

**GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**March 16, 2021**

Present: Legislators Jerry King, Richard Chartrand, Ian Gilbert, and Lisa Virkler. Legislator Ron Burns joined at 1:07 p.m.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Greg Kulzer, Phil Hathway, Andrea Moroughan, and Tom Osborne; County Manager Ryan Piche; Treasurer Eric Virkler; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Human Resources Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chair Legislator King called the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

Legislator Virkler made a motion to approve the 2/16/2021 committee meeting minutes, seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.

**PSB Boiler Recommendation** – Building & Grounds Supervisor Matt O’Connor

Matt O’Connor introduced Robert Company and Dan Bernat from Fourth Coast who have designed the new heating system for the Public Safety Building (PSB). The design is for a full redundancy system with two (2) one million btu condensing boilers, high mass boilers with chemical filtration on it to keep the pH levels consistent, new control components, and a re-worked fresh air intake. This will increase the efficiency rating to 97%. The RFP will go out and hopefully within 4 to 6 weeks the bid will be awarded so the work can begin this summer.

Robert Company explained that they did look at traditional cast iron boilers versus modern condensing boilers and that there is a significant cost savings over the life of the condensing boilers. The rough costs estimate of the boiler portion of the project is \$230,000.00. Legislator King questioned if this would solve the temperature consistency issues, Matt responded that he is confident that the new air handlers which is the second phase of this project will make the temperature more consistent in the building. Robert Company responded to Legislators King’s question and explained that the condensing still works similar to a traditional boiler but has more to do with the efficiency aspect rather than the temperature of the water.

Legislator Chartrand questioned if a lead lag system was looked at, Matt responded that they had, and these new boilers are preprogrammed and can be set up for lead lag. Legislator Kulzer asked what the estimated cost is for each of the boilers, Matt answered that they are roughly \$20,000 to \$25,000 each. Ryan reminded everyone that this whole project was budgeted at \$800,000 and the boilers are only a piece of the total project, there is much more that needs to be decided on. Matt agreed and stated that the Air Handlers are going to be the vast majority of the total project cost. He went on to remind everyone that the \$800,000 project cost was based on 2019 numbers and prices on things have gone up considerably since then so the project could end up costing more in the end.

Legislator King made a motion to authorize Buildings & Grounds Supervisor Matt O'Connor to send out an RFP for the boiler portion of the PSB project based on the specs that Fourth Coast designed, seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.

**Broadband update** – County Manager Ryan Piche and Planning Director Casandra Buell

Ryan Piche reminded everyone that last year the county contracted with DANC to have a company come in and do an inventory of all broadband in Lewis County and to complete a market survey. This scope of work has been completed and put into a report in which DANC would like to present more in depth to the Legislators at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. There are two elements of the survey, the first being BAAT (Broadband Aggregation and Adaption Toolset) which was basically the market survey which was completed by over 1,200 residents; and the second element is Broadband Infrastructure and Inventory Survey which mapped out the infrastructure in Lewis County.

There are other counties who are following in our footsteps and completing these same surveys in their area. Thought needs to be put into what will we do with this data and what are the next steps forward. Ryan will send out the draft DANC reports by the end of the week for legislators to review. Legislator Virkler pointed out that the stimulus package includes money for broadband which should help.

Casandra Buell stated that the comments are really eye opening to how much broadband or the lack of broadband is affecting residents lives and businesses in the area. She strongly suggested the legislators read all the comments that were received to get a better picture of the impact broadband has. There was further discussion on the timeline to decide on what the county is willing to put towards broadband in Lewis County.

**Capital Building Projects Next Steps** – County Manager Ryan Piche

Ryan Piche reported that last month the county signed a contract with C&S Companies for the design phase of the County Capital Buildings Project which includes renovating Social Services Building, putting on an addition for Board of Elections, and a new Highway Garage Facility. C&S Companies will meet with Highway, Recreation Forestry and Parks, Social Services, Office For the Aging, and Board of Elections to determine that the most updated information and needs are being used in the design. Matt O'Connor reported that C&S Companies did complete a 3D scan of the building and will be compiling that document. Legislator Chartrand questioned if the DMV was part of this project, Ryan explained that they are not include however there is something happening behind the scenes that can be discussed later. I.T. Director Conner Biolsi requested that he be involved in this design phase as well to make sure that the technology is in the right areas, Legislator King agreed.

**Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative update** – County Manager Ryan Piche

Ryan Piche reported that the Police Reform Reinvention Collaborative committee has been working diligently, meeting five times over the past few months to address the mandate by the state. The three categories that have been addressed are Mental Health, Substance Abuse and

Homelessness; Police Standard Operating Procedures; and Police Training. The Sheriff provided information and samples on calls relating to mental health issues, standard operating procedures, training budget and training opportunities. There were standards discussed so going forward data can be tracked to make sure improvements are made in these areas. There was further discussion on the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Homelessness aspect and how better partnerships between law enforcement and local agencies could be improved upon by more training and attending local meetings. Overall, the county has achieved what was being asked by the State. Several of the Legislators stated their support for those on the committee and the effort that put in.

Legislator Chartrand made a motion to move the Police Reform Reinvention Collaborative report put together by the committee forward to the full board on April 6<sup>th</sup> for approval and adoption, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Resolution authorizing amendment to the 2020/2021 annual renewal agreement with the Unified Court System for Court cleaning and minor repair services which reduces the compensation to be reimbursed to the County to \$116,867.00 for this annual period. *Eric Virkler reported that the decrease was due to a parking gate arm that was put in a certain category for 100% reimbursement but ultimately put in another category for a much lower reimbursement rate. Ryan reported that the budgeted revenue was only \$111,000.*  
AYE   5   NAY   0
2. Resolution authorizing the filing of two (2) 2020 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant applications to secure funding to assist low and moderate income households with homeownership assistance and housing rehabilitation within Lewis County in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.00.  
AYE   5   NAY   0
3. Resolution establishing lead agency status and negative declaration under SEQRA for adoption of the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement plan.  
AYE   5   NAY   0
4. Resolution authorizing the adoption of the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement plan.  
AYE   5   NAY   0
5. Resolution authorizing appointment of Jessica L. Young, Esq., of Durr, Riley & Young, PLLC, of Boonville, NY to provide professional services as Indigent Legal Services Administrator of the Assigned Counsel Panel for Lewis County, commencing and retroactive to March 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022, at a monthly, all-inclusive rate of \$2,000.00, payable under funding from the Hurrell-Harring grant funds.  
AYE   5   NAY   0
6. Resolution authorizing agreement with Percival Land and Timber, LLC and its agent Domain Timber Advisors, LLC for a temporary access easement to the County for access and development of the County's public motorized (ATV) recreation trail system in Northern

Lewis County, from the Bryant's Bridge Road in the Town of Diana, along the abandoned Bald Mountain Road in the Town of Diana to the Oswegatchie Conservation Easement in the Town of Croghan. *This is the same easement that the county had with the MOPUS group but because they no longer own the property Jackie Mahoney worked with the new owners to get a similar easement again. Legislator Kulzer asked if there was any cost and Legislator Dolhof responded that there wasn't except an additional sign expense.*

AYE   5   NAY   0  

7. Resolution to appropriate funds in the Recreational Trails and Trail Maintenance accounts for the purchase of a trailer with a cost of \$18,200.00. *Legislator Kulzer questioned the cost, type and quotes/bids. Jackie Mahoney responded that there were five quotes obtained. This is a woods trailer that has a picker arm and large enough to carry logs and culvert pipes.*

AYE   5   NAY   0  

8. Resolution authorizing amendment to agreement between Lewis County Solid Waste Department and Barton & Loguidice to provide professional construction administration and inspection services associated with the construction of the Solid Waste Transfer station improvement project at a cost not to exceed \$51,250.00. *There was discussion on hiring a Clerk of the Works to handle all of the upcoming projects in addition to or in lieu of contracting with Barton & Loguidice. Ryan felt that there should be some professional help going forward to ensure all of the tests and requirements are being done. He felt that hiring the same firm to handle both design and engineering is helpful. Legislator Dolhof questioned the time between this project and the next set, what will a Clerk of the Works do in between. Legislator King stated that they could review the design phase of the other projects. There was further discussion on which County Directors would oversee the project instead of a Clerk of the Works and the cost that Barton & Loguidice is offering. A majority of the Committee felt that due to time constraints and overall costs it would be beneficial to move forward with this contract. Legislator King opposed.*

AYE   4   NAY   1  

The following motions were made:

1. Legislator Virkler made a motion to award bid for hot asphalt based on project location in accordance with the tabulation of all bids prepared by the Highway Superintendent and placed on file with the Clerk of the Board, for the period April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.
2. Legislator Burns made a motion to award bids to various vendors for bulk oil and lubricants for the period of April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022 in accordance with the tabulation of all bids and respective low prices on file with the Clerk of the Board, seconded by Legislator Virkler and carried.

It was announced that the Solid Waste Scale house bid opening would be held virtually on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. and any Legislator who wanted to attend can reach out to the Clerk of the Board for details. Once Barton & Loguidice review the bids and gives their recommendation a resolution will be put forward to the full board.

Joan McNichol stated that she would like to have an Attorney Client Privilege session at the end of Finance & Rules for possible contract negotiations, Legislator King asked everyone to stay on if they would.

