

LEGISLATIVE & RESEARCH 2/24/2021

SPEAKERS

Jean Raymond, Steve Bulger, Mo Wright, Phil Barrett, Mike Smith, Pamela Wright, Several Supervisors, Dick Lucia

Jean Raymond

I will call this meeting of the Legislative and Research committee to order. I'm Jean Raymond. I'm the chairman of the committee and I welcome you all. I believe Audra or Pam, who's taking attendance and minutes?

Pamela Wright

We have attendance.

Jean Raymond

Okay. The attendance is taken, we have a quorum. First item of business is the approval of the minutes of the last meeting, which was held on March 9, 2020. Can I have a motion to adopt those minutes?

Mike Smith

I'll make that motion.

Jean Raymond

By Supervisor Smith, second by Supervisor Wright. Any discussion? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Jean Raymond

Any opposed? The minutes are adopted. My job is to appoint a vice chairman. Now we can do it one of two ways we can do somebody who didn't get to the meeting today or we can do somebody who's here. But I think without having asked in advance, I would like to appoint Mike Smith as Vice Chairman. Thank you.

Jean Raymond

Is that okay with you, Supervisor Smith.

Mike Smith

(Illegible)

Jean Raymond

Okay, well, the number (illegible). Thank you. Our main item of business today is the Saratoga County legislative agenda for this year. The staff, with a lot of input from me in the form of written stuff to give

them some background on what we have done in the past, I hope it was helpful, have put together a very comprehensive legislative agenda. That program was sent out, I believe, to all of the chairmen of all of the committees, maybe five days ago for any input they had through their own committees. And then it was sent out two or three days ago, I believe, I'm not sure to the entire membership of the Board of Supervisors. So everybody's had more than adequate time to review it. There are a total of, the number's right here, 11 items which are local to the State, and then there's two Federal items as well. So I think at this point, rather than going through and reading everything, since you've already all read it, if anyone has any comments to make on any of the items. Please feel free, Supervisor Barrett, if you have anything to add, I think your item was added. Was it not? Yeah, that was really probably an oversight. It's much on my part, because that's been, the safe waters. That's been something that's been a pretty high priority for a couple of years. And does everybody, do you want to just briefly tell the rest of the people here what exactly that program involves?

Phil Barrett

A few years ago, the Clifton Park Town Board passed a resolution putting forth a new idea on funding infrastructure. A lot of the funding annually from New York State is on a competitive basis for infrastructure, which is fine, but it seemed that it might be a good idea to take some of that money and allocate it in a formula similar to CHIPS. So everybody gets CHIPS money every year for that specific purpose. This would be additional money by a formula that would be set aside each year. No competition for it, you would just automatically get it and it would be for sewer storm water and water infrastructure. Senator Tedisco, liked the idea, ran with it. After a couple of tries it did get through the Senate. Phil Steck carried it in the Assembly. It did not pass in the Assembly. So it has had some traction. Now, I know Senator Tedisco, I talked to him last week. He's working with the majority in the Senate to try to push it forward again this year. And he's had some very positive discussions about it. So with all that being said, he's making another push, and the acronym is SWAP. So I can keep everybody updated as to the progress that he might make. He is going to come to a Public Works meeting probably next month to discuss it further.

Jean Raymond

And I would add that it's a particularly important concept for the very small towns, because there's a lot of small towns that have maybe only small pieces of infrastructure, small sewage systems, maybe in the little village or whatever, that will never be competitive in the way it's done nowadays. And this might give them the edge that they need. And I know in particular, right over our border, in Fulton County, they have, and I think Jason Kemper is familiar, there's a sewage system in Sacandaga Park that was put in over I think, 100 years ago, some of it I think is wooden pipes. And there are what 200 people and on the whole system, I mean it's impossible for them to be able to fund that kind of program easily, and it's a great idea. It makes perfect sense and gives you some continuity from year to year, you know, you're going to get it unless, of course, it's like CHIPS and they take some of it away from you. Maybe we should ask the Senator make sure he puts something in the bill that it can't be taken.

