolition and creation of certain positions. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that these are the additional positions that were approved at the budget workshop and need to be added to the Compensation Schedule.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Lawler, to set 2021 Salaries for Certain Temporary and Part-Time Employees to include an increase for a 2% COLA. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that this was also discussed at the budget workshop and is regarding those employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

A motion was made by Mrs. Winney, seconded by Mr. Wright, to set 2021 Salaries for Management and Confidential Employees to include an increase for a 2% COLA. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that these are also employees that are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement and a cost of living increase was approved at the budget workshop.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Wood, to introducing a local law to amend the 2021 County Compensation Schedule to provide a cost-of-living increase for certain County Officials, and setting a date for a public hearing thereon. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that this is an annual item. This is for elected or appointed officials that are in the middle of a term. The public hearing will be set for January 13th, 2021. After the public hearing, it goes to the Department of State for final approval.

A motion was made by Mr. Lucia, seconded by Mr. Grattidge, to authorizing a 2-year renewal agreement with CorVel Corporation in the amount of \$340,790 to provide Administrative Services for the County's Workers' Compensation Plan. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that CorVel is the administrator for workers comp. They have worked very closely with the Human Resources Department in bringing the workers comp. costs down significantly since 2016. The savings realized help to build up the actuarial reserves for Workers Comp. Mr. Peck said that the renewal is a 5% increase over last year, but is actually lower than when the County first contracted with them. Mr. Peck said that the investment with CorVel has been a very good one on behalf of the County.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Wood, to authorize a \$50 stipend for Early Voting Inspectors to cover additional hours worked beyond the normal eight hour workday. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that this would be a one-time stipend due to the extended time and service that was required during the pre-election voting, due to the volume of voters. Mr. Peck said that the Elections Commissioners have recommended the \$50 amount per session increase. The total amount comes to \$17K and will be grant reimbursed. Mr. Schiera said that this was discussed extensively and the Elections Commissioners are very much in favor of this. They believe it is more than justified and they are very grateful. Mr. Peck said that they were paid \$125 for an eight hour day and the \$50 increase is to cover additional hours of 3.25 hours flat per person per session amount. The daily rate for election day, which is a 15+ hour day is \$190. Ms. Gaston said that the Commissioners did provide an email explaining the process in determining the additional stipend, and she has copies if anyone would like one. Ms. Winney added that she is not in favor of early voting.

A motion was made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mrs. Winney, to authorize the appointment of Chad Cooke to the position of Commissioner of Public Works. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that interviews were held on November 18th. The recommendation from that interview panel for the position is Deputy County Administrator Chad Cooke. Mr. Peck said that whenever there are lateral transfers or promotions within the County, they like to make sure that the person is not losing out on their salary. Mr. Peck said that for this lateral transfer starting January 1, 2020, there will be a \$92 increase over Mr. Cooke's current salary. The position will be Grade 23, Step 7A. Mr. Peck said that Deputy Cooke with his prior experience in the private sector, at the Sewer Commission, he is a P.E. which is one of the requirements of the position, will make an outstanding Public Works Commissioner.

A motion was made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mr. Grattidge, to authorize the temporary appointment of Hugh Burke to the position of County Attorney. Unanimous.

Mr. Peck said that County Attorney Dorsey has put in his notice of retirement for 12/31/2020. Mr. Peck said that they are currently in the interview process and not having an attorney in place by the end of the year, there is concern among the Assistant County Attorneys, who are appointed, that an acting County Attorney needs to be in place so that they can continue to do their duties. Mr. Peck said that the First Assistant County Attorney is Hugh Burke and his interim appointment will begin January 1, 2021. Mr. Peck thanked Mr. Dorsey for his dutiful service to Saratoga County throughout the years and wished him the best for his retirement.

The vacancy review report was distributed and Mrs. McNamara gave an overview on the positions that are vacant at this time.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Wright, to amend the 2021 Compensation Plan under the Animal Shelter. Unanimous.

Mr. Grattidge asked the Committee to take a second look at a position that was cut at the budget workshop. Mr. Grattidge asked the Director of the Animal Shelter, Penny Heritage, to address the committee and give an explanation as to why the position is important to her operation. Mr. Grattidge said that the Shelter has undergone a transformation under her leadership. An extensive work up was done with Cornell University on the needs of the Animal Shelter, and this was a key position that would help them fulfil their role. Mr. Grattidge said that he would like this committee to take another look at the position and possibly bring it forward to the entire Board.

