

**STEBEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*Wednesday, July 5, 2023*

*9:45 a.m.*

*Legislative Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Annex Building  
Bath, New York*

**\*\*MINUTES\*\***

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Aaron I. Mullen, Chair Paul E. Van Caesele	Hilda T. Lando, Vice Chair	Carol A. Ferratella
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jack K. Wheeler Marie Myers Shearing	Jennifer Prossick Eric Rose	Jennifer Galvan
<b>LEGISLATORS:</b>	Scott J. Van Etten John V. Malter	Kelly H. Fitzpatrick Robert V. Nichols	Wendy Lozo Frederick G. Potter
<b>ABSENT:</b>	James Kuhl		
<b>OTHERS:</b>	Mary Perham Tess McKinley, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension Brian Hildreth, Executive Director, Southern Tier Library System Pauline Emery, Library Director, Southeast Steuben County Library Denise Chilson, Library Director, Hornell Public Library Connie Beall, Co-Director, Addison Public Library Elisa Tobia		

*Secretary's Note: James Kuhl attended via Zoom, however, not under the Extraordinary Circumstance exemption.*

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Mullen called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

**II. MINUTES**

**MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 7, 2023, MEETING MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

**III. DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS**

A. Buildings & Grounds

1. **Authorization to Extend Contract with Fire Service Technology** – Mr. Rose requested authorization to extend the contract with Fire Service Technology for one year at an annual cost of \$16,400. This is for fire alarm monitoring and testing.

**MOTION: AUTHORIZING THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT WITH FIRE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY FOR ONE YEAR FOR AN ANNUAL COST OF \$16,400 FOR FIRE ALARM MONITORING AND TESTING SERVICES MADE BY MR. VAN CAESELE. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

B. Planning

1. **Contract Extension** – Ms. Myers Shearing requested authorization to extend contracts with LaBella relative to the administration and engineering services for the CDBG Woodlands project. The paving and

electrical project needs to be extended to October 31, 2023 as there were some supply issues. Both the administration and the engineering services contracts are due to expire.

**MOTION: AUTHORIZING THE PLANNING DIRECTOR TO EXTEND THE CONTRACTS WITH LABELLA RELATIVE TO THE ADMINISTRATION AND ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE CDBG WOODLAND PROJECT (1115PR85-20) THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2023, MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Mr. Van Etten asked how much money has been spent on this project? Mr. Wheeler replied we could get a report, but it has been hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Swackhamer explained the previous owner let the park go down and they negotiated with the new owner and sold it to the community of owners and they were able to get grants to upgrade the facility. Mr. Nichols commented it would have been better to have built a new trailer park someplace else. They are paying for prevailing wages, engineering, etc. Mr. Swackhamer stated agreed. Mrs. Lando asked can we get a report? Mr. Wheeler replied yes. He stated no County funds were used for this; these were all pass through funds. Mr. Swackhamer commented it was great that they could come into our area. They had to go through a lot of legal work to get something done for these 104 – 106 trailer owners. Mr. Wheeler stated we don't have the number of CDBG projects that a large city would have.

Mrs. Ferratella asked what is the timeframe for the end of this project? Ms. Myers Shearing replied they have extended the project through October 31, 2023. The reason for the extension was due to supply issues. Mr. Mullen commented if you have 100 trailers in the park, it would have been astronomical to replace that number of homes and build a new infrastructure and would have been way in excess of what was spent for the CDBG grant. Mr. Van Etten stated my point is we are spending taxpayer dollars on a privately owned facility. Mr. Wheeler commented with CDBG projects, most are on private property. That is what the funding is for.

2. **First Transit** – Mr. Mullen asked what is the status of the RFP for First Transit? Ms. Myers Shearing replied we had a day-long review with NYS DOT and the contractor for FTA funding and a representative from First Transit attended. We also went to Elmira to look at the buses. They are currently checking through the financials and procurement policies. Next month she will need to come to the committee with a slight adjustment to her job specifications. This review happens every three years. There have been some conversations about doing a traffic study and there may be funding available for that and going out to contract may be a possibility. Mr. Mullen asked we could also try to push them toward collecting the data we need? Ms. Myers Shearing replied yes. They collect from the previous year and then do a checkup in the first of the year. You don't get the exact data until the next February. We are trying to get better data. She noted that First Transit has indicated that ridership is rebounding some. There is a transit committee in the City of Corning and they may have some bearing on that as well.

C. County Manager

1. **Broadband** – Mr. Wheeler stated they spoke with Empire two weeks ago and they also had a meeting with some of the towns. We will help out as much as we can. They are currently working on the build out and make ready documents and are in the final design. We should have the final maps in the next couple of months with construction to begin in 2024.

