

FINANCE AND RULES COMMITTEE
February 16, 2021

Present: Legislators Tom Osborne, Greg Kulzer, Ian Gilbert, and Phil Hathway. Legislator Burns was absent.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Jerry King, Lisa Virkler, and Andrea Moroughan; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chairman Tom Osborne called the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

Legislator Osborne made a motion to approve the 1/19/2021 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried.

Budget Transfer Policy – Treasurer Eric Virkler

Eric Virkler explained that there are different account types that are being addressed. They are .1's are personnel expenses; .2's are equipment expenses; .4's are contractual expenses; and .8's are benefits. He also noted that the budget gets approved on an annual basis and that departments should be monitoring their budgets closely, but it isn't uncommon for the estimates used to build the budget could be off here and there. This current policy was adopted in 2017 which is limited to \$5,000 and doesn't allow any transfers between the other types of account lines. The current threshold of \$5,000 is about 0.01% of our total county budget.

The point behind this policy is to give more flexibility and to decrease small modifications to the budget through resolutions. Another aspect of this policy is the recognition of grant funding, donations or other small amounts of funding which in the past has required resolutions but according to NYS auditors doesn't need to be done that way and maybe should have a threshold so smaller amounts don't need to be handled the same way as larger amounts. There are many examples of other counties policies for reference. Ryan pointed out the resolution to transfer \$5,900 for a sander in the highway department. The way things are handled now makes it hard to purchase new equipment because of the time frame of approval at meetings, which means he will have to repair the old one in the meantime.

Eric gave the example of the resolution in General Services Committee that is transferring the funds in the capital budget to the Sheriff's Department to purchase the specified office equipment. This is a very procedural thing because the Board already approved this funding in the 2021 Capital budget so now it is another step just moving the money that was already earmarked for this specific project. The new policy will allow that money to be moved without a separate resolution. Eric highlights the policy as giving departments more flexibility to move money up to \$5,000 between account lines for contractual items; giving the Budget Officer approval to move funds up to \$10,000 between account lines; and allowing money to be moved between .4's and .2's. Eric further explained transfers from capital accounts to specific account lines to be expended.

Legislator Hathway questioned what the new procedure for the Sheriff's capital funding would be, Eric explained that once the capital budget is approved then the Sheriff's office could move forward with the capital project/purchase and make the internal request to move the money from the capital account to a specific account line. No one can spend money without the Budget Officers approval.

Ryan explained that with a good capital budget it makes it easy because you have already approved the budget and know exactly what the money is going to be used for, so this is a just a policy for moving the funds to the correct location.

Contract Threshold discussion – County Manager Ryan Piche

Ryan pointed out that only the Board of Legislators, by act of resolution, can obligate the county to any amount of contract. Even the smallest contracts need to be done by resolution with Board approval. This came to a head during the pandemic because there were certain times when things need to be moved forward in an expedited fashion and required the Chairman to sign contracts without resolutions. The Board should be focused on the big picture and not be bogged down with these small items. The idea would be to give the Chairman of the Board authority to sign contracts up to \$5,000 without requiring a resolution, maybe even up to \$10,000.

Legislator Kulzer voiced his opinion to start at \$5,000 threshold before jumping up to \$10,000 to try it out. Legislator Gilbert asked that there be a report periodically that shows what contracts have been signed without a resolution. Joan stated that it could be something that Ryan reports on or that each Department reports on. Ryan thought it could also be put on the List of Claims. Legislator Osborne felt that starting at \$5,000 would be best and see how it goes. Ryan felt that this would allow the Board more time to deal with big ideas for the community. He concluded by stating that he would have something put together for next months meeting with a policy or an outline.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Resolution authorizing amendment to the fiber optic network service agreement between Development Authority of the North Country and Lewis County which will increase the monthly cost for services from \$930.00 to \$1,250.00.
AYE 4 NAY 0
2. Resolution to join with the New York State Association of Counties to formally oppose the enactment of the DOT right-of-way fees on fiber optic cable and supporting passage of New York Senate Bill 8858/Assembly Bill 10932 (2020) to repeal Section 24-e of the Highway Law and Section 7 of the Transportation Corporation Law in relation to reducing the cost of expanding broadband access.
AYE 4 NAY 0
3. Resolution to join with the New York State Association of Counties to call upon Governor Cuomo and our Federal and State legislative delegations to work with the Federal Communications Commission, local leaders and officials to re-evaluate FCC broadband availability maps to reflect the true need and to include service gaps in broadband service across upstate, rural New York.

AYE 4 NAY 0

4. Resolution adopting Budget Transfer Policy for the County of Lewis. *Legislator King was wondering about some type of report that shows what transfers have been done. Ryan suggested that there should be more focus on a quarterly budget update which would help with this.*

AYE 4 NAY 0

5. Resolution to appropriate funds in various Capital Reserve accounts.

AYE 4 NAY 0

6. Resolution authorizing agreement between the County of Lewis and Remedy Analytics, Inc. to provide consultant services pertaining to the County's pharmaceutical provisions under its health plans as set forth in Remedy's proposed Statement of Work.

AYE 4 NAY 0

7. Resolution amending Compensation Plan of the County of Lewis with reference to the District Attorney Office to abolish one (1) FT Keyboard Specialist position, Grade 9 and create one (1) FT Administrative Assistant position, Grade 15. *Legislator Gilbert abstained.*

AYE 3 NAY 0

8. Resolution to appoint Deanna Edick, Lewis County Director of Services as the Youth Bureau Director and Ramona Carpenter, Lewis County Senior Keyboard Specialist as the Youth Bureau Assistant and authorize stipends for same, effective and retroactive to March 1, 2021.

AYE 4 NAY 0

The following motions were made:

1. Legislator Hathway made a motion that was brought forward from the General Services Committee to authorize Sheriff Michael Carpinelli to re-fill one (1) full-time Corrections Officer position due to retirement and any associated backfills, effective immediately, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.
2. Legislator Osborne made a motion that was brought forward from the Health & Human Services Committee to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to re-fill a full-time Senior Account Clerk position due to resignation, effective immediately, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried.

Legislator Dolhof discussed a resolution that was brought to his attention to expand the Adirondack Park Agency's authority to oversee and implement conservation design requirements for residential lots and felt that it should be brought forward to the full board for adoption at the next meeting.

At 4:46 p.m. Legislator Kulzer made a motion to enter executive session for discussion on potential contract negotiations, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried. Legislator Virkler recused herself and left the meeting. At 5:14 p.m. Legislator Hathway made a motion to enter regular session, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

At 5:14 p.m. Legislator Osborne made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Kulzer and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board