

**EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
(REMOTELY)
MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Paul Ruskiewicz, Chairman
Barry Cheney, Joseph J. Minuta, James D. O'Donnell,
Rob Sassi, Joel Sierra, Kathy A. Stegenga, Laurie R. Tautel

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Leigh J. Benton, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
Kevin W. Hines, Legislator
Peter Tuohy, Legislator
John Vero, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harold Porr III, Deputy County Executive
Alan Sorensen, Commissioner, Planning Department
Bill Fioravanti, Director, Economic Development
Dr. Kristine Young, President, Orange County Community College
Paul Martland, Vice President of Admin./Finance, Orange County Community College
Michael Torelli, Chairman, Industrial Development Agency
Liz Delaney, Budget Analyst
Dina Sena, Budget Analyst

Chairman Ruskiewicz 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 Legislators Minuta who arrived at 3:33 p.m. and Mr. Sassi who arrived at 3:45 p.m.

Dr. Young discussed the Orange County Community College 2021-2022 proposed budget. She was happy to report that there would be no increase in tuition or fees as a result of the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). They also received the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSAA).

Mr. Martland provided a presentation on the proposed 2021-2022 OCCC budget (see original minutes).

Chairman Brescia cautioned Dr. Young and Mr. Martland about balancing the budget with the CARES Act and the CRRSAA money since it is funding that they are not used to getting. They do not want to be in a situation where it can be an extensive increase next year. He wanted them to be prepared for that. He asked if there was a possibility of an early retirement.

Mr. Martland responded that they did not have an early retirement planned but depending on the situation each year, it could be under consideration. Those who were interested in the early retirement already took advantage of it.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the 23 vacant positions that were outlined in the presentation outlined separately.

Mr. Martland replied that they plan to provide a detailed sheet.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the students need to be vaccinated.

Dr. Young responded that they were in limbo. She did note that Governor Cuomo announced that all SUNY students would have to be vaccinated to attend in person classes but then it was quickly followed up with the vaccine becoming fully approved and out of emergency approval status. They have between now and August 23rd which is the first day, to see what happens.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if the Legislature was instrumental in their ability to keep the tuition flat this coming year.

Dr. Young acknowledged that the Legislature made it possible.

Mr. O'Donnell noted that he has yet to see any mention in the press releases from the college that the Legislature had anything to do with the college's ability to keep the budget flat. He would appreciate it if they thanked the taxpayers, the Legislature, and the county in their future press releases.

Dr. Young announced that a virtual commencement ceremony was going to be on Thursday, May 20th at 5:00 p.m. There are 801 students graduating.

Mr. Fioravanti provided a monthly update on Economic Development. He mentioned that Legoland had a soft opening which he was invited to as a season ticket holder. It was at no cost, and it was a great time. The Medline and Amazon buildings are moving along quickly. The demand for the area is big but there are very few shovel ready sites. He updated the committee on various projects. He updated the committee on the Accelerators stating there are two buildings in the City of Newburgh, a couple in New Windsor, one in Middletown at the Horton Hospital complex and a small Accelerator focused on CBD in Warwick. He has been in contact with 19 out of 20 tenants that they have provided support for.

Ms. Stegenga asked if there was anything planned for workforce housing, senior housing or starter homes. The market is booming, and things are selling much more than what they are appraised at. If they are going to need industrial jobs, they will need a place to put their workers.

Mr. Fioravanti noted the suggestion and it was a very good point. He added that it was a big problem. Workforce housing does not necessarily mean low-income housing.

Ms. Tautel asked if there were any updates on the Accelerator in Highland Falls.

Mr. Fioravanti responded that they still have some hurdles to get over before they can get into the building which needs renovations. There are some opportunities to partner with others to share the space and help relieve some of the cost. The new IDA Board needs to make a difficult decision on further investments to make it work.

Mr. Ruskiewicz asked about the restaurants trying to get back up and running but cannot get the help that they need and hard to get the employees back. Mainly due to the enhanced unemployment and many people are not willing to go back to work. He asked what the status was on the enhanced unemployment.

Mr. Fioravanti stated that there are help wanted signs everywhere and he believed that it will be like that for the next few months and those people looking for employment are in a tough situation.

