

**WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**(REMOTELY)
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Leigh J. Benton, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Janet Sutherland, Kevin W. Hines, James M. Kulisek,
Michael D. Paduch, Joseph J. Minuta

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Michael F. Amo, Independence Party Leader
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
Kathy A. Stegenga, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Dan Bloomer, Director, Operations and Cost Control
Matthew J. Nothnagle, Chief Assistant County Attorney
Karin Hablow, Commissioner of Finance
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner of Finance
James S. Brooks, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation & Conservation
Mike Amodio, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Parks, Recreation & Conservation
Daniel G. Castricone, Risk Management Officer
Eric Ruscher, Director, Real Property Tax Service
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Chairman Benton opened the committee meeting at 3:31 p.m. by asking everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Anagnostakis who was absent.

Mr. Kulisek moved to discuss deed sale parcels, seconded by Ms. Sutherland.

Mr. Ruscher stated there are two sets of bid lists this month and will begin with the County Tax Parcels. The first four parcels are in the Town of Blooming Grove (28-1-2, 29-1-20.1, 29-3-70, 30-3-25). He explained that deed sale parcel number one is on the list again because a new resolution is required to accept the check, parcel numbers two and four do not meet the minimum bid and parcel number three meets the bid; therefore, he recommends it be approved. The fifth and sixth deed sale parcels are in the Town of Cornwall (1-1-50.2, 9-1-1.1). Mr. Ruscher recommends that they both be denied because they do not meet the minimum bid. Parcel number seven is in the Town of Deerpark (29-8-12) and has a minimum bid of \$500.00 and minimum bid of \$500.00. He stated that it is a flood parcel and recommends it be approved.

Motion carried. All in favor of accepting Mr. Ruscher's recommendation to approve deed sale parcels Nos. 1, 3, and 7 and deny parcels Nos. 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Mr. Ruscher moved on to the second page of deed sale parcels. The eighth parcel is in the Town of Monroe (36-3-32.3), has a minimum bid of \$400.00 and an amount bid of \$400.00.

The committee members expressed their concerns and asked that this parcel be removed and bring back to committee next month because it has an adjoining property owner.

Mr. Ruscher stated that he will remove the parcel, do further research and bring it back to the committee next month.

Deed sale parcel number nine is in the Town of Mount Hope (11-8-21) with the same bidder as the previous parcel. Mr. Ruscher recommended that it be pulled and bought back to committee next month.

Parcels 10A and 10B (218-1-89.2) are in the Town of Warwick with two bidders. Mr. Ruscher recommended that the committee approve parcel number 10B because it is higher than the minimum bid. The last parcel is in the Town of Woodbury, has a minimum bid of \$500.00 and an amount bid of \$500.00; therefore, he recommends it be approved.

Motion carried. All in favor of accepting Mr. Ruscher's recommendation to approve deed sale parcels Nos. 10B and 11, remove parcels Nos. 8 and 9 until next month and deny parcel No. 10A.

Mr. Ruscher stated that the next set of parcels is an additional three-page list. On page one there are eight parcels located in the Towns Blooming Grove (27-1-20), Chester (111-2-11.2), Cornwall (39-5-2, 102-18-2), Goshen (17-1-16), Minisink (3-2-39, 3-2-40) and Montgomery (3-1-15.224). He recommended that the committee approve parcels Nos. 11, 13, 14, 15 and 18. On page two there are five parcels. Two are in the Town of Mount Hope (11-8-7, 11-8-21) and three are in the Town of Newburgh (105-1-6, 4-1-27.8, 4-1-69.2). Mr. Ruscher pointed out that deed sale parcels 9A and 9B are the same piece of property with two bidders. He recommends that the committee approve parcels Nos. 19, 9B and 21. The last page has three parcels in the Towns of Newburgh (34-1-13.2), Tuxedo (7-1-1.2) and Wallkill (6-2-25 and 6-2-26). He recommends the committee approve parcels Nos. 23 and 24.

Motion carried. All in favor of accepting Mr. Ruscher's recommendations to approve deed sale parcels Nos. 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 9B, 21, 23 and 24.

Mrs. Bonelli moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to increase Capital Project No. 745-20, Hickory Hill Golf Course Equipment from \$147,000.00 to \$156,000.00. The said Capital Project was placed on hold in 2020. The

increase reflects New York State contract pricing increase for 2021 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Kulisek.

