

**WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**(REMOTELY)
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020
3:30 P.M.**

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

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Thomas J. Faggione, Legislator
Kathy Stegenga, Legislator
Laurie R. Tautel, Legislator
Peter V. Tuohy, Legislator
John S. Vero, Legislator
Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Harry Porr, Deputy County Executive
Dan Bloomer, Director, Operations and Cost Control
Matthew Nothnagle, Chief Asst. County Attorney
Stacy Butler, Senior Assistant County Attorney
Karin Hablow, Commissioner of Finance
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner of Finance
Erik Denega, Commissioner, Dept. of Public Works
Travis Ewald, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Public Works/Engineering Div.
Robert Gray, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Public Works/
Environmental Facilities & Services
Louise Vandemark, Commissioner of Elections
Courtney Canfield Greene, Commissioner of Elections
Edward Magryta, Director of Aviation, Orange County Airport
Eric Ruscher, Director, Real Property Tax Service
Deborah Slesinski, Budget Director
Deanna Crawford, Budget Analyst
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Chairman Benton opened the committee meeting at 3:32 p.m. by asking everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

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

Mr. Benton clarified that Mr. Ruscher is not recommending that any of the four parcels (1-1-50.2, 103-2-3, 9-2-3, 218-1-89.2) be approved because the bidder for parcel number two in Monroe has rescinded his bid.

Mr. Ruscher stated that is correct.

Motion carried. All in favor of not taking any action on the four deed sale parcels.

Ms. Hablow addressed the committee with a brief update regarding Sales Tax by reviewing the County of Orange Sales Tax Received Year-To-Date, County Portion Only and a graph of the County Share-Sales Tax 2020 vs. 2019 (see original minutes).

The next agenda item was a Budget Department update. Ms. Slesinski stated that the month of August always flies by in the Budget Department. Over the past two weeks, they have met with each department either in person or remotely to view their budget submission. There were several departments noting the financial position the county is in who came to the table with cuts while others went back and came back with additional cuts. Currently, there is about \$12 million in potential cuts to the 2021 budget with a gap of about \$24 million. This week and next, the department is going to continue to evaluate measures to reduce the gap as well as do a second review of all the department requests taking into consideration all the vacant positions, spending trends and revenues. They are also waiting for health insurance and pension rates to be released. She pointed out that under the circumstances with all the counties in this precarious position on how to budget in a pandemic, sooner rather than later would be helpful. Furthermore, this is a work in progress, so she will keep everyone posted. There is still an unknown related to state funding which effects this year and next. On Friday, she received word from some state agencies that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the state has begun withholding 20% of local aid payments going back to June. If the federal government delivers funding to the states to offset the revenue loss, the level of state planned reductions may be reduced. In the absence of such a recovery aid, all or a portion of the current withholding may be converted to permanent reductions. She mentioned that there is still some ambiguity about how this is going to be calculated, but it could be several millions of dollars; therefore, there are still many unknowns. As far as casino revenue, \$2.5 million was budget and the county received a first quarter payment of \$404,000.00 and then the casino shutdown. She does not think any more revenue will be received for the rest of the year and her main concern is whether to budget any funds in 2021. Furthermore, the department is keeping an eye on the sales tax which is increasing in a positive direction. She is hopeful that in the end, that there will be increased revenue. In conclusion, the department is reviewing all the spending that happens as well as every vacant position. As of July 31, 2020, there were 286 vacant full and part-time positions and based on that number, the county has achieved a savings of \$10.9 million to-date.

Mrs. Bonelli asked if the budget department is receiving any legislative requests that need to be rejected.

Ms. Slesinski replied no. Most of the legislative requests are accepting grant funds and a couple of capital projects which have been through. She stated most of the departments have been cognizant of putting through a capital project or not.

Mr. Paduch asked if all departments met the requirement for the fifteen percent cut.

Ms. Slesinski replied no. There have been some changes periodically, but right now, the vacancies are going a long way to meeting the fifteen percent.

Mr. Benton clarified that the \$10.9 million is the vacancy factor.

Ms. Slesinski stated that is correct.

Ms. Tautel asked if the voluntary layoffs are included in the \$10.9 million.

Ms. Slesinski replied yes, that is part of the savings.

Mrs. Bonelli moved to adopt a resolution approving the release of the County's interest in and to a certain deed sale parcel to the previous owner of record, to wit: Town of Palm Tree, SBL 357-11-1.-1 (formerly Town of Monroe SBL 62-2-1.-1). The property owner(s) paid the delinquent property taxes prior to public auction but after the County took title to the property, seconded by Mr. Kulisek.