Phil Barrett

Well, and the other part of it is, I mean, you use the chips money to pave roads right? But if there's bad pipes underneath, obviously, that could ruin your day as far as your newly paved road. Right?. So

Jean Raymond

and it happens way too often.

Phil Barrett

Yeah. So this is kind of a way to get some money every year to every municipality, every county. So you know, you're going to get it, you can plan ahead and start prioritizing projects.

Jean Raymond

I think it's great. I'm glad we included it. And I'm glad you picked up on that.

Phil Barrett

Thank you.

Jean Raymond

Does anybody have any other questions or things they want to bring up with regard to the proposed program? If not, I would entertain a motion to adopt it and send it on to Law & Finance, and the full Board. Aye by Supervisor Smith

Dick Lucia

I would second that motion,

Jean Raymond

Seconded by Dick Lucia. Any discussion? All those in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye

Jean Raymond

Any opposed? It is adopted. And that is not to say that this is locked in. If something happens in Albany in the next few months, that pops up that we didn't anticipate we are always free to come back and add to this, anything that might be appropriate. The other item that I would like to bring up under other business is what your preference would be as a committee as far as meeting with the Legislators. In past years, we have gotten into our vans and been driven down to the Legislative Office Building and dropped off out front and gone in and met with them en mass. Then a couple years ago, we had them come to us. And we met in this room. Some of them came, some of them sent a representative. I think this year, my recommendation would be and it's entirely up to this committee, I guess, to make a recommendation to the full Board. But my recommendation would be that rather than try to get, we can't go to Albany, there's no way we can all go to Albany. I'm not even sure the buildings are open to get into once we got there. But rather than asking them to come here, our next meeting will be right at budget time. Right? Coming up to the end of March I think on the crunch. My suggestion would be that maybe we try and do something very similar to what was done at Tuesday's Board meeting with Congresswoman Stefanik, where we maybe invite let's say like the April meeting, invite our two Senators to come in on the speakerphone. Or maybe we'll have a more sophisticated system by them. And talk to us about what's going on in Albany and give us an opportunity to ask them questions back.

And then in May, do the same with our Assembly members, it would be four of them and do the same thing. And then if we continue to see things happening in Albany that we don't like, we can invite them back again. And I think we're much more likely to get a good conversation with the actual living body that way.

Dick Lucia

I like that idea. I thought that worked well with Mrs. Stefanik yesterday.

Jean Raymond

Pardon me. Dick could you repeat yourself? I'm sorry.

Dick Lucia

I'm sorry. I said I think that worked well yesterday.

Jean Raymond

Yes, I agree with you.

Mo Wright

I see you have two Federal agenda items are you

Jean Raymond

that was all

Mo Wright

If you are going to try to get some of our federal, I may have a third.

Jean Raymond

It's fine.

Mo Wright

I know. The FCC has targeted 2022 for new broadband maps. They actually have a target date. They're going to release I believe it's over \$300 million, but they will not release it until they get the new FCC maps. I know the target date is 2022. So I think we should try to work something up so that we don't miss the boat on this. When that money is divvied out we need to have some kind of plan or something. So we get our share of that.

Jean Raymond

I would suggest that and you may know better than I, I believe that AATV is putting something together?

Mo Wright

AATV is. We're also working with NYSAC Ryan Gregoire. Actually, I just got an email from him yesterday. That's how I know about the FCC has targeted 2022 for the new maps. So I can work with NYSAC, and we can come up with something but I think we need to stay on top of this.

Jean Raymond

Totally agree with you.

