

FINANCE AND RULES COMMITTEE
March 16, 2021

Present: Legislators Tom Osborne, Greg Kulzer, Ian Gilbert, Ron Burns and Phil Hathway.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Jerry King, Lisa Virkler, Richard Chartrand 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 Chair Tom Osborne called the meeting at 2:58 p.m.

Legislator Kulzer made a motion to approve the 2/16/2021 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

Contract Policy – County Manager Ryan Piche

Ryan stated that the point of a contract policy would be to eliminate some of the resolutions that authorize contracts with small monetary values or no monetary value. Ryan, Joan, Eric, and Cassandra had met and discussed their vision with input from Legislator Dolhof. The proposal would be that any contract under a \$10,000 threshold can be signed by the Chair of the Board without a resolution and that all of those contracts signed would be reported on the List of Claims every month. This way all legislators would know of every contract the county enters but it wouldn't need action by the full board.

Legislator Hathway asked how it would show up on the List of Claims, Ryan responded that it would be a separate page attached to the back of the report as the current List of Claims is a Munis generated report. Legislator Moroughan reminded everyone that a few years ago there was an issue with a certain Department Head who was spending quite a bit of money and that legislators were not very happy about it. Legislator Kulzer proposed lowering the threshold to \$5,000. Legislator Dolhof had a couple questions about the procedure and if there would be review by Legislators ahead of him signing the contracts, Ryan responded that the proposal would not allow for review ahead of time and items under \$10,000 wouldn't need full approval by the full board but would authorize the chairman to sign on their behalf.

Joan stated that the process for contracts would still be the same that they must be reviewed by herself, any purchase related to the contract would still go through Munis and have the necessary approvals. Most of these items would be renewal contracts that happen every year and a benefit would be to process these contracts quicker but still track all the information. Legislator Hathway clarified that it would go from the Department, to Joan, to Ryan and then to Larry for signature, so many people will review this prior to any money being spent.

Ryan responded to Legislator Kulzer's concern that it would be possible for a contract to go through the internal process and the money be expended before the Board would see it on the List of Claims. Ryan used the example of the pandemic commercials that the Board approved to move forward with. That whole process was done internally, and it was very successful. Legislator Kulzer questions the threshold and felt much more comfortable at \$5,000.

Eric reminded everyone that when talking about the Budget Transfer policy he pointed out that \$10,000 is .002% of our counties overall budget and suggested that someone could argue to go to a \$20,000 threshold. Legislator Kulzer felt that from a taxpayer point of view \$10,000 is a lot of money, especially in this economic climate. Ryan looks at it in a governance light and trying to get the most out of the time spent together. The current threshold is \$0 and Legislator Kulzer would consider it at \$5,000. There was committee consensus to move forward with this at a \$5,000 threshold and Ryan would put a resolution together for next month.

Climate Smart Communities/Clean Energy Communities – Community Development Specialist Kevin Brouillard

Kevin began by giving a brief overview of the Climate Smart Communities program which is a comprehensive climate adaptation and action program consisting of over 100 eligible actions items for certification that improve a community score for grants. Clean Energy Communities is a part of the CSC program that is focused on clean energy & efficiency with 13 high impact action items such as electric vehicles, HVAC upgrades, and Energy Code Training, that all count towards a community score for grant funding. All municipalities are eligible for new point-based grants until December 31, 2025 and non-designated municipalities (everyone except the County and Town of Leyden) are eligible for a \$5,000 grant if they complete four action items.

North Country communities are eligible for forty point-based grants starting out with a minimum of 3,000 points for a \$10,000 grant; 4,000 points for a \$20,000 grant; and 5,000 points for a \$70,000 grant. The Clean Energy Community Action Items are: Energy Code Enforcement Training; Unified Solar Permit; Benchmarking; Clean Energy Upgrades; Clean Heating and cooling Demo; 100% Renewables for Municipal Operations; PACE Financing; Climate Smart Communities Certification; Community Campaigns; LED Streetlights; Clean Fleets; NYStretch Energy Code; and Community Choice Aggregation, each assigned a certain number of points. Currently in the North Country the Town of Waddington has 1,100 points; Town of Colton has 1,000 points, and Town of St. Armand has 1,000 points.

The County has completed Unified Solar Permit for 200 points, Benchmarking for 300 points, Clean Fleets for 100 points, and Energy Code Enforcement Training for 200 points, making a grand total of 800 points. Community Choice Aggregation which is only available to Towns and Villages is assigned 1,500 to 2,000 points and allows local government to choose where the energy comes from for their community. This municipal energy procurement model lets residents and businesses choose between the default supplier and 100% renewable energy. By having a larger demand, communities can negotiate competitive rates with clean energy suppliers. This program operates on an opt-out basis.

The Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) implementation process can take several months. The 9 steps in order are adopting a local law; selecting CCA Administrator; public outreach and education; regulatory approval & data request; bid for default energy offerings; award contract, contract execution & program kickoff; opt-out period; process opt-outs & enrollments; and lastly program launch.

On the County level the NYStretch Energy Code offers 1,200 points and is a readily adoptable local energy code that has 11% more building efficiency than ECCCNY-2020, prepares municipalities for next cycle of energy code updates in 2023, and integrates best practices from programs such as ENERGY STAR for homes. Legislator Dolhof questioned the potential cost of these more stringent energy codes, Kevin responded that it is roughly a 1 to 2% cost but can be covered through C-PACE financing, NYSERDA, utility incentives, and federal tax credits. The residential payback should be over a period of 7 years in savings on energy bills. This action item is open up to the first 100 municipalities and has to be adopted by the end of 2021 to receive the 1,200 points.