Mr. Torelli provided an update on the IDA. He stated that the new board has been in place for two and a half months. They instituted a standardized monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of every month. They also instituted procedures for payment vouchers and invoicing. It will require two people to sign for payment on an invoice instead of just one. They still need to set a date for their board reorganization which will be public and transparent. They are in full compliance with all of the District Attorney subpoenas and the Orange County Legislature's request. To date, all that has been asked for has been sent. He was concerned with revenue coming in. They plan to review last year's budget from the previous board and once the June financials are done they will compare and make adjustments as they see fit.

Mr. Ruszkiewicz thanked Mr. Torelli for all the work he and the board have been doing. He also thanked Mr. Fioravanti who has done a large amount of work handling the day to day operations at the IDA. The County Attorney's office has been very helpful with complying to everything requested for the District Attorney's audit.

Mr. Cheney moved to review applications for Inclusion of Lands in Agricultural District No. 1 and review SEQRA, seconded by Ms. Tautel.

Mr. Sorensen explained that this was the annual review to provide the opportunity for property owners to be added to Agricultural District No. 1. He added that no action needed to be taken today. Five applications were submitted in March for the following properties: 1) Chester Agricultural Center, LLC contains 12.1 acres and is used to grow mixed vegetables. The parcels are within the black dirt and adjacent to other parcels already in the Agricultural District. The subcommittee of the Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board recommends the parcels be added. 2) The Cotter property in Cornwall contains 13.5 acres and the property owners have indicated that it is a proposed home site with some agricultural activity which includes growing sunflowers, garlic and watercress. Based on a site visit and review of the application the Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board does not recommend including this property in Agricultural District No. 1. It is recommended that they reapply next year after undertaking some of the proposed work related to agriculture. 3) Atlantic Fibre Optic, LLC contains 2 acres where they store equipment, a pet crematorium, storage and sale of fresh cut hay, horse shavings, temporary medical paddock for injured horses and rehabilitation, 3600 square foot warehouse, 2130 square foot apartment and storage containers. They are planning to raise pheasants for game use in the future. This property was removed during the 2020 Agricultural District's 8-year review. The Town of Goshen has sent a letter stating they were not in support of adding this parcel to Agricultural District No. 1.; however, members of the Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board conducted a site visit and have recommended including the property back into the Agricultural District but that is not final until the entire Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board discuss it. 4 and 5) The Yurchuk family owns the following two parcels which are adjacent to one another with one parcel containing 4.6 acres and the other 17.8 acres. The properties are in black dirt and are used to farm crops along with containing storage buildings used to store farm equipment. The subcommittee of the Orange County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board has recommended the parcels be added to Agricultural District No. 1

Ms. Tautel asked why the Cornwall property was not recommended to be added into the Agricultural District and asked why.

Mr. Sorensen responded that there were several members of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board who went out to review the parcel. It is currently wooded and at this time there is no agricultural activity on the property. The property owners plan to do something but the board likes to see that there is at least some initial start of agricultural activity occurring before including the property into Agricultural District No. 1.

Ms. Tautel further asked why the Goshen parcel was rejected by the Town of Goshen.

Mr. Sorensen responded that they believed that the since there is a pet crematorium as part of activities going on at this site, they did not look favorably at including it into the agricultural district. However, when the members of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board went out to look at the property, they felt it should be included.

Mr. Cheney asked about the Goshen parcel and asked if their operation is consistent with what they listed on their application.

Mr. Sorensen replied that they listed planned activities for pheasants in the future.

Mr. Cheney pointed out that it was an unusual name, Atlantic Fibre Optic, LLC. Do they have other business operations at that site.

Mr. Sorensen stated that he was not aware of other operations at that site.

Mr. Cheney further asked what cause the property to be removed from the 2020 8-year review.

Mr. Sorensen stated that when they conducted the 8-year review they looked closely at these properties to see if they were more of a commercial nature. The Town of Goshen made their comments and suggested it be removed however, the property owner is requesting to be included.

Ms. Stegenga added to Mr. Cheney's questions and asked if they have paddocks for horses, where are they stored or are they just storing hay and would that classify as an agricultural parcel.

Mr. Sorensen stated that their questions were valid and it still needs to be deliberated with the Agricultural and Protection Board

Ms. Tautel moved to set the public hearing for inclusion of lands in Agricultural Districts No. 1 for June 3, 2021 at 6:45 p.m., seconded by Ms. Stegenga.

On the motion of Ms. Tautel, seconded by Mr. Cheney, the meeting adjourned at 5:05p.m.