

Meeting Minutes  
Efficiency, Reform & Intergovernmental Affairs Committee  
May 7, 2007

In attendance:

Committee members:

Gary Bischoff, Chair	Tracey Bartels
Charles Busick	Susan Cummings
Peter Liepmann	Brain Shapiro

Legislator Rodriguez was not in attendance

Also attending:

Kevin DuMond, CSEA  
Tom Kadgen, League of Women Voters  
Ralph Childers

Agenda:

Fleet Management/Take Home Cars – Tony Gallo  
Board of Elections – Regular bi-monthly reporting  
Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness  
Discussion of how we can take advantage of the NYS Commission

Chairman Bischoff called the meeting to order at 6:05pm

Chairman Bischoff informed the committee that the Board of Elections had nothing new to report since the meeting last month.

Legislator Bartels distributed copies of a King County, Washington State, policy regarding take home vehicles and their method for assessing need and cost benefits (attached.) She highlighted the process for determining cost effectiveness on page 3, noting that exceptions are made for emergency vehicles. She also pointed out that their policy did not take into consideration “wear and tear” on vehicles. She then directed members to page 15 § 7.4.2.1, “Take-Home Vehicle Assignment Criteria.” She continued by saying vehicles with unique or specialized equipment must also be considered. She expressed her frustration about the lack of information provided as this matter, which has been discussed for years, and during that time she has consistently voted no on purchase of new vehicles. She was disappointed that Fleet Manager Tony Gallo was not present. She said that the Efficiency Committee’s schedule allows time for passage of the King County plan and review by the Administrative Services Committee before the June Legislative meeting. She then recommended that the Fleet Manager send a letter to each department head asking for an assessment of the Take-Home vehicles and their usage. She also recommended that a resolution in support of the King County plan be sent to Administrative Services Committee. It was then suggested that managers who have Take-Home cars as a “perk” should be the first to be evaluated.

Chairman Bischoff responded that Fleet Manager Gallo would not be attending and asked if he was needed to establish policy.

Legislator Bartels said that the committee would definitely want to have a conversation with Mr. Gallo in case he is only a couple of steps away from implementing this same policy. She reiterated that the proposal should be sent to Administrative Services.

Legislator Cummings said that she would like a new list of employees who have cars and that that should be the very first request the committee makes.

Chairman Bischoff said that Mr. Gallo would be invited to the next meeting.

Legislator Busick asked why Mr. Gallo wasn't in attendance. He continued by saying that he should have made some type of communication with the committee if he couldn't make it. He continued by saying that he agrees 100% with Legislator Bartels, but the larger issue is that this has been going on for years. He said he tried to get other departments involved and asked why no one else has seen the problem with buying new vehicles.

Chairman Bischoff asked if any departments have their own policy or if a central policy exists.

Legislator Busick responded that there was a central policy, but that department heads had different policies.

Legislator Shapiro, in reference to Take-Home vehicles that are not actually being used, recalled a situation where a department head advised an employee with a vehicle to knock the snow off so it appeared it was being used.

Legislator Bartels advised the committee that in her opinion everything included in the King County document would be totally acceptable to Ulster County. She continued by saying that she would go through the policy to make it Ulster County specific, but that the real question remains whether the committee and county are prepared to make a sweeping change to current policy.

Legislator Shapiro told the committee that they should make the changes.

Kevin DuMond of CSEA, advised the committee that if Mr. Gallo sends out a letter asking for this information a number of department heads will respond that they don't know who Mr. Gallo is and that they do not work for him. He suggested that it might be more appropriate for such a letter to come from the County Administrator or Chair of the Legislature. He continued by saying that the majority of Take-Home cars are perks.

Legislator Bartels responded that employees have, in the past, used collective bargaining units to make the "past policies" argument.

Chairman Bischoff recommended that Mr. Gallo be invited to the next meeting, and that the committee should have something ready to be voted on so this could be considered by July's budget vote.

Legislator Busick inquired about the possibility of department heads making their arguments to the head of their oversight committee.

Legislator Bartels offered that departments have to deal with the County Administrator on a number of issues without going to the oversight committee.

Legislator Busick recommended that this policy be mentioned at caucuses so legislators have advance knowledge of the change. When asked by Chairman Bischoff, Legislator Busick agreed to advise the Republican caucus. Chairman Bischoff would tell the Democratic caucus.

