

**VALLEY VIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021
2:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: James D. O'Donnell, Chairman
Michael D. Paduch, Laurence LaDue, Eric Ruscher, Rosemary Kukys

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Mary Pat Smith, Assistant to the County Executive
Christopher Ericson, Deputy Commissioner of Health
Brian Titsworth, Deputy Commissioner of Infrastructure Services
(Buildings and Grounds), Dept. of Public Works
Scott Razzano, Director of Professional Services, Buildings and Grounds
Donna Strecker, Director of Finance, Valley View Center
Anthony Sole, Director of Plant Operations, Valley View Center
Ann Marie Maglione, Director, Office for the Aging
Johanna Porr, County Historian

Mr. O'Donnell opened the committee meeting at 2:31 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Amo and Mr. Bloomer who were absent.

On the agenda was a discussion on possible uses for the Parry Building at Valley View.

Mr. LaDue explained that he had requested that Scott Razzano, Director of Professional Services, Buildings and Grounds, prepare a summary on the Parry Building. The Department of Public Works has been overseeing the building when the County Clerk moved into the Parry building and was using it and Mr. Razzano has prepared the following summary. The building consists of approximately 60,000 square feet and construction drawings were completed in 1976. There are approximately 108 resident rooms and 80 bathrooms, and the building was used up until about 2008 when it was closed due to needed repairs and code compliant issues. The building has two original boilers and only one is functional. The cooling tower is decommissioned and unrepairable, the generator needs to be repaired but it does run if manually started. The oil tank outside needs to be replaced and many parts of the building have no heat due to bad fan coils/motors. Many parts of the building have no hot water, most gate valves for water are frozen and need to be replaced. Many pneumatic valves for heating and cooling need to be replaced along with piping for cooling. Elevators are original equipment and were constantly being worked on when they occupied the building. Pumps in the boiler room leak and need to be replaced and there are no disconnects in place and all electrical equipment is old and needs to be replaced. The sprinkler and fire alarms are outdated, the building floods in the main entrance hall during heavy rain, the water main shut off is not operational, a large percentage of bathrooms are inoperable, and the roof has been patched and repaired multiple times and needs to be replaced.

Mr. O'Donnell asked about the cost for this work. Mr. Razzano replied that the building is not code complaint as it currently stands. A full evaluation of the building needs to be done and, in

his opinion, it would not be wise to state a price unless they knew where they were going with the building. Would it be a medical facility, something similar or something totally different like an office building.

Mr. O'Donnell asked that Mr. Razzano garner information on the industry standard with respect to pricing if they were to gut the whole building and the cost if they keep it and market it as a health facility. Mr. Razzano replied that he would put something together.

Mr. O'Donnell responded that when the pandemic hit 18 months ago, he had a plan for the Parry building and that was to use it when they were short on hospital space; however, both the Commissioner of Health and Commissioner of Emergency Services did not agree. In all probability, the federal government would have paid for the repairs. Unfortunately, two months after his suggestion Governor Cuomo and New York State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Howard Zucker, put COVID-19 positive patients into Valley View and every other nursing home in New York State. They could have had the Parry building refurbished and up and running and paid for by the federal government if those two commissioners had agreed with him. The end goal of this committee is to find out how they can utilize that property to make Valley View profitable and self-sustainable.

Mr. Paduch commented that Mr. Razzano has made several good points; however, for a year and a half they were supposed to be putting together a master plan. How can Mr. Razzano give them a price when they do not have a master plan and do not know what they want to do with the property. There are several things that must be addressed including the parcels around Valley View and the wastewater treatment plant before a price can be placed on the building.

Mr. O'Donnell explained that the Parry building is one piece of the pie, and the master plan is a good idea, and they could hire someone to look at it. The goal and intent of this committee is to come up with a master plan of not just one idea but numerous ideas so that the full legislature can make a decision on how to move forward. His standpoint from the beginning was to look at the history of Valley View as provided by Johanna Porr, County Historian, current status of Valley View based on the annual department reports as provided by Laurence LaDue, Commissioner, Valley View Center, information on the surrounding properties and what is viable and not viable as provided by Eric Ruscher, Director, Real Property Tax Services, and once that is all comprised, they will have a document on the entire area. The last part would be the master plan and he is waiting on a call back from Dr. Jason N. Adsit, President, Mount Saint Mary's College, on the possibility of getting students involved as part of their thesis. When he spoke to Dr. Adsit a little over a year ago he was excited with the prospect and offered both health and business students; however, that is still being worked out. Once they have all these pieces together, they will have numerous different options on what to do at Valley View but part of that is getting a price on gutting the building and real estate values on the various parcels. They have a lot to do, and the COVID-19 pandemic did not help as they have not met for over a year and Valley View is struggling with 80% occupancy.

