

AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Broome County Legislature met on Tuesday, September 28, 2010 in the Legislative Conference Room, Sixth Floor, Edwin L. Crawford County Office Building, Binghamton, New York.

Members Present: Daniel Reynolds, Donald Moran, Richard Materese (Legislature); Andrew Block (for Mayor Matthew Ryan, City of Binghamton); Michael Marinaccio (Town of Dickinson)

Members Absent: Jerry Marinich, Barry Klipsch, Ronald Keibel (Legislature) John Bernardo (Town of Union); Debra Preston (Town of Conklin); David Hamlin (Town of Fenton); Peter Andreasen (Town of Vestal)

Others Present: Suzanne Messina, Christopher Marion, Joshua Krantz, Jennifer K. Royer (Legislature); Tim Whitesell (Town of Binghamton);

The Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman of the Legislature Daniel Reynolds at 5:05 P.M.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that he would like to review the budget further. He was at the Budget Address and he can tell that it took a lot of work, but he wants to check it closely to see how they got to the bottom line. He especially wants to look at sales tax figures. He wants to see how it was projected and whether these projections are likely to be correct. Mr. Marion stated that it looks like they projected a 3% increase over last year's budget numbers. Mr. Reynolds said that it most likely uses a 2% increase plus the allocation for the extra six million from withdrawing the exemption for clothing and footwear. Mr. Materese stated that they will look closely at the calculations used to determine the sales tax figures. Mr. Marinaccio agreed that the calculations do need to be checked closely because otherwise the County could go back into the hole and whatever happens to the County effects the municipalities. He also thought that there may be a law regarding how the weeklong exemptions work. Mr. Block stated he was curious about the sales tax distribution, the cap and the terms of the distribution. He stated the City of Binghamton is facing some difficult decisions. This year the City used a one-time emergency budget measure, deferring their pension payment for employees other than police and fire. They have one more emergency budget measure which they can use next year but it looks like 2013 will be the breaking point since the City is at 89% of its constitutional debt limit. Mr. Marion told Mr. Reynolds that there is no sunset on the sales tax legislation that was passed and that the Legislature is free to reconsider the legislation at anytime. Mr. Materese stated that if things turn around he believes that we can share the sales tax again; however, the County also has substantial costs to pay such as Medicaid.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that cuts are never easy to make. He also stated that Mr. Andreasen is not happy about the cuts to the libraries. Mr. Reynolds stated that the County will have to talk to Mr. Andreason and other municipalities that have libraries about these cuts and their potential effects on the community.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that from the presentation you can tell that County Departments are making a major effort to cut down on costs. Mr. Whitesell agreed and said that from the budget you can tell the administration has had to make some tough decisions. Mr. Marinaccio stated that costs are a big problem for everyone right now and something needs to turn around soon.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that it's good that the budget doesn't include gas leasing revenues. Mr. Materese stated that if the leasing revenue comes, it will come when it comes – but he believes that they will do the budget without it. Mr. Marion stated that the dates for budget meetings that were announced will have the same departments; however times for the departmental interviews may change. Mr. Reynolds asked that all municipal officials give him a call if they see anything of concern or interest in the County Budget.

Mr. Materese asked if there was any news on the winter highway maintenance issue between the County and the municipalities. Mr. Whitesell stated that many of the municipalities have already removed the agreement from their budgets but the County has wanted to discuss it more. The next meeting between some of the municipalities and the County is on Monday, October 4, 2010 at the Spot. Mr. Reynolds asked for an example of what effect the reduction would have. Mr. Whitesell stated that the county roads which they maintained ended up putting the Town in the hole for \$4,000 and that a 10% reduction would leave them \$10,000-\$11,000 in the hole for the maintenance.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that he is still looking into the dog licensing issue since the State will no longer be maintaining a centralized database. He thought that the County could provide the service for a fee, but that seems to be more complicated than he initially thought. Mr. Whitesell noted that even though the State will not be maintaining the records anymore, they will still require a fee of \$3 for unspayed/unneutered pets and \$1 for those which are spayed/neutered. Mr. Materese asked if there was a penalty for not sending that money. Mr. Whitesell said that the Town of Binghamton would have around \$60-80 and they will put the money into a dedicated fund which then can be given to a non-profit which provides spaying/neutering programs in the area. Mr. Moran noted that in the past there used to be a dog census. Mr. Whitesell stated that may be useful after the new law is implemented.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the cuts to contract agencies in the County Budget vary and that there is a handout which notes what each cut is. Local libraries and the Discovery Center would no longer receive money after this budget. Cornell Cooperative Extension is also taking a big hit with a 40% reduction. Mr. Materese stated that this is actually a triple hit because for every dollar they receive from the County, they receive addition funding from the State and Federal Government based on a formula.