Legislator Shapiro suggested that instead of reviewing and revising the King County plan it should be sent to the County Attorney as is.

Chairman Bischoff said that the policy could be moved on now and be adopted into Administrative Code later.

Legislator Bartels suggested that all employees who currently have a Take-Home vehicle be notified that there is a possibility the vehicle could be revoked. She mentioned that a car that was just approved for purchase has a counterpart that is being used for commuting.

Legislator Busick said that from past conversations on the matter there has been an identifiable duplication of services.

Legislator Shapiro expressed his frustration that Mr. Gallo was not present and that it has taken at least three years to get this started.

Legislator Bartels asked what the committee's will was for sending the King County plan to the Administrative Services Committee.

Chairman Bischoff amended the question to when will it be sent to Administrative Services.

Legislator Shapiro recommended that when the plan is sent to them there should be an explanation of the Efficiency Committee's intentions, so that the two committees can work together instead of drafting separate policies.

Mr. DuMond interjected that this must get done. He said he could site a number of abuses of Take-Home vehicles.

Legislator Busick said to Mr. DuMond that he would be getting a lot of appeals from CSEA members and asked what he would say to them.

Mr. DuMond replied that he would ask his members to justify the need. He continued by saying that he did not have a Take-Home car when he was on call at the Health Department. He said that the term "on call" should also be looked at closely offering night meetings or meetings to address a group on behalf of the county as possible arguments that could be encountered.

**MOTION by Legislator Bartels, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Legislator Busick: To send the King County, Washington State Administrative Policies and Procedures regarding Take-Home For County-Owned Vehicles, to the County Attorney's office for review and to have County Administrator Hein immediately send a letter, with a deadline for response included, to each department head requesting details about take home vehicles assigned to his or her employees, the frequency the vehicle is assigned and the number of times it is actually used. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Chairman Bischoff moved the meeting on to Local Government Consolidation sharing three draft resolutions, "Requesting State Assistance and Establishing Inter-Municipal Collaboration Council as Provided in the Ulster County Charter," with the committee (stapled together and attached.) One was outlined by Chairman Bischoff, one by Legislator Liepmann and the third was a combination of the two written by Chairman Bischoff. He continued by saying that it was a good idea to move forward with this in conjunction with what the Charter will do. He then asked the committee if there should be one panel or two.

Legislator Bartels asked if the County Executive or the Chair of the Legislature appoints panel members.

Chairman Bischoff directed her to the first "Resolved" in the resolution: "... that the Chairman be authorized to appoint..."

Legislator Bartels suggested that there be only one panel that could bring in experts rather than have 10,000 panels with specific focuses.

Chairman Bischoff informed the committee that submissions to the state Commission on Local Government Consolidation must be received by June 15<sup>th</sup>. He then reminded the committee that the next Legislature session is on June 13<sup>th</sup>. He asked if there should be a separate resolution to appoint staff to help frame out proposal in greater detail.

Legislator Cummings asked if the new legislative clerk could help.

Chairman Bischoff replied that she does not start until June 4<sup>th</sup>.

Legislator Bartels said that the committee has made suggestions about proposals that would affect this and said the committee should have a resolution authorizing staff.

Chairman Bischoff said he would prefer a vote so as not to appear that he was doing it alone as Chairman. He continued by saying that the committee should look at Highway departments. He directed the committee to a draft proposal (attached) he sent via email regarding Highway Departments.

Legislator Liepmann took a moment to inform the committee that in 1898 New York City was a conglomeration of over 100 villages and towns until it was consolidated. He then complimented Chairman Bischoff on the great draft proposals.

Chairman Bischoff continued by saying that the draft proposal includes language referencing equitable contract.

Legislator Shapiro informed the committee that a similar situation already exists in his district where the Town of Denning receives Highway services from the Town of Woodstock.

Legislator Liepmann advised the committee that inter-municipal agreements already exist at the state and can be reviewed.

Chairman Bischoff suggested the following as good places to start: Highway, Police, Economic development and back office. He shared another draft proposal to be sent to the state commission regarding Economic development with the committee (attached.)