Mrs. Lando stated there is money for Broadband available. Will we try to get some of that or will we get that automatically? Mr. Wheeler replied you will not get it automatically. He stated that he has a call into the NYS Broadband Office. They like the STN model as it encompasses multiple counties. Steuben County is so geographically large and diverse that for the last mile connection, the providers cannot economically do it and those are the gaps we have to bridge. We need to fund a large project or incentivize the carriers with ARPA funds to make that last connection. They seem to understand that. We will keep our eyes open and we have a call with STN about some of the grant funds that are out there. There will be more discussions on how they will allocate the money and what that process will be.

Mrs. Lando asked that should not affect anything that we already have planned? Mr. Wheeler replied no. They agreed we need to leverage State funds to expand further. I would guess it will be a public private relationship to encourage the last mile build.

#### IV. OUTSIDE AGENCIES

##### A. Cornell Cooperative Extension

1. **2024 Budget Presentation** – Ms. McKinley stated our mission is to put knowledge to work. We have 18 local staff and 20 regional agricultural staff. They provide resources in the areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Financial Health and Consumer Wellness, Nutrition and Youth Development (4-H). Our programs are funded by Federal, State and County funds through appropriations and grants. In 2023 we requested a County appropriation of \$420,000 which includes the office space. Those funds helped to support the local County Agriculture Program, 4-H Program, Financial and Consumer Education Programs and participation in the Cornell Vegetable Program, Finger Lakes Grape Program and Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team.

Ms. McKinley provided the following highlights: In the 4-H program there are over 300 active youth enrolled and they have provided many educational classes to any youth. Additionally they hosted the NYS Shoot at the Bath Rod and Gun Club. With their nutrition program they have provided hundreds of nutrition classes to SNAP eligible adults. They participate in the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program and also have worked with OFA to provide a Veggie Van. This van provides fruits and vegetables to various food deserts throughout the County. Last year we had one farmer that participated and this year we will have two farmers participating with 7 stops. With our Agriculture Program we set up a permaculture garden at the dog park on Haverling Street in Bath. We will be holding a pasture walk next week and Farm Trail Day has been scheduled for September 23<sup>rd</sup>. In addition, last year we were the lead agency for the Finger Lakes Shared Business Network, which provides human resources and IT support for the 7 counties in the Finger Lakes area.

Ms. McKinley stated for 2024 she is requesting an appropriation of \$432,000 which represents a 2.8 percent increase from last year. This funding will allow us to continue what we are doing with supporting farmers and meeting the needs of the community. Looking ahead, we are looking to have more agricultural programs in the schools. With our strategic planning, we would like to have a full-time Ag in the Classroom Educator that could go into the schools and help students recognize the importance of agriculture. We are also hoping to grow the Veggie Van Program and have gotten a lot of good press. We also have a grant to expand our 4-H Robotics Programs.

Mr. Malter asked what is the value of the in-kind contribution of office space? Ms. McKinley replied we have used \$60,000 when we apply for grants. Mr. Wheeler stated we never had a square footage dollar amount for that, but we can talk to the Commissioner of Finance and look at that.

Mrs. Lando asked with the Veggie Van, did someone want to use that as a model? Ms. McKinley replied many of the other extension offices want to use this as a model. We are just paying a stipend to a farmer to be at a certain location and advertise. Our budget for this program was \$7,500 last year and most of that went to the farmer. This year we are budgeting \$26,000 and most of that will go to the two farmers that are participating.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked how many school districts participate in the Ag in the Classroom Program? Ms. McKinley replied five districts have signed up and we are looking to get more. All of the schools are excited about the program, but with the payment, only a few have signed on. We will be going out to the school districts to try to get them to buy into the program. We are having the schools pay for the Ag in the Classroom Program. They would pay BOCES a set amount that is based on their poverty rate. BOCES then pays us the amount. This is the model that is used in some other counties throughout the State. We are asking for \$5,000 for a classroom for ten months. She stated she thinks that the schools have so much going on that they did not follow through on that. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked what is the age range for this program? Ms. McKinley replied K-6<sup>th</sup>. There are ag programs in Wayland-Cohocton, Avoca, Prattsburgh and Jasper-Troupsburg and those are for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. We did not want to duplicate those existing programs. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented it seems like a great program.

B. Southeast Steuben Libraries

1. **2024 Budget Presentation** – Mr. Hildreth stated things are going very well for the libraries. We have seen a 10 percent increase in library material use and a 40 percent rebound in the number of people coming through the doors and we are on track for increasing those numbers. Participation in public programs has increased by 20 percent. Because of a partnership with STC, the libraries were able to apply for ARC grants. This has increased the number of in-house computers, loanable laptops and WiFi hotspots, tele-health resources, scanner, copiers and printers made available to all community members.

Pauline Emery, Library Director of the Southeast Steuben County Library, stated thank you for the years of support you have given the library as it has a huge impact. She noted in their library, story hours are standing room only. Families are coming back into the libraries and are requesting assistance to get their kids excited about reading. We are pushing for family engagement. With ARC funding we were able to get 30 laptops with hot spots and those are able to be checked out to the public. This will have a direct impact on the community. The State Legislature approved the NY Construction Aid which helps the infrastructure of the libraries to provide access for all.

