

# Inter-County Association of Western New York

% Steuben County Legislature, 3 East Pulteney Square, Bath, New York 14810

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Carol Ferratella, President – Steuben  
Mark Rondinaro, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Schuyler  
L. Thomas Sweet, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Chemung  
Amanda L. Chapman, Secretary – Steuben  
Brenda K. Scotchmer, Treasurer – Steuben

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE:  
Brenda Rigby Riehle, Allegany  
Chad Klotzbach, Genesee  
Sarah Purdy, Yates

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:  
Rochelle Stein, Genesee  
John Fitzak, Orleans  
James W. D. Howell, Schuyler

*Representing the Counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chemung, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tompkins, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates*

## **\*\*MINUTES\*\***

*Friday, April 18, 2025*

*Beaver Hollow Conference Center*

*1083 Pit Road*

*Java Center, NY*

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Carol Ferratella, President (Steuben), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and asked Ellen Grant (Wyoming) to provide the Invocation and Rory Binkleman (Wyoming County Veteran) to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **II. ROLL CALL OF COUNTIES**

Allegany (2), Cattaraugus (0), Cayuga (0), Chautauqua (1), Chemung (1), Erie (0), Genesee (1+1), Livingston (1), Monroe (0), Niagara (1), Ontario (0), Orleans (1), Schuyler (1), Seneca (1), Steuben (2+1), Tompkins (0), Wayne (0), Wyoming (3+4), Yates (0). **16 members and 6 guests.**

Others in attendance included the following individuals representing Wyoming County: Jim Brick, Vice Chair of the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors, representing the Town of Perry; Scott Schrader, Wyoming County Administrator; Bryan Kehl, Supervisor representing the Town of Attica; and Tony Solina, Director, Wyoming County Veterans Services.

### **III. WELCOME**

Rebecca Ryan, Chair of the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors stated thank you for the opportunity to host and welcome to Wyoming County and our hidden gem at Beaver Hollow. Following the meeting, please take the time to explore the trails and the pond. She thanked Kathy Snyder, President and COO of Beaver Hollow for hosting us. Ms. Ryan shared the following fun facts about Wyoming County:

- Wyoming County is 184 years old
- Population is 40,000 and cows outnumber people
- Wyoming County is 596 square miles
- Tourism claim to fame is Letchworth State Park, known as the Grand Canyon of the East
- Top industry is agriculture; we are #1 in the State for market value and #2 in the State in milk production
- In 2022 we had 638 farms, and the average farm size was 320 acres
- In addition to rolling hills, farmlands, woodlands and streams, you may also spot Water Buffalo, Bison and Zebra at Hidden Animal Adventures
- Top employers are Wyoming County Government and Wyoming County Health System
- Wyoming County is one of two counties that own their own hospital and health care system
- Wyoming County is the home to Morton Salt and New York Chips

Ms. Ryan also provided a brief history of famous people that have lived/worked in Wyoming County including:

- Daniel Bakeman - last surviving veterans of the American Revolution War and longest and only marriage on record to have claimed to exceed 90 years.
- Ed Don George - professional wrestler and naval commander in WWII
- Barber Conable – U.S. Senate/Congress and former head of the World Bank

Ms. Ryan stated there are many other well known unsung heroes. It is appropriate that we are here at Beaver Hollow today as this has become a refuge for many of our national military heroes.

#### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

*The minutes of the March 21, 2025, meeting were approved upon the motion of Gary Maha (Genesee), seconded by Tom Sweet (Chemung), and duly carried.*

#### V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Brenda Scotchmer, (Steuben) stated during the month of March, the association received \$900 and paid out \$762.00. Balance as of March 31, 2025 is \$6,544.08.

*The Treasurer's Report from March 31, 2025, was approved upon the motion of Brenda Rigby Riehle (Allegany), seconded by Tom Sweet (Chemung) and duly carried.*

#### VI. NYSAC UPDATE

Alexandra Regan (NYSAC) provide an update on the budget, proposed legislation and NYSAC programs.

