

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON ARTS, EDUCATION, TOURISM AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
HELD AT ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, KINGSTON, NEW YORK, ON
September 26, 2007**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTENDING:

SUSAN ZIMET, Chairwoman
WAYNE HARRIS, Deputy Chairman
MARY SHEELEY
BRIAN CAHILL
GARY BISCHOFF

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

CLAIRE BURLINGHAM, Dean of Administration, Ulster County Community College
ANNE CARDINALE, Director, Ulster County Office for the Aging
JOYCE MINARD, Executive Director of New Paltz Chamber of Commerce
PAUL RAKOV, Emerson Hotel appearing for Ulster Tomorrow
STANLEY ACKERMAN, Rocking Horse Ranch, appearing for Ulster Tomorrow
LYDIA REIDY, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension
TERRY BREITENSTEIN, Director of Ulster County Veteran's Service Agency
RICK REMSNYDER, Director, Ulster County Tourism
JANET SALANITRI, Recorder

The meeting was scheduled for 5:00pm to begin with a tour of the Persen House. After the tour the committee returned to the meeting room for the regular meeting.

A quorum being present, Chairwoman Zimet called the meeting to order at 6:00pm at which time Leg. Bischoff suggested that for next year's budget sessions that the Committee meet in the larger room and utilize the projection screen. At this time Chairwoman Zimet recognized Terry Breitenstein, Director of Ulster County Veteran's Service Agency.

Ulster County Veteran's Service Agency:

Mr. Breitenstein reviewed a summary of his department's budget and said it had not changed much from last year. He said the primary change was in the equipment line referencing the department's two 15-passenger vans, an 8-passenger van and a 1998 automobile for special runs, which he stated were in not very good shape. He said he has to replace the vans and how

that replacement would be accomplished would depend upon what the state bid comes in as. He is looking at a 24-passenger bus which would mean they would have only one vehicle. This will eliminate one part-time driver. He said the cost of the bus would be about \$54,000 and would depend upon state bid. He said he also looked at the handicapped van used by Golden Hill and it was in terrible condition.

On indigent burials, Mr. Breitenstein said the line needed to be increased. The current allowance for indigent veteran burials was \$1,800 but Social Services, with various riders to the contracts, can pay more. He said that currently if there are extra costs for an indigent burial the law is vague and we should be able to go up on occasion. There followed a general discussion of funeral costs and various associated expenses. Chairwoman Zimet asked Mr. Breitenstein for a proposal to the committee so they can take action. He said the problem is that you will probably be looking at more money and you really don't know how much you are going to be using for that year. Chairman Zimet said any proposed resolution should have a provision, for example, that states if more funds are needed he could expend an additional \$X. He will be looking to ask for an increase for next year's budget.

Chairwoman Zimet said she had received a call from Joe Egan who has been trying to get the county to have a veteran's cemetery. She said he will come in and meet with the committee in the future. Mr. Breitenstein said he does not believe there is a defined need for a veteran's cemetery in Ulster County. Also, he said there are a lot of state mandates involved. There followed a general discussion on veteran's cemeteries in the State of New York.

Chairwoman Zimet advised the committee that there were things for the committee to discuss regarding Post Traumatic Stress Disorders which she will put over to next month.

The report of Ulster County Veteran's Service Agency being concluded, Chairwoman Zimet recognized Rick Remsnyder, Director of Ulster County Tourism and in response to his question, advised that it would be most appropriate if he would go over this budget and the committee would ask questions.

Ulster County Tourism:

Mr. Remsnyder reported that he had met with the County Administrator's office and his preliminary budget totaled \$203,102 which is an increase over last year of about \$20,000. He said most of that increase was for advertising, the Travel Guide and some Web enhancement. Mr. Remsnyder said that salaries last year were \$374,000 and this year are \$399,000 and he

believes the requests are reasonable. Chairwoman Zimet asked about the \$35,000 which was requested for Judy Randall. Mr. Remsnyder said that the request is for an intense marketing study. He said that although he went to Judy Randall's conference that does not mean we are going to use her as this matter has to go out for bid.

Chairwoman Zimet said an area of great concern was that the number of calls for information from Tourism had fallen off and was that directly attributable to the cutbacks. Mr. Remsnyder said that early comparisons show that if you are not advertising you are not going to get as many calls. On the 800 number telephone calls he said that in the third quarter of 2005 there were more than one thousand calls and in 2007 there were one hundred five. There followed a general discussion of what may have caused the spike of more than one thousand calls. Mr. Remsnyder said that when he first came on board he was asked by the County Administrator not to do any advertising.

Chairwoman Zimet said the department and the committee should try and come up with some kind of plan that could accomplish what we want it to and also which would be something measurable. Mr. Remsnyder said that since the middle of last year his office had been tracking results of advertising and he believes there is a need for more advertising. In reply to a question from Leg. Harris, Mr. Remsnyder said he thought advertising would need an additional \$50-60,000.

