FINANCE AND RULES COMMITTEE MEETING
December 17, 2019

Present: Legislators Bryan Moser, Tom Osborne and Ron Burns

Others: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Jerry King, Randy LaChausse, Greg Kulzer and Andrea Morroughan, County Manager Ryan Piche, Treasurer Patty O’Brien, County Attorney Joan McNichol, HR Director Caitlyn Smith, Real Property Tax Director Candy Akin, IT Director Adam Zehr; and Reporters Nick Altmire, and Julie Abbass

Committee Chairman Bryan Moser called the meeting at 3:55 p.m.

Legislator Burns made a motion to approve the 11/19/19 committee meeting minutes, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

Ryan Piche requested feedback about the proposed 1/7/2020 Legislator Orientation day-long session (attached), adding that Birnie Bus would provide a bus and driver for the day. Legislator Osborne spoke favorably about touring county offices, particularly those he had not yet visited. Chairman Dolhof favored the all encompassing one-day session. Legislator Moser opined it a good idea. There appeared to be general agreement. Ryan Piche will plan the day as proposed for all Legislators.

Ryan posed to devise a mission statement, vision and goals for the next two years. He asked review of his listed priority options, while encouraging discretionary inclusions, with plans to discuss at the January 7th session.

Legislator Moroughan would like all Legislators to participate in the annual budget preparation. She does not favor the process used for the 2020 budget, wanting to be more involved with department by department preparation and discussion. She would like to revert back to Dept. Heads presenting to committees. Ryan Piche is unaware of any other county that conducts detailed budget workshops.

Legislator Moser inquired the wisdom of having committees if all Legislators are to be involved in everything.

Legislator King suggested informational/educational sessions with Legislators who want more in-depth understanding of the budget, not necessarily just during budget deliberation.

Ryan Piche does not believe Legislators should be involved in every budget session with Dept. Heads and the Treasurer. It’s not the role of a Legislator, he said, knowing that is not the process of other county governments.

Legislator Kulzer didn’t necessarily want to mirror other counties, distinguishing Lewis County’s good financial status, while void of problems experienced by other counties without
Legislators’ influence in the budget. Ryan Piche said he worked hard to emulate Jefferson and St. Lawrence County

Ryan requested each Legislator to select 3 or 4 from his outlined priorities on the distributed sheet, in an effort to establish collective priorities, goals, vision and mission, to simulate business-like conduct. He had included Legislators-Elect Phil Hathway and Ian Gilbert and asks they be prepared to discuss on January 7th, 2020.

The mission statement, vision and top priorities will be compiled and posted throughout the Court House as the Board’s foundation for all discussion.

Ryan Piche proposes a Board Retreat, a strategic session with a facilitator to develop a 5-10 year plan outlining goals for their upcoming term.

Legislator Osborne favors an off-site retreat and informal setting with a moderator to keep discussion on track, recognizing the importance of a 5-10 year plan.

Ryan Piche envisions a closed preliminary discussion, thereafter reporting to the media the determined broad overarching goals for the 2-year term. County staff would then carry out their stated goals.

Ryan reiterated his quest to determine Legislators’ level of interest for a day-long session with a facilitator to establish priorities and goals, and direction toward accomplishments.

Legislator King and Burns each expressed favor for a planning session.

Chairman Dolhof also supports a one-day brainstorming session.

Legislator LaChausse misses interaction with Dept. Heads to hear their vision for discussion each month, which he feels has been lost with the new committee system. He doesn’t want to take them away from their jobs, necessarily, but feels disconnected from Dept. Heads.

Chairman Dolhof exclaimed that Legislators are here with Dept. Heads each month, asking for clarification for what was desired.

Legislator LaChausse really feels a disconnect from Dept. Heads, while noting the presence of Adam Zehr and Candy Akin at this committee meeting, but having no input for the past year. Legislator Moroughan concurred feeling the same.

Ryan distinguished, as an example, that Emergency Management allocations are 10% of the overall budget, deeming it unwise for the Dept. Head to come in each month and report on daily operations. It may be sufficient for smaller departments to report quarterly.

Legislator Kulzer expressed support to revert to the prior nine (9) committees, when each Legislator chairing one. If someone wants to serve as a Legislator, they are agreeing to commit
the required time, he stated. He posed the idea of evening committee meetings, favoring the smaller groups with Dept. Heads reporting and terming their interaction as more important.

