

FINANCE AND RULES COMMITTEE
May 17, 2022

Present: Tom Osborne, Chair; Phil Hathway, Vice-Chair; Jeffrey Nellenback; and Josh Leviker. Legislator Ron Burns had been excused.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Lisa Virkler, Andrea Moroughan and Ian Gilbert; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; and Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith.

Committee Chair Tom Osborne called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Legislator Hathway made a motion to approve the April 19, 2022 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Leviker and carried.

Lewis County Procurement Policy update – Brian Hanno, Purchasing Director

Brian explained that the updates really consisted of establishing the Purchasing Director position, the duties, and making that person the county purchaser with the County Manager being first alternate and the Chairman as second alternate. There is language that states the Purchasing Director will now be responsible for getting quotes and processing them. There was language added to define emergency purchases and added language to address piggy backing off other contracts, which allows us to join other agencies contracts and for them to join ours. As an example, if Onondaga County does an RFP for copy paper, we can piggyback off their contract and get the same deal. It would continue to be monitored each year to make sure we are getting the same price or using contracts against each other to get a better price. This should help create more efficiencies in purchasing goods and services. County Manager, Ryan Piche and County Attorney, Joan McNichol both praised Brian for his excellent work and jumping right in on things to help stream line processes within the county.

Rails to Trails Concept – Ryan Piche, County Manager

Ryan began the presentation with a clip from CBS This Morning showing several rails to trails across the country. Rails to trails are local, there is the Adirondack Rail Trail which goes through Lake Placid, Ray Brook, Saranac Lake, Lake Clear, Tupper Lake, Piercefield, Sabattis, Lake Lila, Beaver River, Big Moose and Old Forge. This trail is a biking and hiking trail in the summer and a snowmobile trail in the winter.

There is already a Rails to Trails in Lewis County from Burdick's Crossing to Lyons Falls which was acquired by the County in 2012 and is approximately 4.1 miles long. The JCC Center for Community Studies Lewis County Survey shows that Rails to Trails are strongly supported with 87% supporting development of more non-motorized trails for walking, hiking, and bicycling; 81% support conversion of

existing railroad beds or tracks to public recreational multi-use trails; and 74% support development of more ATV and snowmobile trails for motorized vehicles. The statement “I support county government efforts to convert existing railroad beds and tracks to public recreational multi-use trails, both motorized and non-motorized” was further broken down in to age categories, household income levels, and political views as follows: 82% of 18 to 36 year-olds agree; 85% of 40 to 59 year-olds agree; and 74% of 60+ year-olds agree; 85% with a household income of \$50,000 or less agree; 87% with a household income of \$100,000 or more agree; 82% of conservatives agree; and 91% of liberals agree.

The next steps are to acquire and convert the remaining rail lines in Lewis County to recreational use. There are 44 parcels across three sections of rail with 4 main sections of development. The section from Lyons Falls to Lowville consists of 10 parcels with a total assessed value of \$78,399.00. The section from Lowville to Carthage consists of 14 parcels with a total assessed value of \$252,950.00. Legislator Hathway questioned how many miles this section is, Treasurer, Eric Virkler responded that it would roughly 14 to 16 miles. The section from Lowville to Croghan consists of 20 parcels with a total assessed value of \$125,841.00. In response to Legislator Hathway it was stated that this section was roughly 10 to 11 miles. The section from Lyons Falls to the County Line consists of 15 parcels with a total assessed value of \$145,832.00. The total miles of all trails would be 35 to 40.

The county is currently working with outside counsel to acquire properties. The trail will be multi-use like the existing trail from Lyons Falls to Burdick’s Crossing. The specific use of each section of rail has not yet been determined. The process of acquisition, engineering assessment, and conversion will take many years to complete. There are several difficult sections where bridges and culverts will need to be completely replaced. The county is eager to work with landowners; the final path of the trail is negotiable. Meetings have already been offered to concerned landowners adjacent to the trail and the county will meet with anyone.

Legislator Hathway questioned if the vision would be to work on small sections of rail at a time, Ryan responded that he felt it would be necessary to proceed with converting one chunk at a time. Legislator Hathway felt that he would like to prove that this works by converting a less controversial section first. Legislator Gilbert referenced the earlier video’s multi-use aspect of allowing certain sections for biking, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, and walking which should lead to less trespassing and noise. Inside the village of Lowville would be a great area for more passive uses instead of active uses but the Beaver falls to Croghan section could be used for both.

Legislator Nellenback liked the idea of sections for more passive activities, feeling that people who are upset or against this endeavor probably think more about the ATV damage and these trails will not just be for ATV’s. Legislator Virkler pointed out that there is a severe lack of growth in the county, and the county needs to consider what young people want and need in order to start creating more growth.

Legislator Moroughan drives a golf cart sometimes and the thought of having ATV's on the same trail could create issues. Chairman Dolhof stated that the Lyons Falls to Burdick's Crossing trails is a multi-use trail and everyone seems to be very respectful of each other. Some ATV's will get as far over on the trail as they can and stop when horseback riders come through. Legislator Gilbert indicated that the trails can be 50 feet to 80 feet wide, which is quite a bit of space.

Mr. Larry Pacola, Lewis County resident, stated that he has a camp on one side of his property and is building a house on the other with the railroad through the center. He questioned how legislators would feel if they had a trail for public use going through the middle of their front yard. Legislator Osborne stated that this is in the concept phase right now and questioned if there might be a way to go around the edge of his property. Maybe not every section of the railway will be used.

Another gentleman in the audience stated that some of the property that the railway is through is federally protected wetlands. Legislator Osborne again stated that this is just something that is being looked at right now, information is being gathered, it will likely be a 3-to-5-year endeavor.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Adopting and Otherwise Treating Local Law No. 2-2022 "A Local Law Continuing an Additional Mortgage Tax for Mortgages on Real Property Situated in Lewis County".
AYE 4 NAY 0
2. Amending Compensation Plan of the County of Lewis with reference to County Attorney Office to create one (1) Temporary Intern position for 350 hours at \$16.00/hour.
AYE 4 NAY 0
3. Authorizing Section 5311 Consolidated Federal and State Funding Grant application for the Lewis County Public Transportation System for fiscal years 2021-2022.
AYE 4 NAY 0
4. Authorizing agreement between the County of Lewis and the ARC, Oneida-Lewis chapter, NYSARC, Inc. for transportation services for a three-year period with the ARC to reimburse the County at a rate of \$25.00/hr. in 2022, \$25.50/hr. in 2023, and \$26.14/hr. in 2024.
AYE 4 NAY 0
5. Amending Procurement Policy and Appointing Purchasing Director as the Responsible Purchaser under the Procurement Policy.
AYE 4 NAY 0

6. Transferring and Appropriating Capital Funds related to the Facilities Projects in the amount of \$691,158.96.

AYE 4 NAY 0

7. Authorizing agreement between the County of Lewis and Spectrum Northeast, LLC by its manager, Charter Communications, Inc., for fiber/coax broadband infrastructure expansion to passings in the Towns of Croghan, Denmark, Watson, Lowville and Greig.

AYE 4 NAY 0

At 3:39 p.m. Legislator Leviker made a motion to enter executive session for discussion on personnel matter, I.T. security matter, and outside counsel advise on status of litigation, seconded by Legislator Nellenback and carried.

At 4:41 p.m. Legislator Nellenback made a motion to enter regular session, seconded by Legislator Leviker and carried.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Hathway made a motion to adjourn at 4:41 p.m., seconded by Legislator Nellenback and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board