Mo Wright

I don't know exactly where the new administration in Washington is going to take this. Hopefully, they're going to hold some people's feet to the fire so they don't just start taking low hanging fruit and just waste that money the FCC is going to free up next year. It would be nice if somebody puts some kind of meat into the legislation that forces them to actually do what they're supposed to be doing and not just spend the money (inaudible)

Jean Raymond

One of the things that they're talking about, and I don't know where it stands, and I will probably know better in a couple weeks. I serve on the NACo transportation committee and one of the things that they've been talking about is trying to get broadband itself to be considered infrastructure for the purposes of funding, in which case that would mean that there will be a transportation bill of some sort, infrastructure bill. And ideally, they'll bury hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars in that over a five year period for the broadband and cell. But I totally agree with you. Maybe what we could do is take a look in the next month at what's happening with the NYSAC and with AATV as far as whether we want to piggyback on a resolution or use what they've done to create our own and then add another item to the Legislative agenda.

Mo Wright

I'm not sure who from NYSAC is going to be on our call tomorrow with Intercounty.

Jean Raymond

Probably Mark.

Mo Wright

Last month we had the counsel. So if Ryan, if I get a chance to talk to Ryan tomorrow, I will I know he's working with NACo on some stuff also. That's why I'd like to see something put on our Federal, because the State, I think what we need to focus on is trying to get some of this infrastructure money coming directly to the municipalities and skip the State.

Jean Raymond

Oh, no question about that.

Mo Wright

I'm not really sure how we go about doing that. But I think that's why right now we've got basically a year before the FCC comes up with these new maps and releases this money. I think we need to be prepared when they do that so that we have all our stuff in line so we can be towards the front of the, I mean we've been in Washington trying to get this, we've been in Albany trying to get this, and they're actually trying to, they're going to free it up here pretty soon so we need to be right here with our hands out and try to, I mean I think every town in this county has problems with broadband in certain spots. So

there's no reason we can't hold some people's feet to the fire with some of this FCC money and spend what we get in Saratoga County.

Jean Raymond

If the COVID bill which is going to come out of Washington in the next three or four weeks, continues as it's going, it's got a very big piece of the money going not to the State but to the Counties and municipalities and supposedly and you may know this Steve better than I, supposedly Schumer is behind some of this.

Mo Wright

Elise mentioned that yesterday. Direct aid, like she said, who knows what the final bill is going to look like but I think there's bipartisan support to keep the municipal, state and local money piece of that.

Jean Raymond

And now let's set a tone too, which will give us some edge. Are you okay to wait until next month?

Mo Wright

Yea, I just want to make sure if we're going to talk to our legislators and there's no reason we can't get Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer on a zoom call along with Elise and Tonko and some other guys and we need to make sure that we're holding their feet to the fire that they're standing up for us down there in Washington, because there's going to be a lot of people showing up with their hands out when this money is freed up, and we need to be one of the first ones in line.

Mo Wright

I couldn't agree with you more and it may come to a point depending on where things go. We may want to I shouldn't say this at this point, but if things loosen up a little, and it looks like it's going that way, we may want to look into taking on the services of a lobbyist on the behalf of the Saratoga County towns and the County itself, sometimes a little bit of a squeaky wheel down there gets a lot of oil.

Mo Wright

I'll work with Ryan anyways, and we'll come up with something, and work with Steve to try to come up with something that we can at least have on our agenda on the federal level. And I'll try to keep the committee up to date, what I find out through NYSAC, as far as, if we do get a, I know that they just have a target date of 2022 for the maps, that's been a huge, every time we go down there, they keep saying they can't use these maps, they're outdated. They finally have agreed with us that we need new maps, they're in the process of drawing up new maps, the new maps are supposed to be released in 2022, and then they'll release those funds. So it doesn't give us a lot of time.

Jean Raymond

I think it might be worthwhile to have NYSAC, in particular, and NACo take a look at what the criteria is that they're using on the maps, because that's been the problem up until now the criteria was, if you've got one house in a census tract,

Mo Wright

Supposedly they are not using census tracts for the new maps.

Jean Raymond

Well, make sure they haven't found a different way to do the same thing that they've done before. Make sure that they do it right. So we don't hit them at the last minute with, these maps are no good because you did it the wrong way.

