

Government Review & Efficiency Committee Minutes
March 4, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Matt Veitch; Committee Members Eric Connolly, Tara Gaston, Joe Grasso, Jean Raymond, Jon Schopf, Kevin Tollisen; Supervisor Bill Peck; Steve Bulger, Matt Rose, Audra Hedden, County Administrator; Michael Hartnett, Michelle Granger, County Attorney; Andrew Jarosh, Treasurer.

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

On a motion made by Mrs. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Grasso, the minutes of the February 4, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously.

Local Laws

Mr. Veitch said that at the last meeting, they discussed going through and determining what local laws were active and what were not active. The keeper of the local laws for Saratoga County is the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Veitch said that he has been given access to the documents and they start with Local Law #1 of 1950. Mrs. Raymond said that the older local laws may be codified. Mr. Veitch said that he is currently putting the local laws on a spreadsheet to track and try to eventually determine which ones should be kept and which should be repealed. Mr. Veitch hopes to bring the project to the next meeting. Mr. Veitch said that newer local laws are filed at the State and can be accessed through their website. Discussions have taken place as to where the physical records could be kept, possibly as part of the County Clerk's records. Mr. Hartnett said that he can look into any specific retention mechanism for the County on this.

Ethics Policy

Mr. Veitch said that he discussed the ethics policy with Mr. Hartnett recently. Mr. Hartnett said that most of the guidance comes from General Municipal Law article 18, specifically 806 and 808. 806 is the statute that enables or directs the governing body of each County, by local law, ordinance, or resolution adopt a code of ethics, setting forth the guidance of its officers and employees on the standards of conduct reasonably expected of them. 808 talks about a Board of Ethics, that's a permissive statute that the County does. Mr. Hartnett said that State has a different set of rules that is under Public Officers Law. The County Code was adopted in 1998 and as far as he can tell has not been specifically updated since. Mr. Hartnett said that the statute has an attachment, that is the code of ethics attestation, and a financial disclosure. Another attachment lists all of the individuals that are responsible to submit this and as far as he can tell, this list has not been officially updated. Mr. Hartnett said that he believes the list may have been informally updated in 2010. Mr. Hartnett suggested that the list be updated, working with HR to confirm that the titles and positions are updated. Mr. Veitch said that he was confused by the fact that there is a Board of Ethics and an Ethics Advisory Council. Mr. Hartnett said that he is not aware of any guidelines or bylaws that they are operating under and this is an area to look at and explore for this committee. Mr. Veitch appointed a subcommittee of himself as Chair, Supervisors Grasso and Gaston to explore this issue. Ms. Gaston requested copies of the ethics information be sent to the committee members. Mr. Hartnett said that a staff member from the County Attorney's office can assist the subcommittee with their work.

Records Retention

Mr. Veitch said that he would also like to appoint a subcommittee to take a look at the overall records management program. Explore what there is in terms of rules and regulations and also physical storage space. Mr. Hartnett said that the County retention policy is directed by the New York State Department of Education and the New York State Archives. This was recently updated and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in December 2020. Mr. Hartnett offered staff assistance from the County Attorney's office to the subcommittee for this project. Mrs. Raymond suggested that a tour of the Warren County records facility could be helpful. Mr. Bulger said that he spoke with County Administrator Ryan Moore from Warren County and he is looking forward to hosting them at his facility. Ms. Hedden said that the County Historian may have information on getting grants for record retention and may be an asset to the subcommittee also. Mr. Veitch appointed a subcommittee of Supervisor Raymond as Chair, Supervisor Connolly and Treasurer Jarosh to review records retention.

County Budget

Mr. Veitch said that this is a policy they need start very soon. The budget process actually begins in 3 months. Mr. Schopf said that he participated in a Department head meeting recently and made departments aware that they would be looking to do an accelerated budget process this year.

Mr. Veitch appointed a subcommittee of Supervisor Schopf as Chair, Supervisor Tollisen and Supervisor Veitch to review the county budget process/policy. Mr. Veitch said that staff from the County Administrators office should also be involved.

Board of Supervisors Department Policy.

Mr. Veitch said that he is pulling this item from the agenda for discussion at a later date.

County Suggestion Box

Mr. Veitch said that at the last meeting it was discussed having a county suggestion box for employee ideas in terms of departmental efficiency. Mr. Veitch said that IT has been working on developing a webpage that can be accessed by Departments to submit the suggestions. Mr. Veitch said that this was also brought up at the Department Head meeting. A few questions came up about this at that meeting because the idea is to work with policy and in governance and operations, rather than potential personal and HR issues. Mr. Veitch said that Mr. Hartnett is going to look into whether this information will be subject to FOIL. Ms. Hedden said that the comments will be automatically sent to an email address specifically for this purpose. Currently, only Ms. Hedden and IT have access to this email address and submissions will be anonymous. Ms. Hedden said that a legal disclaimer box will need to be checked prior to submitting items. Language on this disclaimer is being finalized. Mr. Schopf expressed concern over the fact that this is an anonymous submission that it not turn into a soundboard for personal grievances against other employees. Mr. Bulger suggested that a clear policy of how these emails should be handled once received be developed. Mr. Grasso suggested that it be introduced to the staff explaining why it is being done and how the suggestions are intended to be used. Mr. Veitch suggested perhaps rolling the program out with a memo from either him or the Chairman.

Review of County Code

Mr. Veitch said that County Code was discussed briefly earlier, and how the Ecode has not been kept updated. Mr. Hartnett said that refreshing the online version of the code would be something he would fully support. Mr. Veitch said that he would like the County Attorney's office to begin looking into this. Mr. Schopf said that he can provide the contact information of a person at Ecode he has been working with recently. The annual maintenance on a project is he doing is very reasonable and if we can get a quote, it will give an idea of what the base cost will be to discuss at next month's meeting.

On a motion made by Mrs. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Grasso, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board