Mr. Reynolds noted that the County Legislature's Ad Hoc Natural Gas Education Committee has been having meetings with great information. The last meeting had useful presentations from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the DEC. There have also been other useful meetings throughout the community about the issues regarding Natural Gas.

Mr. Marinaccio stated that the Town of Dickenson will be hosting lawyers from Hawkins Delafield and Wood, LLP on October 7, 2010. These lawyers will be discussing the concept of establishing a natural gas distribution district, enabling residents to purchase natural gas from fracking at a cost below present rates. He also stated that residents are very wary about where drilling pads will be

located and that he hopes that the State will speak to the town when they receive permit requests.

Mr. Reynolds asked if there were any thoughts on the current lease proposal for the lease of natural gas rights on County land. Mr. Marinaccio and Mr. Whitesell we not convinced that this was the best deal available. Mr. Reynolds stated that this lease is only for the northern properties which are not as rich as the properties closer to the Pennsylvania border. Also, we need to keep in mind that there are extensive restrictions which will prohibit drilling in these areas (the landfill, the airport and some County parks). There is also a tiered system where some properties will garner signing bonuses \$2,250 an acre, others \$2,500 and some with \$2,750 per acre. Mr. Materese stated that the initial offer included the properties in the southern part of the County and that all the properties would get \$3,000. He believes that this isn't as bad of an offer as it looks on the first glance.

Mr. Marinaccio asked what was going on with the methane gas at the landfill. Mr. Materese stated that the original contract did not benefit the County at all. The County went to court against the agency we contracted with and the County is now getting money. This is the best we can do until the agreement is up in 2017, but things have improved. Mr. Materese stated that there is enough methane gas to run the airport.

Mr. Reynolds stated that there is an issue that Vestal is considering dropping out of the Real Property Tax Services Version 4 System which provides assistance to municipal assessments. Of the seventeen municipalities, all but one currently participates in the program and all seem to be happy with the system. There has been a disagreement between Mr. Keough (County RPTS) and Mr. Minoia (Vestal Town Assessor) in that Mr. Keough will only have County personnel makes changes and will not let City and Town Assessors make changes to data. There is the potential for a transfer around December 1, 2010 if this happens. Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Marinaccio both stated that they would discuss this issue with the parties involved. Mr. Reynolds asked to be notified of any other situations or issues that are going on and we will try to figure them out.

Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Materese and Mr. Marion stated that October 28, 2010 is the day that they will be formulating the Legislature's proposed changes to the County Budget after all the hearings have completed. Mr. Reynolds would like the municipalities to keep that date in mind when thinking about scheduling the next meeting.

Mr. Marinaccio asked whether it would be possible to get a monthly report on how the sales tax is going. Mr. Reynolds stated that this document is maintained by the Office of Management and Budget and that he does not receive it regularly, only when he asks for it. He suggested that Mr. Marinaccio call Ms. Kalka for more information on this report.

Mr. Block stated that some City and County agencies are working together to present an event about Livable Communities and the process of moving towards regional prosperity on October 23, 2010 at the Helen Foley Theatre at Binghamton High School. He hopes that people will come to the movie presentation and panel discussion.

It was decided that the next meeting of the Committee would be determined via email.

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 P.M.