Legislator Shapiro asked if it was possible to have this ready for the state by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Legislator Bartels said that the resolutions are a forward thinking move and agreed with Legislator Liepmann that the Highway proposal draft is great. She suggested that work begin with Dennis Doyle's office and continued by saying that the committee must forge ahead despite resistance. She reminded the committee that when the subcommittee was formed a letter was sent to towns saying that the county's job would be handed over to the towns. She said this was like a stab in the back because nothing was said about compensation. She told the committee that she got many calls from Town Supervisors and Highway Superintendents.

Chairman Bischoff informed the committee that the request for proposals came from the state on April 23 and the want proposals back by June 15.

Kevin DuMond suggested that there would be less controversy if the committee looked at consolidating Ulster County Area Transit and Kingston City Bus saying that would be something easy to get under their belt.

Legislator Bartels said that the June 15<sup>th</sup> deadline isn't for the implementation of the proposals, but rather asking for funds and expert assistance to determine if they are viable initiatives.

Legislator Liepmann advised the committee that he spoke with Supervisor Valk who told him that county roads in Shawangunk are not maintained as well as the town roads. Legislator Liepmann then distributed copies of a March 22, 2007 Newsday article (attached) regarding a similar consolidation initiative in Long Island and the huge cost savings associated with it.

Chairman Bischoff added that the same topic was covered in a New York Times article. He continued by saying that fewer areas for consolidation should be looked at so that we could focus our efforts.

Legislator Liepmann disagreed saying that more areas for possible consolidation should be looked at. He referred to various upstate New York cities such as Buffalo and Rochester that have many little towns and villages vs. places with large structures already in place such as Cleveland who are already benefiting from economic growth. He continued by saying that the money saved could be spent on job development.

**MOTION by Chairman Bischoff, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Legislator Bartels: To move forward with the proposal for a comprehensive evaluation of how Ulster County Economic Development efforts could be modernized and updated and have each member of the Efficiency, Reform and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee contact his or her Town Supervisor to enlist municipal participation by the state's June 15 deadline.**

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Chairman Bischoff then suggested to the committee that "strategy #5" from page 10 of the March 2007 Ulster County Strategic Economic Development Planning Inventory of Strategies Report be sent to the Economic Development Committee for review and action.

**MOTION by Legislator Liepmann, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Legislator Shapiro: To refer the proposal for a comprehensive evaluation of how Ulster County Economic Development efforts could be modernized and updated, specifically "Strategy #5" as per the Ulster County Strategic Economic Development Planning document, to the Economic Development Committee for review and action with a recommendation by the Efficiency, Reform and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee's that the Economic Development Committee make a submission to the New York**

**State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Chairman Bischoff recommended that the sixth “Whereas” be stricken from the draft Resolution “Requesting State Assistance and Establishing Inter-municipal Collaboration Council as Provided in Ulster County charter.

Legislator Bartels advised that it should be left in because the Efficiency Committee has no specific topic focus and comes from a broader perspective.

Legislator Liepmann suggested that “insurance” be included in the third bullet of the sixth “Whereas.”

Chairman Bischoff responded that insurance would already be included with the current language.

**MOTION by Legislator Liepmann, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Legislator Cummings: To pass, as is, the Draft Resolution “Requesting State Assistance and Establishing Inter-Municipal Collaboration Council as Provided in Ulster County Charter. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Legislator Bartels handed out a list of all county vehicles to committee members to be taken home and digest.

Chairman Bischoff told the committee that all items on the agenda had been completed and asked if there was anything else the committee wanted to discuss.

Legislator Bartels told the committee that she has been receiving calls from the press and constituents regarding the resolution that was brought up in November that called for an investigation into the Bush Administration’s intent to go to war and for impeachment process to begin. She was asked to bring it up again to the committee. She read a quote by Representative Henry Hyde, then Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, from the impeachment debate in 1998, “But we members of Congress took an oath that we would perform all of our constitutional duties, not just the pleasant ones. As chairman Peter Rodino stated in 1974, ‘We cannot turn away out of partisanship or convenience from problems that are now our responsibility, our inescapable responsibility, to consider. It would be a violation of our own public trust if we, as the people's representatives, chose not to inquire, not to consult, not even to deliberate, and then pretend that we had not by default made choices.’ This will be an emotional process, a strenuous process, because feelings are high on all sides of this question, but the difficulties ahead can be surmounted with goodwill and an honest effort to do what is best for the country.” She continued by saying that the people she is most disappointed in are the Democrats in Congress who dropped the ball even before the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress said that impeachment was off the table. She asked the committee why, at the very least, an investigation would be conducted.