C-PACE which was adopted by our Board already can earn the county 300 additional points if it is utilized by developers for one or more projects in the county. Community Energy Campaigns require NYSERDA approved community solar companies and installers to educate residents and businesses on the benefits of community solar and clean heating & cooling technologies to earn 400 points. The current activities in progress for the county are Greenhouse Gas Inventory, County Fleet Inventory, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, and Buy Local Campaign.

Some additional items that the county could pursue are Climate Smart Communities Bronze certification, Community Campaigns, C-PACE Financing, NYStretch Code which would increase our points to over 3,000 allowing us to receive up to \$25,000 in grant funding. Legislator Dolhof voiced his concerns on the NYStretch Code, that an individual wouldn't recoup on their investment over a reasonable time. Kevin suggested having a presentation from a professional on that item to better explain it. Other potential action items would be Clean Heating & Colling Demo, Clean Energy Upgrades, and Clean Fleets for 500 points each. This would get the county up to the 5,000-point mark to get the full grant award.

The committee decided to think about this program and the action items more before moving forward. Legislator Dolhof felt that the NYStretch Code wasn't necessarily an item he would move forward on. Legislator King felt that this new code might deter businesses from coming to the area. There was further discussion.

Ryan explained how Green Energy has played a big part here in Lewis County and will continue to have many energy producing projects. The first step to utilizing this more would be a Community Choice Aggregation. Legislator Chartrand voiced his concerns that green Energy is not always the cheapest solution and residents may not want to purchase this if it costs more in the end. Kevin explained how Green Energy can be less expensive through due to discounts on the supply not the delivery, and because you are pooling demand the price can be negotiated down.

Legislator Dolhof questioned if the Green Energy purchased could be from a company producing it here in Lewis County, Kevin responded that it could be as well as outside of the county depending on the demand. Ryan reminded everyone that the savings comes because of the aggregation of pooling together for a large demand. Casandra Buell let everyone know that the county can't participate in the CCA, it has to be administered through a separate entity for the benefit of residents. There was further discussion. In response to Legislator King anyone who is on municipal power wouldn't be interested in this. The committee was in favor of taking the

next steps, specifically putting out an RFQ for a Community Choice Aggregation Administrator to move this forward.

Smart Growth Fund – Planning Director Casandra Buell

Casandra began by stating the purpose of this fund would be for community investment which could range from environmental studies, to reuse plans, to a complete site remediation. This fund would give life to dozens of community development projects across the county. Project Identification would be handled by an Ad Hoc committee consisting of the County Manger, County Attorney, Planning Director, County Highway Superintendent, Real property Director, DANC, and three (3) Legislators. Each Legislative district would submit a project application and a matrix, consisting of many aspects, would be used to identify project feasibility and/or what order the projects would be completed.

The Ad Hoc committee will access the projects needs and determine what the best path forward would be with the funding available, it could include environmental assessments and reuse studies or actual site remediation. The next steps would be to determine who will serve on the Ad Hoc committee and that the committee agrees on the matrix being used to evaluate the projects, determine the process if a property needs to be acquired in order to move forward, and where and how much funding should be allocated.

Ryan added that he feels this fund would be a great way to clean up properties in the community and create opportunities for redevelopment. There was further discussion on the steps to move this idea forward as well as the funding aspect, options like wind & solar revenue could be used. Legislator Dolhof suggested that the line item could be added to the budget and then when working on the budget it could be determined where the funds would be coming from. Joan responded to Legislator Gilberts concerns by stating that most of the properties that would fall into this fund/program are already tax foreclosures that the county hasn't taken possession of due to the high costs of clean up.

Legislator King thought there was a portion of the Tax Auction proceeds being put into an account every year for a clean up fund. Joan explained that it did happen a couple years when the revenue was much higher than anticipated but because it is hard to estimate the revenue it hasn't been done consistently. Ryan thinks that all money from the tax action should be put into this fund to continue to grow it. Legislator Osborne think this is a great idea but feels the hardest part will be administering it. Legislator Hathway voiced his concern that this plan doesn't given an equal share to each district because one or two projects could use up all the funds. There was further discussion on making this viable for all communities by rotating projects from different areas. Casandra Buell commented that the matrix will be a big part to make sure this program is administered fairly between all Towns.

Legislator Osborne felt the committee is on board with this idea but just needs to find the funding sources, which Ryan stated he would work to put together year end numbers. The Ad Hoc Committee legislators will be appointed by Chairman Dolhof. Legislator Burns was excused.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Resolution authorizing an amendment to the Tyler Technologies, Inc. contract to provide for the training package of \$3,000.00 and the elimination of the Civil Service and Work Orders annual maintenance fees for these items which have not been used.
AYE 4 NAY 0
2. Resolution approving correction of tax bill and to authorize the County Treasurer to adjust, apportion and charge back the Towns a total of \$3,365.96.
AYE 4 NAY 0

The following motions were made:

1. Legislator Hathway made a motion that was brought forward from the Health & Human Services Committee to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to refill one (1) full-time Social Services Program Examiner position due to promotion effective March 22, 2021, seconded by Legislator Kulzer and carried.
2. Legislator Kulzer made a motion to accept the Cyber Liability Insurance renewal with Eastern Shore Associates through NYMIR for the period of April 5, 2021 to April 5, 2022 at a cost of \$15,831.54, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

At 4:39 p.m. Legislator Gilbert made a motion to enter executive session for discussion on potential contract negotiations and status of property, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried. At 5:03 p.m. Legislator Chartrand asked to be excused. At 5:17 p.m. Legislator Gilbert made a motion to enter regular session, seconded by Legislator Kulzer and carried.

Legislator Kulzer made a motion to authorize County Attorney Joan McNichol to contract with an engineer to put together a structural analysis of the Lyons Falls School, seconded by Legislator Osborne and carried.

At 5:19 p.m. Legislator Kulzer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board