Mr. Amodio explained that there was no capital spending in 2020, so if the capital spending is "relaxed," for 2021 they would like to move forward and order these various pieces of equipment. He referred to the legislative request which includes further information (see original minutes). The increase is \$147,000.00 to \$156,000.00.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to increase Capital Project No. 737-20, Parks Equipment from \$76,000.00 to \$78,000.00. The said Capital Project was placed on hold in 2020. The increase reflects New York State contract pricing for 2021 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Kulisek.

Mr. Amodio stated this request is similar to the justification of the previous request as the 2020 model is no longer available. One piece of equipment shows that there is a New York State contract price increase and the other one shows a few changes to the attachments for the equipment which has lowered the price.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mrs. Bonelli moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to increase Capital Project No. 746-20, Stony Ford Golf Course Equipment from \$103,000.00 to \$110,000.00. The said Capital Project was placed on hold in 2020. The increase reflects New York State contract pricing in 2021 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Kulisek.

Mr. Amodio explained this request has five pieces of equipment (see original minutes), three out of the five have an increase in price due to the New York State contract, one piece of equipment is no longer available and the other had no change in price.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Castricone addressed the next agenda which was an update regarding Risk Management. He asked that the committee refer to the report that was provided (see original minutes) so he can review and answer any questions. The topics reviewed was the Mission Statement, The Division Administrators (on behalf of the County Executive), Staffing, Budget for 2020, Contract Review/Insurance/Significant Events, Goals for 2021, Benefits Unit, Safety Risk Mitigation Unit, and the Employee Assistance Program.

Mrs. Bonelli thanked Mr. Castricone and his staff for a comprehensive report.

Mr. Kulisek moved to adopt a Local Law to continue the imposition of tax under Local Law No. 13 of 2009, known as the "Orange County Hotel and Motel Room Occupancy

Tax Local Law" for an additional three years,
seconded by Mr. Hines.

Ms. Hablow stated this is a request to pass a local law to continue the Hotel and Motel Room Occupancy Tax which established in 2009. She added that the revenue has grown every year since inception in 2009 except for 2020 due to the pandemic. It is a significant revenue for the county and a sizeable portion of it goes to fund Orange County Tourism. She noted that at the Rules Committee meeting, there was a question as to whether some of the underlying municipalities had also been successful in enacting a hotel/motel tax. The only information she was able to obtain was from the Town of Wallkill stating the governor assigned and approved their request the last week of December which means they will still need to pass a resolution.

Mr. Paduch asked if the funds will be distributed back to the Town of Wallkill.

Ms. Hablow replied the hotels that are in the Town of Wallkill will be required to remit five percent to the county. Depending upon how their local law is written, they may not require quarterly reporting, they may require monthly or another periodic interval; therefore, she will not collect their funds in any way.

Mr. Minuta commented they also enacted legislation for Airbnb and would like to know if that is included in this local law.

Ms. Hablow responded that Airbnb is a separate contract between the County of Orange and Airbnb, so the reason we were able to enter that contract was because of this law, but the contract is separate from the law.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Hablow reviewed the County of Orange Sales Tax Received Year-To-Date, County Portion Only and the Municipal 2020 Sales Tax Due Other Government (see original minutes).

Ms. Slesinski addressed the last agenda item which was a Budget update. The department continues to work in teams of two, rotating one week in the office and one week remote. This past month the focus has been closing out 2020 PO's and reviewing revenues. She pointed out that this has been a "perfect storm" with COVID purchases needing to be reconciled and staff working remotely; therefore, they are about two weeks behind where they would normally be at this time in any other year. She then stated that she is thankful that her staff has remained healthy and are always willing to put in the extra work to get us to the end. At the last meeting, she was asked about contractual account balances and said that she had hoped to have that information at this meeting, but unfortunately does not have the information yet. The department continues to work on the implementation of the Hyperion Budgeting software with multiple work sessions each week as they are hoping to roll this out with Capital Budgeting in the spring. They also continue to monitor vacant positions. As of February 23, 2021, they are 309 full and part-time vacant positions, which achieves a savings of \$3.6 million. They try to forecast out the savings if all current positions remained vacant and feel that they are on track to meet the 80% austerity that was implemented in the 2021 budget even though they do not know if there will be changes throughout the year. She also mentioned that by having such a significant vacancy factor this year, it will create challenges for budgeting in 2022. Lastly, she brought the committee up to date on the larger revenues that are

budgeted in the undistributed account. It includes Sales Tax, Hotel Tax, Gaming Revenue, and a few others. The full chart was distributed to all legislators (see original minutes), and currently there is a deficit of \$20.3 million, however, there could still be a change.

With no questions asked, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.