

**EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**(REMOTELY)
MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2020
4:00 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Thomas Faggione, Legislator
Peter Tuohy, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Kevindaryan Lujan, Legislator
James Kulisek, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Harry Porr, Deputy County Executive
Bill Fioravanti, Director, Economic Development
Nicole Andersen, Director, Community Development
Lucy Joyce, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative
Sarah McKay, Executive Director, Orange County Arts Council
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Deanna Crawford, Budget Analyst
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Chairman Ruskiewicz opened the committee meeting at 4:02 p.m. with a moment of silence and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Mr. Minuta who arrived at 4:05 p.m. and Mr. Sierra who arrived at 4:10 p.m.

Ms. Tautel moved the request to accept and appropriate \$1,343,670.00 in Emergency Solutions Grant funding (CARES Act funding) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, seconded by Ms. Stegenga.

Ms. Andersen explained that Community Development was going to enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Social Services. The goal is to help administer a homeless prevention program which will pay for utility and rental arrears for people who are at risk of homelessness and are being evicted from their homes.

Motion carried. All in favor with the exception of Mr. Sierra who had not arrived yet.

Ms. Joyce was next on the agenda with an update on Cornell Cooperative Extension. She explained that when the pandemic hit, they all pivoted quickly to stay in touch with participants and move forward in a positive way. Their educators immediately started online programs. Providing organizations and households with food became top priority. It is not usual for them to

deliver food to households but they were doing that and now starting to back off a little. Their Gleaning Program is very busy. They have been filling the truck with produce and emptying it in two days for months and that is unheard of for them to move that much produce. The Gleaning Program is 100% grant funded through the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program. They fund soup kitchens and food pantries. They have a Nourish New York Program where they would buy food or distribute coupons. Buying food is not something they normally do. They received \$129,000 grant for this, but instead of buying food, they wanted to contract with farmers for the food products that were in high demand but very limited. She addressed the disruption in dairy industry. There are three dairy farms in Orange County that pasteurize and process dairy products. There were able to buy milk from the local farmers and distribute locally, either in form of the product itself or through coupons. They have about \$20,000 worth of dairy coupons for Price Chopper located in Middletown and Newburgh. Those are a few ways that they plan to spend the money and they are trying to keep it as local as possible. She thanked the Legislature for the multiple resolutions and all of the support in helping them become recognized as an agriculture fair through Agriculture and Markets. Although there are no county fairs or state fairs this year, they are still able to receive premiums for the youth who participate.

Mr. O'Donnell commended Ms. Joyce on a great job she is doing. He extended his appreciation to one of the educators, Lisa Hintze and her daughter Madison, who sent appreciation cards to every police department and police officer in Orange County. That was very well done and he sincerely appreciates the support for the police.

Mr. Fioravanti was next on the agenda with a monthly update on Economic Development (see original minutes).

Mr. Cheney thanked Mr. Fioravanti for all of his work. He asked about the update within the report on the U.S. Space Command and Governor Cuomo not supporting the county's application. He asked if there was another application.

Mr. Fioravanti stated that he did not have an answer for that. The information came from Senator Gillibrand's office. He and the County Executive asked for her advocacy for the proposal and Senator Gillibrand's Chief of Staff called him the next day and thought the proposal was great, they contacted the Governor's office and were given the impression that the proposal for Stewart Airport will not have the Governor's support. He was interested why and tried to get an answer, it could be tied to the fact that it is a Port Authority airport, there may be other ideas for that, possibly keep cargo travel there. It is disappointing but they did not receive an indication from the Governor's office that they will support it.

Mr. Cheney asked his colleagues to do what they can to let the Governor know that this is important to Orange County and there were many items listed in the application that should stand out to the Federal Government and the Governor's office.

Mr. Kulisek ask if Mr. Fioravanti knew who was on the selection committee for the Grand Street properties RFP.

Mr. Fioravanti replied that Deputy County Executive Harry Porr put that together and he will ask him.

Mr. Porr responded that it was a small group and they plan to review the two proposals. He invited the President of the college, Dr. Young. The work will be quick so it will go fast with a plan to come back to the Legislature in September.

Mr. Kulisek stated that the dollar figure seemed very low.

Mr. Porr stated that the goal is what is in the best interest of the City of Newburgh and the college and the best use for those buildings. They will explore price, purpose and function of the two proposals that came in. The small group who will review the proposals are himself, Eric Ruscher, Bill Fioravanti, Dr. Kristine Young, Fred Watson and Damian Brady. All administrative people, all internal and they plan to get a lot of work done as soon as possible.

Mr. Kulisek asked if anyone from Newburgh was involved and Mr. Porr pointed out that he forgot to mention the City Manager who is also part of the review committee.