- **2025-2026 State Budget**
  - We do not have a State budget and there are no concrete updates at this time.
  - One of the issues delaying the adoption of the budget is Discovery reform.
  - State Budget deadline was April 1<sup>st</sup>, however, it is not unusual for the State to have a late budget.
- **Issues Holding Up Adoption of State Budget**
  - *Discovery Reform* – They are close to an agreement. Speaker Heastie presented the Assembly proposal to the Governor and Senate. We feel pretty good with where we are with that.
  - *Mask Bans in Public*
  - *Discussions Regarding how the Lieutenant Governor Should be Elected*

Ms. Regan stated lawmakers were scheduled to be on break this week and last week, however, that did not happen. The Governor sent them home yesterday for Easter Break. The 6<sup>th</sup> extender will be in place through Wednesday. Lawmakers are expected to be back in town Tuesday/Wednesday, and we hope they will reach a budget deal by this coming Sunday. Once lawmakers reach a deal, that will not be the end of discussions as we are expecting federal cuts. Ms. Regan stated NYSAC is working on our priorities for the remaining session. There are only 22 days until session ends at the end of June and this includes adoption of the County Sales Tax Extenders. We will release our priorities which are based largely on the resolutions we adopted at conference.

- **NYSAC Priorities** – Ms. Regan stated we are advocating for no new cuts or new mandates for counties. We are also working on getting flexible funding for counties.
  - *County Infrastructure Program*
    - \$50 million available to every County; \$1 million to each County.
    - May be used for water, sewer, broadband, housing infrastructure
      - Aimed at community development.
    - NYSAC is pushing for more programs like this.
- **Finance Update**
  - *Sales Tax*
    - Growth is slowing and approximately 31 counties received less sales tax.
    - New York City payments were up about 6 percent and for the other counties, payments were down about 2 percent compared to last year.

- 29 counties are in the negative and 29 counties are in the positive. The variance is due to a number of factors.
- NYSAC will be able to provide more information once they have a chance to look at the number from January – April.
- *Pension*
  - March 31<sup>st</sup> was the end of the last State fiscal year.
  - State Comptroller Report
    - Investment rates are down and that means the county cost could go up.
- *RAPID Act*
  - Gives the Office of Renewable Energy (ORES) siting control over large projects and transmission projects. The goal is to expedite siting. New legislation has added transmission projects and ORES had to come out with new regulations.
  - NYSAC had another opportunity to raise concerns and emphasize the need for more local control.
    - NYSAC submitted comments this week and we recommended different ways to include local governments in the siting process. We advocated for more local control and for the protection of agricultural lands and the environment.
  - Based on feedback we received, we provided concrete recommendations to make the process better for local communities.
    - More pre-application engagement with local governments.
    - Provide timely information about intervener funding.
    - Improved technical assistance for municipalities.
      - Dedicated program offering technical support, standardized templates and regular training.
    - Stronger agricultural and environmental protections,
      - Mandate solar screening scorecards to determine if projects are sustainable.
      - Reinstate the role of Agriculture & Markets to provide oversight.
      - Requirement to provide timely feedback.
      - Institute a public violations database.
      - Institute a clear process for public participation.
        - They currently have 21 days to provide public comments, and we would like to see that extended to 30 days, if not longer.
      - Mandate a notification requirement when project ownership changes.
      - Institute more robust decommissioning standards.

Ms. Regan stated ORES will have one year to finalize their regulations.

- ***Grant Opportunities*** – There is additional money being made available.
  - *Environmental Bond Act*
    - Voters approved the \$4.2 billion bond act.
    - *Clean Water / Clean Air Act*
      - Originally \$100 million was made available to school districts to transition to electric buses.
      - Additional \$200 million is now available.
      - 75 school districts have applied and purchased 350 electric buses.
      - 250 school districts are working with NYSERDA to develop plans to electrify their fleets.
    - *Water Infrastructure*
      - \$479 million is available for local projects.

- \$200 million is to be used for water infrastructure improvement program and inter-municipal programs for water and sewer infrastructure.
- Water infrastructure in New York State is very old.
- There are 3 resiliency programs with a total of \$80 million available.
  - *Resilient Watersheds Grant Program*
    - \$45 million available through NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) flood mitigation projects. This is flexible funding.
  - *Coastal Rehabilitation and Resilience Projects*
    - \$20 million from the NYS Department of State is available to coastal communities.
  - *Inland Waterways and the Local Water Revitalization Program Implementation Projects*
    - \$15 million from the NYS Department of State.
    - Improve waterfront and watershed resiliency and reduce flooding.