Mr. Nothnagle stated this is a request that has been presented several times under Local Law No. 2 of 2010. The property owner was able to get the full amount of money owed for the property, so he is asking that the committee approve this so he can proceed to the next step to vacate the deed and judgement.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Kulisek moved to approve the request confirming and, to the extent necessary, authorizing the transfer of funds from Beaver Dam Lake Operating Budget Fund Balance to Capital Project No. 852, for the Beaver Dam Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District, \$659,000.00 (supplemental appropriation required), seconded by Mrs. Bonelli.

Mr. Denega stated the department previously requested the application be submitted to the Comptroller's Office to revise the ceiling on the project for an additional \$659,000.00 to complete construction. Through that process, the application was submitted, and the public hearing was held. At this point, the Comptroller's Office has yet to respond to the application. However, the County Attorney's Office gave them notification and that is why the approval is needed.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to the Capital Projects budget for capital improvements to the solid waste operations at the Orange County Transfer Station #1 (Trailer Parking Pad – required by the DEC). This project has been approved under the 2020 Capital Plan as Project No. 75. Upon approval a new capital project will be created, \$180,000.00 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Minuta.

Mr. Denega explained this request is for the New Hampton Transfer Station and is mandated by the DEC to help capture the seepage out of the trucks with the solid waste as they sit and wait to be transferred. It is a pad like a storm water basin where everything would be collected into a basin for proper collection for environmental protection.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to the Capital Projects budget for Runway/Taxiway Slurry Sealing and Painting. This project has been approved under the 2020 Capital Plan as Project No. 28. Upon approval a new capital project will be created, \$50,000.00 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Benton.

Mr. Denega stated slurry sealing and painting is related to the safety and longevity of the life of the asset.

Mr. Magryta explained this is related to the FAA grant assurances for pavement in order to maintain and keep the pavement in good to excellent condition through the expected lifespan of the pavement. This would include any necessary repairs and preventive maintenance that would prevent the pavement from going into the fair or poor category prior to its useful life. There are a couple of taxiways and aprons that are very much in need of this work and are at the point where the longevity of this pavement lasts until the next FAA grant window for pavement replacement which is around 2024-2025.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Ms. Sutherland moved to approve the request for supplemental appropriation to the Capital Projects budget for Airport Infrastructure capital improvements. This project has been approved under the 2020 Capital Plan as Project No. 10. Upon approval a new capital project will be created, \$50,000.00 (bonding), seconded by Mr. Kulisek.

Mr. Magryta stated the airport is 97% full. One important issue is the condition of some of the pavements in areas where there were vacancies and are now full of tenants. There are also areas of pavement that are well passed their useful life in fair to poor condition. He added these areas need to be reclaimed and repaired with new pavement.

Ms. Tautel asked if this will be grant funded or coming out of the budget.

Mr. Magryta replied this is being funded out of bonding. The FAA does not cover that part of the area.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Kulisek moved the request to accept and appropriate additional state revenue of \$133,707.07 and apply it towards debt service and project can be closed. The Board of Elections received revenues of \$729,362.50 under the 2006 Capital Project No. 147 to purchase voting machines, voting booths and election day supply carts. Total expenses for the project were \$595,655.43, seconded by Mrs. Bonelli.

Ms. Vandemark explained they have been researching this grant and being this is a 14 year-old project, they cannot locate the files. She spoke to Mr. Green earlier today who told her that it was for the original voting machines, any necessary equipment that was needed at that time for the polling sites, carts and voting booths; therefore, this request is for the unexpended funds. They have looked through files and tried the best they could, so this is the only information they have.

Mr. Benton clarified this was part of the original "Help America Vote Act" that some legislators voted for a long time ago which helped with the machine process.

Ms. Vandemark stated that is correct. It was for the original machines and necessary equipment.

Regarding the email sent out to all legislators from Mrs. Reed, Mr. Benton asked her if she is satisfied with this.

Mrs. Reed replied that she reached out to Bonnie in the Finance Department who handles the capital projects and basically this is reimbursement from the State for the project. As always, the State is a little behind in reimbursing us. She urged the Board of Elections to make sure all claims and vouchers were submitted so if there are any additional funds that can be reimbursed, they could do so.

Mrs. Bonelli thanked Mrs. Reed for her initiative in reaching out to the Finance Department who then reviewed the information thoroughly and gave a good explanation as to why this took so long. She stated Albany is very laxed when it comes to reimbursing the county for expenses over 14 years ago. It is unacceptable.

Motion carried. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.