Legislator Gilbert read the following into the record:

“Several months ago our board put forward a resolution calling on the state to approve reopening plans for the schools in Lewis County. Those plans were subsequently approved. Each school adopted some form of what we call a hybrid model, with some if not all students, attending in-school instruction for a few days per week with the overall goal of reducing classroom density. As a parent I am grateful that my two oldest have been able to go back to school, though on a changed schedule from past years.

My view is that the hybrid model was properly understood as a temporary concession, driven by legitimate concerns that emerged from a lack of information about the risk the virus posed to students and staff in a public school setting. Now that time has passed, I want to publicly add my voice to those calling for the state to permit full-time instruction in our public schools and private schools.

My reasons are threefold: Firstly, we have a better sense of the risk that the virus poses to children and staff in a school setting, and we know that risk is manageable. From a January 26, 2021 article in the Journal of the American Medical Association called: Data and Policy to Guide Opening Schools Safely to Limit the Spread of COVID-19 Infection. As many schools have reopened for in-person instruction in some parts of the US as well as internationally, school-related cases of COVID-19 have been reported, but there has been little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission. A case-control study of exposures among children aged 0 through 18 years with and without COVID-19 infection in Mississippi found that having attended gatherings and social functions outside the home as well as having had visitors in the home was associated with increased risk of infection; however, in-person school attendance during the 14 days prior to diagnosis was not.

In the fall of 2020, 11 school districts in North Carolina with more than 90,000 students and staff were open for in-person education for 9 weeks.<sup>6</sup> During this time, within-school transmissions were very rare (32 infections acquired in schools; 773 community-acquired infections) and there were no cases of student-to-staff transmission. Similarly, in a report released by CDC on January 26, 2021, with data from 17 K-12 schools in rural Wisconsin with high mask adherence, COVID-19 incidence was lower in schools than in the community. During 13 weeks in the fall of 2020, there were 191 COVID-19 cases in staff and students, with only 7 of these cases determined to result from in-school transmission.

I will point out that with respect to Wisconsin, they have taken the approach that schools can decide for themselves whether to do a hybrid or an in-person model and some of those schools did have full time in person instruction. Also, rural Wisconsin demographically and climate is pretty close to rural upstate New York. Widespread vaccination has pushed down our covid numbers and freed up space in our hospital. We must consider the possibility that any increase in community spread caused by full-time in-school instruction, is nevertheless within manageable

parameters in terms of county resources because of the great success we have had in getting people vaccinated.

Secondly, near-universal vaccination of school staff has reduced the danger posed to adults. The state allowed for school staff to jump ahead in the vaccination line, while there was still an ongoing danger to the elderly population. This was allowed as a way of avoiding staffing issues caused by quarantining and also to guarantee full-time in-person instruction in the near-future. The state prioritized vaccinating school staff over workers in other fields, many of whom have been back to full schedules in dense settings for months, or never left them in the first place.

Thirdly, we are starting to see the negative impacts that school closure is having on young people. From an article from Erin M. Hawley printed in June 2020 in National Review Online: A new CDC study shows that 40 percent of young adults have experienced symptoms of depression or anxiety in the last month, May of 2020. The National Center for Health Statistics asked questions modified from the Patient Health Questionnaire and from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale.

In answering the following questions, forty percent of students scored at levels associated with diagnoses of major depressive disorder or generalized anxiety disorder. Some of these students indicated that they had felt down or hopeless, at least some of the time. Others indicated that, in the past week, they'd frequently been anxious and unable to stop worrying. Our young people were not in a great position before the pandemic. According to a 2018 American Psychological Association report, Gen Z was the "most likely" age group to report poor mental health.

As policymakers consider options to reopen and revitalize the economy, they should not leave our youth out of their calculations. Generation Z is struggling; they may not contribute this year to the COVID-19 death toll, but, unless something is done soon, many will be casualties of the shutdown. Anecdotally, in conversations I have had with teachers, many feel dispirited in their inability to fully engage in their professions and to properly assist the students they are committed to serving. I am grateful to the teacher and other staff who have gone above and beyond to work in these circumstances.

My personal view is that the state should revise its rules to allow schools to make the transition to full-time instruction, if they feel it is in the best interest of their staff and students. This would necessarily require a change to the state-mandated 6-foot spacing rule on buses and within classrooms.

I want to also call on the public to do what we need to do to make full-time reopening possible. That means getting vaccinated when it is your turn, being gracious to school and public health officials who are working within parameters that they have no say in and using your voice to ask your representatives in Albany to implement these modest changes."

Legislator King stated that Legislator Gilberts statement will be moved forward to Health & Human Services Committee for further discussion if needed.

At 2:29 p.m. Legislator Burns made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board