Ms. Regan stated to sign up for these grants, please visit [www.environmentalbondact.ny.gov](http://www.environmentalbondact.ny.gov).

➤ ***Connect All Funding Opportunities***

- *ConnectAll Deployment Program*
  - Applications Due April 25<sup>th</sup>
  - \$50 million available to support deployment of broadband to unserved and underserved locations statewide.
- *ConnectAll Connectivity Innovation Program – Mobile Service*
  - New funding of \$5 million to help close the gaps with cellular coverage.
  - Applications due June 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - [www.wireless@esd.ny.gov](http://www.wireless@esd.ny.gov)

➤ ***NYSAC Webinars / Programs / Conferences***

- *Short-Term Rental Law*
- *NY HELPS Program*
  - This program provides for flexibility for State and local governments to hire employees by bypassing Civil Service, at least temporarily, to help speed up with the hiring process. This has been a tremendous asset to numerous counties. They will also be hosting a webinar on April 21<sup>st</sup> on how counties are leveraging NY HELPS to build their public health workforce.
- *Finance School*
  - Will be held May 7<sup>th</sup> – May 9<sup>th</sup> in Warren County.

Gary Barnes (Allegany) asked is there any significant hope for improvement of the Discovery process? Ms. Regan stated we have been working with the District Attorneys Association of New York (DASNY) to bring legislative amendments to the law. The Assembly has accepted our recommendations and those have been presented to the Senate and the Governor. We will not know the status of that until the budget is enacted.

Don Wester (Livingston) asked has there been any further discussion about the closing of five prisons? We had heard a rumor that they might be closing Groveland Correctional Facility and that is something that Livingston County is very concerned about. Ms. Regan stated we do not know which prisons the Governor is considering. NYSAC is advocating for more funding for those communities that are affected by prison closings. We were advocating for additional DRI funding for Warren County. Our focus is on making sure we can get money to transition those communities that will be affected.

Don Wester (Livingston) stated Livingston County is also concerned with the large solar projects and our ability to maintain and preserve prime agricultural soil. It is confusing in terms of what the landowners can control

versus local laws that prevent solar farms. We are concerned that landowners will not have control of their land. Ms. Regan stated it is a difficult process for siting. The large solar projects will go through ORES.

Residents are entitled to make decisions about what to do with their property. The approach for the small solar projects is to provide resources and information. NYSAC is advocating for more technical assistance and training from the State. The State is requiring developers to pay a fee per acre and there is also a requirement to put decommissioned land back to agricultural use. She stated there is a bill that the Legislature is considering allowing farmers to sell portions of their land for renewable energy and to keep the agricultural designation.

Elizabeth Partee (Seneca) asked is there a State requirement about returning land to the developer or future owner? Ms. Regan stated if the project is sold, then the land and requirements are transferred to the new owner. The fee per acre is paid up front, so it should not matter who the owner is. She stated she will check that regulation.

John Fitzak (Orleans) asked with the grant, are there strings attached, or are they up-front funded grants? Ms. Regan stated those grants do have a local match requirement and we are trying to get the amount of the match down. Right now, those grants require a 50 percent match. We anticipate there will be another \$50 million appropriation, and we are pushing for a change to reduce the match to 25 percent. These grant funds are really flexible, and the State is working with each county and trying to find the projects that counties want to do. John Fitzak (Orleans) commented it is hard for counties to come up with a 50 percent match when we are held to the 2 percent tax cap.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

Mark Rondinaro (Schuyler) requested for the future that the Association not hold meetings on Good Friday.

**VIII. RESOLUTIONS**

*Secretary's Note:* No Resolutions were received.

**IX. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Friday, May 9, 2025, in Seneca County.

*Motion to Adjourn made by Mark Rondinaro (Schuyler), seconded by Tom Sweet (Chemung) and duly carried.*

*Secretary's Note:* Following the conclusion of the meeting, Tony Solinas, Director, Wyoming County Veterans Services, provided a presentation on the Veterans Service Program. Additionally, Kathy Snyder, President and COO of Beaver Hollow provided a presentation on the Beaver Hollow Veterans Program.

Respectfully Submitted by



Amanda L. Chapman, Secretary  
Inter-County Association of Western New York