Mo Wright

I know Ryan is going to have a zoom call. I don't know if he'll be on tomorrow. But I think we will wind up having a zoom call with NACo, NYSAC and some other, I believe we're going to get Bill Farber involved.

Jean Raymond

I think Bill is involved. He's on a couple of things that went through today.

Mo Wright

And try to come up with some kind of a game plan. But I just think we're going to need some supporting resolutions here through the through our County board. And we need to be prepared for this when it comes down the road.

Jean Raymond

I think that's very well spoken and very important. Steve, did you have something to add to that?

Steve Bulger

Yes, Madam Chair and Supervisor, couldn't agree more. I've been hearing from a number of people, both in Albany and particularly in DC that the infrastructure bill is coming, it's going to be big. And exactly to your point, those counties, those towns that are ready to go with projects, they're going to have a big leg up. And I know In fact, I was talking with Supervisor Barrett of Public Works. And others, it's something we're definitely going to, we got to prepare, start preparing for now. Because once it hits, it's going to go. You know, the early bird gets the worm on this one. And this is a great project with the broadband. So I think that should be one of our, and we'll let the Board decide, but that should be one of the priority infrastructure projects, at least in my opinion, that we put forward.

Mo Wright

I think we're in a perfect opportunity to do this, perfect time too with COVID. I mean, everybody's trying to do the telemedicine, they're doing school from home. It's at the forefront of everybody's mind that we need to do something to have better broadband, particularly in the in the rural areas. So I think this is a good opportunity and like I said, we just need to be prepared, so we're one of the first ones with our hands out when the FCC cuts this money loose.

Jean Raymond

I'm not sure where the intersection of our committee would be with the Technology and Resiliency committee, I think those two kind of could go hand in hand. So it might be two committees working together, or representatives from two committees. Totally right, we have to be proactive.

Mo Wright

(inaudible) before we do talk to the federal people that that it is one of our legislative

Jean Raymond

I'm perfectly fine to add it. We can add it. If you have something as far as I'm concerned.

Mo Wright

I mean, I can email Ryan and see what he's got going on with NACo and through NYSAC, and we'll come up with some more I can hook Steve up with him and we can come up with some wording for something

Jean Raymond

If you have language, I don't know how everybody else feels, but if you have language in time for the March meeting of the Board of Supervisors, we can add it, we're meeting early for March. So we could add it.

Mo Wright

I would assume that Ryan is going to do the Inter County meeting tomorrow so I can talk to him during that. If not, I will send an email out to him and Steve Acquario and make sure that we get something on our legislative agenda.

Jean Raymond

That'd be great. And we can add, we can send it directly from you to Law and Finance for the March meeting, to send it out to the committee ahead of time to make sure they're okay with it, but I don't see a problem.

Mo Wright

Right. I just don't want to miss the boat on it.

Jean Raymond

And I'm sure there's going to be other things that are going to come up. I keep hearing a little whisperings of things that might be happening. And we haven't even begun to address what's going to happen with redistricting once the census numbers are out. That's going to be a whole other issue that we may want to take up too. We still don't know how the Adirondacks in particular and our three towns up north are going to come out with a count.

Mo Wright

They're not releasing it till the end of this year right?

Jean Raymond

The numbers are supposed to be in the hands of the State by June 1, I believe, or earlier, or maybe by June 1 the State is supposed to be starting their process. And that's a whole other thing.

Steve Bulger

And it's likely going to be delayed.

Jean Raymond

Yeah. And it's all mixed up because there was a commission a couple of years ago that made recommendations that were passed into law that now they're trying to un-pass and get them back out of law. So this is going to be a difficult session in Albany this year or two.

Jean Raymond

Very good. Anything else? Any other business? I'll entertain a motion to adjourn?

Mo Wright

So moved.

Jean Raymond

By Mo, second? Mike? Meeting is adjourned. Thank you all very much.