Legislator King likes the current committee system, appreciating the ability to sit in on all committees, while favoring more Dept. Head interaction.

Ryan Piche asserted that Legislators should focus on the overall larger County structure and governance. While appreciating the frustration of some Legislators, he urges they not get stuck on the smaller issues. Jefferson County had 200 resolutions for 2018, and he is hopeful to reduce the County’s count closer to that number by eliminating smaller issues.

Ryan recommends that Dept. Heads of the larger departments participate in the one-day facilitated session.

He informed of plans to establish an on-line Board portal similar to the Hospital’s that would alert Legislators by email to check the portal. There would be a folder for each categorical issue, committee or department. Legislators Dolhof, Osborne and Burns and others expressed support.

Ryan noted the various presentations that have been made by Dept. Heads throughout the past year at committees, specifically recalling the property tax installment initiative that has been accomplished; and the fuel tank project that remains in progress. He asked Legislator input whether those have been beneficial. Chairman Dolhof expressed appreciation for the specific presentations that provided program information that otherwise would not be known through the old committee structure.

Legislator King expressed favor for the new committee structure, while noting that some of the newer Legislators may want more information from Dept. Heads. He feels it important for them to tour buildings and departments and have the face-to-face with Dept. Heads and others.

Caitlyn Smith offered to provide a “new hire checklist” for all Legislators at desired intervals.

In response to Ryan Piche, Legislator Moser appreciated the timely union negotiation updates he has been receiving from Ryan and Caitlyn Smith.

Legislator King would like to be informed as things are happening to enable preparation for discussion at formal meetings and enable informed decisions. He suggested that Ryan Piche immediately forward to Legislators electronic alerts from Dept. Heads about specific occurrences.

Legislator Moser recommends appointment of a 3-Legislator Ad Hoc Committee to review the process and develop a specific system for Dept. Head increases, based on merit or other chosen basis for submission to all Legislators for approval. The CITEC “point system” could serve as a reference. In his opinion, the latest salary increases served an injustice to both, the outgoing and
new Dept. Heads. It certainly illustrates the need for a policy so that all managerial personnel are treated consistently and fairly.

Legislator Kulzer opined that a new Dept. Head salary being above the outgoing employee’s salary was justified due to oversight of a $1.7 million budget and responsibility to supervise 12 employees. Someone responsible for a smaller budget or fewer supervisory responsibilities may not be justified. He asserted nothing wrong with approving a higher percentage increase for justifiable responsibilities and qualifications.

Chairman Dolhof inquired the procedure used by other counties to arrive at Dept. Head salaries.

Legislator King supports development of a policy so that everyone is treated alike.

Legislator Osborne favors forming an Ad Hoc Committee to devise a proposed system, considering that some Dept. Heads have greater financial responsibilities and qualifications than others.

Chairman Dolhof agreed to establish and appoint an Ad Hoc Committee.

The following docket items were then reviewed and approved:

1. Resolution to Adopt Local Law No. 1-2020 “A LOCAL LAW PROVIDING FOR INCREASES TO SALARIES FOR CERTAIN LOCAL OFFICIALS”.
   YEA________________3_________________     NAY _____________0_____________

   YEA________________3_________________     NAY _____________0_____________

3. Resolution authorizing discharge of mortgage to Michael S. Bartlett, (Judy K. Bartlett and Cathleen M. Bartlett). Pursuant to a program administered by Snow Belt Housing Company, Inc.; said $5,000.00 loan has been paid in full and a Discharge of Mortgage is now warranted.
   YEA________________3_________________     NAY _____________0_____________

   YEA________________3_________________     NAY _____________0_____________
5. Resolution directing reimbursement of $50.00 from LCGH for a penalty incurred by the Lewis County Self-Insurance Plan for the late filing of a report to the NYS Workers’ Compensation Board for a LCGH claim.

YEA_______________3___________________     NAY ____________0______________

MOTIONS:
Legislator Burns made a motion for approval of Lewis County Self-Insurance Excess Liability Insurance policy with Midwest Employers Casualty Co. for calendar year 2020 for a premium of $78,303, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

Patty O’Brien distributed a list of account balances.

At 5:02 p.m. Legislator Osborne made a motion to enter executive session for an update on union negotiations and to discuss a specific personnel matter. The motion was seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.

At 5:23 p.m. Legislator Burns made a motion to re-enter the regular meeting, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

Legislator Burns made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Clark, Clerk of the Board