Chairman Brescia agreed that the master plan would be the final piece and they could wait years for a master plan; however, that should not preclude them from doing certain projects on the property so let's stop talking about it and do something.

On the agenda was an update on Valley View Real Property.

Mr. Ruscher referred to the maps and email that was sent to legislators and committee members on July 16, 2021, that included a solar guidebook, press release from Westchester County

on solar projects and Erie County's solar plans. He explained that solar companies generally prefer to be within a 10% slope and the large pad site above Valley View may be the area to explore, for it contains 32.6 acres, but they also have the 15.12 acres that is slightly more level. While he has gathered this information, he has not approached any particular solar company, but he has talked to New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) about projects and programs they offer. A 1-megawatt facility would power approximately 164 homes with the average home using about 800 kilowatts and about 10,000 kilowatts a year. Based on that the large pad site area at 4 megawatts would exceed electrical demand for Valley View, the Department of Social Services (DSS) building and the Parry building by 50% and well above the means of the entire complex. The smaller pad site would be at 2 megawatts and produce 78% of the solar energy needed for Valley View, Department of Social Services (DSS) and Parry building. Westchester County is looking at solar panels on nine county-owned properties with four sites directly offsetting the counties needs but the county would be required to come up with the funds for the project. The most popular is counties that are leasing the properties at between \$50,000.00 and \$80,000.00 a year and they are going into long-term contracts with the solar companies and then buying back the energy at reduced costs which is saving one county millions. There would be no upfront costs and they would see an immediate cost savings. On Route 17A in Goshen on the right there is a 5 megawatts project being built into the hill that will have 14 megawatts of storage as storing the electric is key. In December, the adjacent parcel of 23 acres owned by Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. was purchased for \$1 million. One negative aspect would be putting projects on agricultural lands which is why they are avoiding black dirt. In his opinion, it would be something worth exploring. In his original email he attached a video on ground leases for committee members to review.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if this would be like what was done at the Emergency Services building. Mr. Ruscher replied they he does not have the details of the agreement, but he would try to get that information for the committee.

Mr. O'Donnell asked for a breakdown of what Valley View pays for energy. Mr. Ruscher replied that they have three years of data.

Mr. Sole clarified that those bills would not show the efficiencies of the combined heat and power project that was just installed as it is now providing half the power to the facility that they would not see on an electric bill but are paying for in gas.

Mr. O'Donnell reiterated that their objective is to make Valley View self-sustainable.

Chairman Brescia asked if it would be possible to use stimulus funds. Mr. O'Donnell replied that they would look into it.

Mr. LaDue thanked both Messrs. Ruscher and Sole for their information and input. He agrees that the potential is there for solar and while Valley View may not need all of it, they could use it for other projects down the road.

On the agenda was a presentation on the history of the County House.

Ms. Porr presented the committee with a handout and power point entitled, "History of the County House" which explained how it went from a County Poorhouse to the Valley View Center for Nursing Care and Rehabilitation (see original minutes). The handout highlighted the following:

Poorhouses and Almshouses in early America with governments reluctant to get involved in regulating facilities and treatment. This resulted in towns and villages operating poorhouses in a wide range of ways. Some communities relied on church leaders and parishioners, while some local governments set aside a portion of local taxes to cover the expenses of housing and feeding the poor and some communities had a separate orphanage. As a result of the Yates Report, the New York State Legislature passed a law on November 27, 1824, that mandated each county in New York to erect a county house to care for the poor and disabled from their local municipalities. In 1829, Orange County officials met and established a committee to purchase 200 acres of land for that purpose. January 1830, the initial 129 acres were purchased from lawyer, William Thompson of Goshen, for \$3,225.00 and by 1835, all but four counties in New York State had erected poorhouses. In Orange County five superintendents were appointed as overseers of the "County House" in 1830 but after 1857, the site was managed by one elected official. In 1831, an eight-page booklet entitled, Rules, Regulations and By-Laws for the Government and Good Order of the Poorhouse of Orange County" was published. This defined the proper behavior and duties of the Keeper and Assistant. The Keeper maintained order through disciplinary measures and the Assistant was to ensure the facility was clean, regular meals were provided and to manage burials in the on-site bog land. Over time the location was referred to as "Orange Farm" and around 1837, a portion of the land was made into a work farm for residents to plant crops and for several decades, stocking and seeding the land would be a documented expense for the institution. Additions were made to the house and property over the years including a large workroom that doubled as a kitchen. In the 1840's landscape architect and Orange County native Andrew Jackson Downing was commissioned to design a psychiatric facility known as the "Utica Lunatic Asylum" to house individuals suffering from mental illness with Orange County sending patients who were difficult to that institution upstate. There was debate periodically on whether the "County House" should be dissolved in favor of sending those with the most severe needs to statewide facilities. For budgetary and humanitarian reasons many believed that the responsibility of caring for the poor should revert to the local level. Twenty years after the system was created Orange County was averaging 200 people in the poorhouse at any given time. Providing for them cost taxpayers approximately \$20,000.00 per year – equivalent to \$700,000.00 per year today. In 1847, the Orange County Board of Supervisors recommended that towns debate the issue and in 1853 the community of Newburgh formally withdrew from the county system. A poorhouse was erected called the "City and Town Home" and it continued to operate until 1946. The population of Orange County in 1860 was 63,812, giving one insane pauper to every 1,680 of its inhabitants to be treated and provided for in their charitable asylum. The moral impossibility of giving the insane proper care, or suitable medical treatment under the present system of "County Houses" was set forth by Dr. Townsend and the inadequate compensation to physicians and as imperative as the necessity appeared the lunatics in Orange County were better cared for than in most other counties. In 1875, The New York State Legislature dictated that "pauper and destitute children" should be transferred to institutions (often religious organizations) such as Catholic children to the Sisters of Charity in Port Jervis and Protestant children to Susquehann Valley Home in Binghamton for education and care. However, other times it entailed contracting children to the Children's Aid Society who would put them on "orphan trains" to Midwest farms. As a result of the depression of the 1930's the federal government began to carve out larger influences over poverty policies. There was a trend to support individuals without housing them in the institution, similar to the Outdoor Relief programs that were common before the Revolutionary War, but with a lot more standardization of eligibility than ever before. This culminated with a scandal in the city of Newburgh in which the government was stuck between choosing to comply with federal stipulations (which would bankrupt city finances) or refuse federal funds in order to continue to manage their own welfare system. They chose the latter, instituting tighter rules for those on the welfare system. In 1962, NBC produced an hour-long exposé called "The Battle of Newburgh." Criticism from

Governor Rockefeller and state injunctions followed, and the system was dissolved in favor of a welfare system solely under Orange County management and organized from the new Welfare Office located on the grounds of the old County House in Goshen. While all other purposes faded, care for the elderly remains. In 1979, The Orange County Residential Health Care Facility opened with the intent of providing senior housing and nursing care, and since the 1990's the facility has been known as the Valley View Center for Nursing Care and Rehabilitation.

Mr. O'Donnell asked if they were new buildings in 1979. Ms. Porr replied that it was slightly complicated as some things were preserved and some new buildings were built with different parts of the facility growing over time.

Ms. Kukys added that the Parry building was opened in the 1979 and the Glenmere building opened in the 1990's.

Mr. Sole clarified that the Parry building was built on 1977 and the Glenmere building in 1997.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested they find a way to fill the gap between 1979 and the present with respect to each individual building.

Ms. Porr recommended a paragraph on each building as it gets complicated when discussing which buildings were used for which purposes and how it changed over time.

Ms. Maglione addressed the aging population of Orange County. The Office for the Aging considers older adults (60 and older) one of the fastest growing populations and over the last three years they have seen an increase of between 23% and 25% a year. The magic number at one time was 85 years of age; however, people are living much longer and more independently with many living well into their hundreds and living independently with the services they provide. They are a non-medical office that deals with social determinants of health by keeping them engaged and active. Nutrition is a huge issue and during the COVID-19 pandemic the meals they served doubled. They not only provided meals but offer services like buy groceries and picking up prescriptions. Even though the pandemic has relaxed, and people have been vaccinated their numbers have not decreased due to food insecurity. They talk about food insecurities with children, but it also exists with older adults as they are on a limited income and are restricted to the funds they have. Elder abuse during the pandemic was difficult as people were isolated and keeping eyes and ears on people is extremely important. People are living independently longer; however, there will always be a need for assisted living facilities and nursing homes, and they provided a variety of services such as the social determinants, friendliness, activities and socialization are huge. They are now dealing with the aftermath of the pandemic with respect to isolation and depression. The mission of the Office for the Aging is to keep people living independently with the best quality of life for as long as possible. This trend will not be ending soon as it continues to grow and the longer people live the need for programs will be necessary such as those for nutrition, physical health, emotional health, mental health, dental health, and financial health. They also work closely with Valley View because there are times that older adults need to be in a nursing home.

Mr. LaDue asked about a timeline for the aging population to continue to increase. Ms. Maglione replied that it would plateau in 2030.

The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.