Mr. Peck said that the sub-Committee reviewed the Department requests, this position was supported at last month's HR Committee, and it was taken out at the Budget workshop. Mr. Peck asked Mr. Dorsey if procedurally this would need to be an amendment at the Board Meeting next week. Mr. Dorsey said that it can be done that way, but the resolution adopting the 2021 Comp Plan with all changes approved by the Board last week has already been put together, this item can be offered as a separate standalone resolution to follow the resolution adopting the 2021 Comp Plan, as an amendment to the 2021 Comp Plan to add this new position under Animal Shelter and have a standalone vote at the budget meeting.

Ms. Heritage said that she would like to review a portion of the Cornell Assessment that was done in 2019. Ms. Heritage gave an overview to the reason a full time Shelter Aide was requested and is needed. 40% of the Animal Shelter staff are part time. The Shelter has only 3 full time Shelter Aide positions which are currently filled, this means there are no full time opportunities or path to grow the good part time staff that they have. Ms. Heritage said that at the last meeting they heard a lot about retention, as Cornell pointed out and Ms. Heritage would like to stress, for stability and future growth of the Animal Shelter, they need to retain some of those part time people. Ms. Heritage said that it's not going to happen overnight, the Cornell Assessment was done in 2019 and there are already some great recommendations that have been implemented. Ms. Heritage recognized that we are in the midst of Covid and 2020 but in order to get where they need to be for stability, it's critical. Ms. Heritage said that looking at future leadership, there are not many people in the Senior Management roles at the Shelter. Three of them are over age 60 and two are over age 55. Ms. Heritage said that the Animal Shelter is an essential service which operates every day including weekends and holidays. Ms. Heritage said that they have had ongoing challenges

with staff shortages, this year alone they will have had five medical leaves in 5 months, and just trying to cover vacation, comp, personal time and the turnover of part timers. Several of the part timers work second jobs and are unable to fill the gaps when the need arises. Another item that was experienced this year due to the pandemic, they have lost the assistance from inmates at the Jail offsite work program. There was also no summer youth help or group volunteers this year, therefore the staff is stretched. Ms. Heritage said that adding this one full time Shelter Aide position will help address routine cleaning and animal care, and to help stability and to continue to move the Shelter forward. Mr. Wright asked about the cost of the position. Ms. Heritage said that it's a \$38,319 salary and with fringe brings the cost to \$61,311.

Mr. Kusnierz asked if when the County adopted the alternate work arrangement policy which gave Department heads flexibility, within that policy does this give them the authority to restructure which staff will be coming in to the office based on potential exposure? Mr. Peck said that the alternate work policy had to do with flex scheduling times, not with entirely who could come in and who couldn't. There was flexibility where people could work some shorter days if they worked some longer days, within the confines of IT and cleaning staff, but it was not a work at home policy. Mr. Kusnierz said that he would like to bring it to the Committee's attention that as a result of some exposures and positives, and he believes more may be seen, in some of the local courts, the Committee may want to give consideration to allowing key department heads, i.e. those that work in the Courts such as Public Defenders office, District Attorney's office, some authority to structure their work days with their employees so that they can have maximum coverage for the responsibility of those offices, but with minimal exposure. Mr. Kusnierz said that he would like the Committee to think about that within the next couple of weeks as he knows this will be an issue with the ramp up in exposures for our local courts. Mr. Wright said that he believes it may not only be the Courts, it could become County wide issue sooner rather than later. Mr. Kusnierz agreed, however said that he knows it's an immediate issue right now. Mr. Peck said that the Covid uptick is an ongoing issue, county, statewide and nationally. Mr. Peck said that as Mr. Kusnierz was saying, we better start thinking about a way to be nimble in each Department moving forward, to achieve our goals not only internally but those to serve the entire County, and think about ways to solve that. Mr. Peck said that over the next week, between now and Law & Finance meeting, we should be monitoring this on a daily basis and between Administration, HR and the Supervisors, think about what direction needs to be taken moving forward.

Mr. Wood thanked the members of the HR Committee and the HR Staff for all of their hard work and dedication to the Committee and the County during this past most difficult year. The issues dealt with were numerous and the work was certainly challenging, but every one met the task head on, attended every meeting, many of which were lengthy, and performed duties with excellence. Regular meetings were held each month, a number of special meetings also held. They participated in hiring interviews and formed several sub-committees that tackled extremely difficult assignments. Mr. Wood especially thanked Mr. Peck for devoting a great deal of time and providing leadership to keep the committee going. Mr. Wood also thanked Marcy and the entire HR Staff, the Office of the Clerk of the Board, the County Administrators and County Attorney's offices. Mr. Peck thanked Mr. Wood for his continued devoted service.

On a motion made by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mrs. Winney, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board