Legislator Shapiro commented that the Town of Woodstock offered a resolution to oppose the invasion of Iraq. He said that this memorializing resolution would serve to empower others on both sides of the argument to weigh in on the issue and inspire the “higher-ups” to take action.

Legislator Cummings reiterated that, as she said in November, the Ulster County Legislature is not the appropriate government body to take such an action. She said that legislator Bartels had said it herself that action needs to be taken in the halls of Congress.

Legislator Bartels responded that if the county is willing to submit a resolution to take a closer look at dog food, a resolution she said was included in this weeks packet, why not this. She reminded the committee that she stood on the floor of the legislature with Legislator Noonan to call for a ban on all memorializing resolutions, and said that this would be her first one because the issue is so important.

Legislator Shapiro told the committee that, for Legislators with constituencies like his, something needs to be brought to the floor.

Ralph Childers advised the committee that the term impeachment should not be included if a memorializing resolution is presented. He continued by saying that Speaker Pelosi said that impeachment proceedings were off the table. He informed the committee that the cost of the war is growing every day and that there are already 3,362 American casualties, 24,314 wounded and another 15 unconfirmed dead for that day. He concluded by saying that he felt it was a mistake not to say anything.

Legislator Shapiro asked the committee if it was more effective to have a memorializing resolution come out of the county legislature or to have constituents call their federal representatives.

Chairman Bischoff recommended that the resolution be made simple. He suggested it should ask Congress to create a committee to investigate the circumstances and information that fostered the decision to invade Iraq.

Legislator Cummings asked if the resolution would be voted on in June or July.

Chairman Bischoff answered that if it passed the Efficiency Committee tonight it would be included in the June packet, if the language changed it would be considered in July.

Legislator Cummings said that impeachment is too strong a word, and that the more radical the resolution the less chance it has of passing. She told the committee that she believes that a lot of people are not happy with the current situation in Iraq, and many people are not happy with President Bush.

Chairman Bischoff told the committee that he felt that a memorializing resolution from the county is as good as ~100 or more calls from constituents.

Legislator Busick said that he believes the opposite is true.

Legislator Liepmann asked if Legislators Bartels and Shapiro along with Mr. Childers would draft a resolution.

Legislator Shapiro asked when it should be done by.

Legislator Liepmann replied that it could be introduced as a late resolution for June.

Legislator Cummings said that they could email the resolution and call a meeting while adhering to the 72-hour meeting notice requirement.

Legislator Bartels said that she would get together with Mr. Childers immediately to work on the resolution and will email it to committee members with the goal of making it for the June meeting.

Legislator Liepmann said that he had a meeting with Citizen Action regarding "Clean Money Clean Elections," and recommended that something could be done on the county level for less than \$100,000 which would allow more open debate and less big money deciding elections.

Legislator Bartels responded that she is a huge supporter of clean money but that she did not believe there was a big money problem in Ulster County. She said that it was definitely worth the discussion, but would be a hard sell locally.

Legislator Liepmann said that there would have to be certain criteria to qualify for matching funds and that there would have to be quicker reporting for advance booking purposes. He said that legislators are at a level where they can talk to people directly.

Legislator Cummings said that legislative campaigns spend more than \$2,000.

Legislator Bartels agreed with that figure.

Chairman Bischoff said that almost all legislative campaigns spend more than \$2,000.

Legislator Bartels said that, although it doesn't make that much sense on the local level, it would be a good example setter for higher offices.

Legislator Liepmann pointed that Ulster County hasn't seen someone with big money moving into the area and running yet, but that it is happening in surrounding counties.

Chairman Bischoff asked who would be overseeing this and would the \$100,000 include funding for staffing.

Legislator Liepmann replied that the Board of elections would be responsible for oversight.

Legislator Busick took a moment to commend the committee on their efforts and to single out Chairman Bischoff for all of his hard work.

**MOTION by Legislator Busick, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Legislator Bartels: To adjourn at 7:43pm.**  
**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Mahler