Denise Chilson, Library Director of the Hornell Public Library, stated we have been focusing on working with organizations on outreach. My staff has been trained on Narcan administration. We are working with Workforce Development. She noted they have two teens starting today to help out with the summer reading program. We are working with the Hornell City School District and had all of the pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> graders come in and get their library cards and talked about the summer reading program. We are working hard to support what the school is doing. Ms. Chilson stated they also go to Elderwood and deliver books to the residents. We have developed a tool lending library and offer gardening kits, bird watching kits and bike repair kits. We offer passes to Corning Museum of Glass, Buffalo Zoo and Empire passes for State parks. There is a homebound book delivery service and we have increased our hours. There are 93 programs scheduled for July and August. We do grant writing and do as much as we can to reach out to the public and bring them in. In 2021 we had 846 patrons, 2022 we had 1,600 and as of May 2023 we have had 2,200. This is an exciting time for the library and we appreciate your support.

Connie Beall, Co-Director of the Addison Public Library stated we are a small rural community spread out over a large geographical area. Some of our services include loaning out hotspots and laptops. We also offer e-books and podcasts. Our budget is small and our staff is small. We are very excited to get our summer reading program started this week. We have offered a special program with an animal rehabilitator as well as a program on growing and tending to small plants. We have a small budget and the money we get from the County and grants makes up about 5 percent of our budget and takes care of the programs we do throughout the year.

Mr. Hildreth stated traditionally we have requested \$99,000 for the 17 libraries up until the pandemic. The last couple of years we have requested \$79,600 and that is the amount we are requesting for 2024.

Mrs. Ferratella commented there has been a concern from residents regarding the increase to the contribution to the library system on their tax bills and that has been a shock. What is your total budget and how is that distributed to the libraries? Mr. Hildreth replied each library is funded through a school or town referendum with three exceptions; Jasper-Troupsburg, Avoca and Howard. Those three libraries are funded through a line item. The other 14 are funded through a public vote. Hammondsport and Pulteney are done through a municipal board. Ms. Emery stated we have asked for every year the allowable levy and we have not overridden that. If a new home is assessed at \$100,000 that homeowner will pay between \$34 - \$36 annually for library funding. The average taxpayer is paying \$32 per year. The median assessed value in Corning is \$85,000. That is really the only way the libraries can continue to be sustainable. Mrs. Ferratella asked is there a cap on that? Ms. Emery replied we do not go over the 2 percent. The libraries can go above the 2 percent if needed, and we have not done that. Mrs. Ferratella commented the \$35 per year is the lowest dollar value that anyone has seen. I would like to see how that is distributed. Ms. Emery commented her guess is that would go to the Corning library as Riverside is along the district lines. Mrs. Ferratella asked how much is raised in Corning-Painted Post? Ms. Emery replied \$980,000. That covers approximately 61 percent of our budget. That leaves 39 percent that we have to do

fundraising for to close that gap every year. She noted 65 percent of their budget goes directly to services to the public.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked when the minimum wage increased, how did that affect you? Ms. Emery replied we do not have a large staff. We have one of the smallest staff for a medium-sized library in the State. We have a lot of volunteers. The COLA increase is the increase we see in our payroll.

Mr. Hanna commented I have three libraries in my district and it is amazing what the volunteers in those libraries do and the programs they offer. They primarily do fundraising. Mrs. Lando stated she visited the library in Corning and the child center is amazing. The libraries have been very accommodating and they provide a lot of services beyond books. Ms. Emery stated we will be having a virtual art exhibit in the park in collaboration with the Rockwell Museum.

Mr. Nichols commented it would be nice if the libraries could come up with some type of programs to keep kids from trying to experiment with drugs and perhaps team up with the prevention agencies. Ms. Emery stated she will definitely take that back to their teen coordinator. We are looking for programs and we have Narcan in our building and our staff are trained. Mr. Nichols stated in this morning's meeting they were talking about how many kids in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade are experimenting. It would be nice to tie that programming in with the libraries to try to prevent that.

Mr. Van Caesele asked how are the dollars allocated to the libraries? Ms. Emery replied it is based on population. Mr. Hildreth stated it goes back to the 2010 census.

#### **VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

A. *Comprehensive Plan* – Mr. Van Etten asked what is the status of the Comprehensive Plan? Mrs. Lando replied all of the public information sessions were held and they will take that data back and make any adjustments and then the committee will have another meeting.

B. *Tax Auction* – Mr. Van Etten commented the tax auction started today. The Corning Courthouse did not get pulled, correct? Ms. Prossick replied correct. Mr. Wheeler commented with regard to the property we had discussed in Hornell, the owners did file an Order to Show Cause with their full payment.

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. VAN CAESELE. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman  
Deputy Clerk  
Steuben County Legislature

**\*\*NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR\*\*  
Wednesday, August 2, 2023  
9:00 a.m.**

**Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature's Office  
NO LATER THAN NOON  
Wednesday, July 26, 2023**