Mr. O'Donnell was disappointed that nobody from the Legislature was involved in the interview committee. He asked if Mr. Porr can talk to the County Executive to see if the Legislature could be part of that. The Legislature is in charge of the property so the fact that there is not one Legislator on the committee is very disappointing.

Mr. Porr mentioned that the purpose is to do the work as quickly as possible and when they get elected people involved they need to address open meetings law. He reminded the committee that no matter what they do, it needs to be approved by the Legislature.

Mr. Lujan commented on Mr. O'Donnell's remark and stated that this is a project that will affect the City of Newburgh, in his own district and will have a big impact. He was disappointed that Legislators will not be a part of this because it would be great to have input as elected officials, despite that it may slow things down. They know their districts very well and the make up and there is a reason why they were chosen to be on the Legislature.

Mr. Ruskiewicz agreed with Mr. Lujan and Mr. O'Donnell stating that he felt it would be beneficial to have a Legislator on the interview committee, although they do get a final say on it.

Mr. Porr pointed out that none of it can happen unless the Legislature approves it.

Mr. Minuta stated that if there was an opportunity for a Legislator or more, he would volunteer to be part of it considering his background and existing knowledge of those buildings. He stressed his disappointment of the Governor not backing the U.S. Space Command at Stewart Airport which is in his district. He asked Mr. Fioravanti if there was anything he can help with to promote this or someone he should speak to, let him know.

Ms. Reed stated that in the past when the Legislature reviewed proposals for the sale of real property, they had the proposers come in and present to the Legislature directly. They did that with Camp LaGuardia in the past and had the three proposers come in and did a slide presentation and a verbal presentation of what they were offering and what their plan was for the property. It was not part of the administrative review committee of the proposals, it gave the Legislature the opportunity to meet with the proposers and to understand what their vision was for Camp LaGuardia. She did not see why they would not do the same with the Grand Street properties. This would be after the proposals were reviewed and vetted by the administration.

Mr. O'Donnell agreed with Counsel and stated that it should not take the County Executive's office more than a month to review the two proposals. He asked Chairman Ruskiewicz to schedule the two proposer to come before the Legislature next month.

Mr. Ruskiewicz stated that he would work with the County Executive's office and put something together.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that they did not need to work with the County Executive's office, they just need to get the names and ask them to come in.

Last on the agenda was Sarah McKay who provided an update on the Arts Council. She stated that their last event prior to Covid-19 was the Student Art Showcase at the Galleria Mall and there were over 1,000 people in attendance. Since Covid-19 they doubled their membership and seen an increase in the demand for art support services. They were able to pivot quickly to virtual events and as a result the attendance has increased by 100%. Prior to virtual, the locations where they would host the event would have a capacity of thirty to forty people, now they see two hundred plus people register for one single event online. They met with the Port Authority back in March and they were talking about bringing back their Arts Department for all their airports, starting with Stewart Airport. The conversation has been tabled due to the pandemic, but it would have been a giant sculpture in Stewart Airport. They will need to revisit the conversation. They also met with the MTA and were on their panel with several local government leaders from Port Jervis. They have a new train station with murals that were decided on by the panel. Due to the present challenges, they opened free virtual online art classes supported by independent funding. They had over 130 students participate and they had it in Spanish and English to support all the families during these difficult times. A new virtual program this year is called Artist Conversations with Industry and each month they invite industry leaders to discuss opportunities and careers in the arts with artists and it has been a big success. They hope they can help with the campaign "Escape from New York" bringing more people from New York City into Orange County. They started a campaign on social media which exploded and it was very exciting and has gone international. Ms. McKay displayed a short video.

Mr. Kulisek noted that the video touched on every corner of the county from Warwick, to Pine Bush, Newburgh all the way to Greenwood Lake and it hit all avenues of the county. He wanted to provide as much support as they can to the Arts Council.

Ms. McKay announced that on September 15, 2020, the annual Hudson Valley Creative Impact event will be held at Storm King. Only fifty people are allowed to attend physically, they plan to air it virtually. She extended the invitation to all Legislators.

Mr. Lujan thought it was great to see that this project spread throughout the county. He knows many people who have participated. It is great to see, especially with everything going on with Covid-19, particularly our youth who were forced to be home. He thanked Ms. McKay for all the work they have been doing.

Mr. Minuta applauded Ms. McKay for all her efforts and noted that Orange County is a beacon for the arts. He commended her on the great job she did on her presentation and thanked her for all her work.

Mr. Ruskiewicz stated that trying to do things virtually can be challenging but it was great to see they were able to reach a broader audience and hopefully it will continue post Covid-19. She really does reach every part of the county and it is great to see.

On the motion of Ms. Tautel, seconded by Mr. Cheney, the meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.