

RULES, ENACTMENTS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2022
3:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Paul Ruskiewicz, Chairman
Michael Amo, Barry J. Cheney, Thomas J. Faggione, Kevin W. Hines, Michael D. Paduch,
Kathy Stegenga

ALSO

PRESENT: Katie Bonelli, Chairwoman
Betsy N. Abraham, Esq., Legislative Counsel
Langdon Chapman, Commissioner, Human Resources
Donna McCarey, Deputy Commissioner, Human Resources
Alan Sorensen, ACIP, Commissioner of Planning
Erin Sztendor, Budget Analyst

Mr. Ruskiewicz opened the meeting at 3:30 p.m. and requested everyone stand for the Pledge. All members were present with the exception of Legislator Sierra, who was absent.

Mr. Paduch moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature sending a Home Rule request to the New York State Legislature in support of Legislation amending General Municipal Law and the Tax Law, in relation to including the County of Orange within the definition of a "Designated Community" under the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act of 2007, seconded by Mr. Hines.

Mr. Sorensen explained that this would allow any municipality within Orange County to pursue the development of a Community Preservation Plan and subsequently put in place a Real Estate Transfer Tax to fund their Community Preservation Plan. This tool has been used successfully by the Town of Warwick and other towns throughout the Hudson Valley to not only protect open space but to help maintain viable agricultural lands and critical mass of agriculture land within the Hudson Valley. They are in the early stages of updating the County's 2004 Open Space Plan and are looking for opportunities and tools to help preserve open space with one of those proven effective tools being the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

Mr. Hines pointed out that Orange County passed this previously; however, it was killed at the New York State Senate.

Mr. Ruskiewicz clarified that it was stopped in Senator Skoufis' committee.

Mr. Sorensen added that individual Orange County towns have pursued it, but they were stopped at the Governor's desk. If put into, law each municipality would not have to get their own legislative act as they would be under this umbrella. However, they would still be required to go through the process of developing a Community Preservation Plan and a referendum to establish the transfer tax within their communities.

Mr. Cheney asked for clarification on the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act of 2007 and why Orange County was not included. Mr. Sorensen replied that he cannot say why they were not included in the initial act, but he could research it. There are many communities throughout the Hudson Valley that have had their Community Preservation Plans approved by the State legislature and signed by the Governor. The merits and strengths of all the applications from Orange County including the recent one from the Town of Blooming Grove were deserving of approval yet they were not successful and no different than the ones in Dutchess County that were approved.

Mr. Cheney stated that he found it disturbing that other communities received approval, yet Orange County communities have not, and they were no more deserving than the communities in Orange County that applied.

Mr. Cheney asked if Ulster County was a designated community. Mr. Sorensen replied that he was unsure.

Mr. Cheney expressed his support and hopes it will be successful this time because he has seen the impact and results in the Town of Warwick.

Mr. Amo recalled that in the Town of Chester this was turned down by the Governor due to possible litigation pursued by the New York State Attorney General with regard to semitic issues.

Several legislators agreed with Mr. Amo's recollection.

Mr. Amo emphasized that Orange County seems to have a mark on it with respect to the Governor's office. If that is the problem, how do they avoid it and not disenfranchise people in any community.

Ms. Stegenga pointed out that the lawsuit would not have had any impact as this is an attempt to keep some of the characteristics and ideals of those towns and villages.

Mr. Amo asked if approved by the Governor would it be easier for every municipality to have a Community Preservation Plan. Mr. Ruskiewicz replied that it would only take one step out of the process, and they would still have to go through the rest of the process.

Mr. Sorensen clarified that this would make them eligible to pursue and develop a Community Preservation Plan, but a referendum would still be needed to impose the Real Estate Transfer Tax.

Mr. Amo stated that he recognizes the issues his constituents are dealing with on a regular basis. While the whole concept is not a bad idea he would be voting no because he is concerned with how it could be misused by someone.

Mr. Paduch asked if this was just adding another tax. Mr. Sorensen replied that it would have to go out for referendum.

Motion passed 6-1 with Legislators Cheney, Faggione, Hines, Paduch, Stegenga and Ruskiewicz voting in favor and Legislator Amo voting against.

Ms. Stegenga moved request that the Legislature form a retention/recruitment committee consisting of the Chairperson of the Legislature (or her designee), Chairperson of Personnel and Compensation Committee, Majority Leader, Minority Leader and Director of Operations. Committee will be authorized to approve such incentives upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Human Resources as are necessary to attract/retain qualified employees within available Departmental appropriations and consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements. The Committee will receive advice of the Budget Director to determine available appropriations, seconded by Mr. Hines.

Mr. Chapman explained that this is one of the tools they are trying to use to attack the problem of retention/recruitment.

Mr. Hines asked if they would need approval by the unions. Mr. Chapman replied that it would depend on the circumstances so they may have to negotiate with the unions on one and not another.

Mr. Hines asked if Mr. Chapman planned on speaking with the unions. Mr. Chapman replied that this has been shared with the unions.

Mr. Hines asked if it there was any positive and/or negative feedback. Mr. Chapman replied that it was a private discussion; however, they recognize that this must be used tactfully, and different people will have different views on it.

Chairwoman Bonelli applauded the efforts of Mr. Chapman in addressing their retention and recruitment issues.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Stegenga moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature proclaiming September 17, 2022 through September 23, 2022 as constitution week, seconded by Mr. Amo.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Faggione moved resolution recognizing September 15, 2022 through October 15, 2022 as National Hispanic Heritage Month, seconded by Ms. Stegenga.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Cheney moved resolution of the Orange County Legislature designating September 2022 as "Prostate Cancer Awareness Month," seconded by Mr. Faggione.

Mr. Faggione explained that Mr. Abramson, a prostate cancer survivor and founder of Cultivating Healing and Justice Initiative Support Services, Inc., made a brief presentation at the Health and Mental Health committee. Mr. Abramson stressed awareness, outreach and the one-of-a-kind Mobile Prostate Cancer Screening Unit from Mt. Sinai Hospital were important in his mission.

Mr. Amo agreed that this is a disease that effects so many men with his own father dying from prostate cancer. In his opinion, the biggest message is receiving a second opinion before treatment.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.