

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BROOME COUNTY LEGISLATURE MEETING MINUTES
MAY 3, 2018

A Committee of the Whole Broome County Legislature met on Thursday, May, 3, 2018 in the Legislative Conference Room, Sixth Floor, Edwin L. Crawford County Office Building, Binghamton, New York.

Members Present: D. J. Reynolds, S. Flagg, S. Baker, K. Wildoner, G. Baldwin, M. Pasquale, J. Shaw, R. Keibel, C. O'Brien, M. Sopchak, M. Kaminsky, M. Whalen

Members Absent: D. D. Reynolds, R. Heebner, B. Weslar

Others Present: J. Garnar, K. McManus, C. Wagner, H. McCrory, C. Crammer, County Exec's Office; J. Knebel, S. Kane, OMB; R. Behnke, Law; T. West, Purchasing; T. Hill, Sheriff's Office; L. Schuhle, T. Eaton, OFA; R. Laclair, S. Arnold, WPNH; D. Jonson, Former WPNH; A Hutson, S. Ephraim, Aramark; A Martin, J. Bertoni, C. Hall, Legislature

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 4:09 p.m. Mr. D. J. Reynolds announced that the meeting was called to get an update from the Administration on the food service contract.

Mr. McManus stated that the food service contract with Aramark is utilized by the Office for Aging, the Jail and Willow Point Nursing Home. It was implemented under the previous administration and a previous Nursing Home Administrator, Kevin Carey. When Mr. Carey left County employment, Denise Johnson took a temporary position as Administrator and identified several problems, including inconsistent delivery of the tray food service. At the request of Ms. Johnson, Aramark transitioned to a pantry style food service. There continued to be problems with food being late, inconsistent food temperatures, double billing and billing reimbursement. Nursing home staff were pulled from their regular duties to review invoices which sometimes resulted in overtime. Ms. Johnson had conference calls with Aramark representatives but her concerns seemed to be dismissed. It was in November, after the pantry style food service transition phase, that the County Executive informed the Chairman and the Legislature of the problems and announced the County's disengagement from the contract and that a RFP Task Force would be formed.

Mr. West stated that he and the RFP Task Force conducted intense interviews and analyzed the issues to address the problems with the food contract. There was an informal pre-proposal meeting held that allowed collaboration with experts in the field to help develop a new RFP. Some of the biggest changes in the new RFP included specifications that defined detailed expectations of the County and the vendor, the option to bid on a portion of the contract; jail or nursing home and how the RFP would be scored.

Ms. Schuhle stated that the Office for Aging uses the Aramark contract for meals at senior centers and the Meals on Wheels program. Aramark uses the kitchen at the Nursing Home to prepare the meals and then transfers the meals to the senior centers. Because Senior Center meals and Meals on Wheels are customer driven, it is important to have nutritious, appealing meals. Other than a few miss billings that were rectified, her department did not experience many problems. The manager that oversees their portion of the contract was a previous Central Foods employee that knows how the process works. Their portion of the new RFP is very detailed and will give more choices for its clients.

Lt. Hill stated that he is the food service liaison at the jail and that in the beginning food service was a nightmare, which generated problems with the inmates and created safety concerns. Lt. Hill contacted Aramark's manager and was involved in the hiring of a new food service manager. Since then things seem to be better but now there are issues with the quality of the food being served; which he is trying to correct.

Responding to a question from Mr. Keibel, Mr. West stated that they had a very good turn-out for the pre-proposal meeting and that Aramark was present.

Responding to a question from Mr. Whalen, Mr. West stated that he didn't believe that narrowing the specifications would limit the responses. In fact, he believes it will generate more interest and will be better for the County and the vendor.

Responding to Mr. Shaw's question, Ms. Schuhle stated that Office for Aging might be happier with Aramark than the nursing home and the jail because they are different environments and don't have the same issues and regulations. She further stated that they receive feedback and make adjustments based on a survey that they distribute to their clients.

Responding to a question from Mr. Sopchak, Mr. Laclair stated he had conversations with Aramark's Regional Manager about the problems at the Nursing Home. Ms. Johnson stated she spoke to the Vice President who responded with "give us a chance, let's see what we can do" but never came for a site visit. Mr. Behnke stated that the current contract is for a four-year period, with a clause that it can be terminated for convenience.

Mr. Baldwin stated that most of the problems seem to be a management problem and there should be more checks and balanced in place. Mr. LaClair stated that while management is a huge part they also need to have buy in from the company.

Mr. Pasquale asked if terminating the contract will have any financial impact on the County. Mr. Behnke stated that there is a provision in the contract that upon termination of the agreement, the County shall reimburse Aramark for the unamortized balance of the equipment financial commitment.

Responding to a question from Mrs. O'Brien, Mr. LaClair stated that there will be both direct and indirect cost savings to the County. Ms. Johnson stated that the County should realize savings through the provisions in the new RFP/contract for alternate meals and snacks; a couple of the items that were problematic with the previous RFP/contract that the County was getting charged for.

Responding to Mr. Flagg's concerns over the food temperature issue and whether the Department of Health did inspections, it was stated that the Department of Health may have been more forgiving on the results of their inspection because of the transition from tray to pantry food service. Ms. Johnson stated that there are standard operating procedures and daily kitchen food temperatures and delivery are logs are kept.

Responding to a question from Mr. Whalen, it was stated that the County employee that Aramark hired would have been more effective if Aramark was more responsive.

Mr. Reynolds thanked everyone for their time and for explaining the different components of the contract. He expressed concern that it took so long for the administration to notify the Legislature of the problems the County was having with Aramark. He further expressed his disappointment in the delay of receiving the RFP for the Legislators to review. He is happy to see the interpretation of the contract spelled out, so as to not be put in this situation again.

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, Mr. Reynolds adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.