Leg. Cahill asked if there was any data has been compiled to see if the tourism industry is suffering without this advertising. Mr. Ackerman said this information was readily available from the Treasurer's Office in the form of sales tax revenue. Ms. Minard said the visitor's center in New Paltz is down almost 40% and it is open from May through October.

In discussing the Kingston caboose, Mr. Remsnyder said last year was a good year; however, this year Tourism took it over and we have not been able to keep it staffed on a steady basis and it has not been open seven days a week. He said he believed inquiries are down about 25%. Ms. Minard said New Paltz was doing very well in the tourism and travel areas but stressed that she had to spend the money on advertising in order to get people to come here.

Leg. Harris said he had called the I Love NY Office and asked them about our Travel Guide and was told that the Travel Guide was one of the best they have ever seen from Ulster County. He said that at the present time we may be holding the purse strings too tight. Leg. Cahill said we are going to have to introduce a new revenue stream and believes that whatever is done has to be new. Chairwoman Zimet said the focus has to be on getting people to look at the Web site and order the Travel Guide. There followed a general discussion on marketing principles and practices.

Leg. Cahill said it is very important that we get the figures from the Treasurer's office to see if there is any down-turn at all. Mr. Rakov said he and Mr. Ackerman and Ms. Minard are all involved in "Ulster Tomorrow". He said there are a lot of people that come here and never go to an event or stay in a hotel or eat in a restaurant. They did recommend hiring a tourism consultant to come in and also do some internal promotions.

Mr. Rakov further said that advertising is great, but it is very expensive. He said public relations is better and cheaper and could generate the news stories about tourist destinations in the area. A general discussion of the advantages of publicity on tourism followed. It was agreed that press releases on tourism help people to define what Ulster County's strong points are.

At this time Chairwoman Zimet publicly thanked Leg. Harris for taking it upon himself to verify some of the rumors that were circulating about tourism that were not necessarily true.

Also, said Chairwoman Zimet, at the Ulster Tomorrow meeting one of the recommendations made was to take Tourism from the County and give it to the Chamber of Commerce or Ulster County Development Corp. A memo from Mr. Remsnyder had been distributed on why he felt this was not the way to go at this time and it was the feeling of the committee that it should be discussed further. Mr. Remsnyder said the thing that upset him the most was that there was no input either from his office or the Tourism Advisory Board or from this committee.

Concluding his report Mr. Remsnyder said that Buildings & Grounds had built two portable information kiosks and is building another. One will go in the Town of Marlboro and the agreement is that we would install it and keep it filled and they can use part of it. He said he is meeting next week with the Town of Shandaken and he would also like some input as to where we can put more of these. He said they do not have to be manned.

The report of Ulster County Tourism being completed, Chairwoman Zimet recognized Claire Burlingham, Dean of Administration at Ulster County Community College

Ulster County Community College:

Dean Burlingham reported to the committee that the Fall 2007 enrollment has met our budget projections and we expect to exceed projections by about 2%.

As an update on the capital projects, the Dean reported that all contracts are in place for the construction of the new labs and the renovations to the interior of the gymnasium. At the present time the lab area and construction staging area are being secured with fencing and the contractors have been on campus.

Dean Burlingham said that looking at the capital program and by not doing the addition to the gymnasium at this time there is \$1.5 million left. We were anticipating that those funds would be put into the new Facilities Master Plan and the gym addition included. However there have been several safety issues brought to bear recently.

First is the issue of the old elevator in Vanderlyn Hall. A wheelchair-bound student was using the elevator, with her health aide, when the door closed and caught the wheelchair. There was about \$2,000 damage to the wheelchair itself and thankfully the student was not injured. However, this could easily have been a catastrophic incident. It is estimated that to replace the elevator would cost about \$185,000, and the college would like to take that money out of the \$1.5 million.

Secondly, given all of the terrible incidents on various campus around the country lately, most notably being Virginia Tech, we have some concerns. Dean Burlingham said this had been discussed in the campus Safety & Security Committee and they would like put in place a "Crisis Management Program", which would require us to put a "Shelter in Place" plan, whereby someone could not get in to a classroom. The cost for this system would be about \$19,000. The other part of this program would be a public address system. As it stands now, said Dean Burlingham, the college officials have no way of mass communicating any information to the student body. The cost for this system would be about \$100,000.

Dean Burlingham stated that the total of these three initiatives is about \$304,000. On the question of what happens to the \$1.5 million, Dean Burlingham said it will go back and will sit there until the next capital project. She said if we don't do these three things now we will have to do them in the future. Priorities have shifted because of these health and safety issues.

Leg. Harris asked Dean Burlingham about the bleachers in the gym which he understood to be a safety issue. The Dean said that the bleachers, the handicapped lift to the gym stage and the gym floor are already in the works.

Chairwoman Zimet asked if the Board of Trustee's had approved this proposed reallocation of funds and the Dean said they had discussed it but nothing else had been done. Leg. Cahill said the matter should go before the Capital Projects Oversight Committee and the Dean agreed. Dean Burlingham said that when money was reallocated it went through this Committee, then the Oversight Committee and then Ways & Means. Both Chairwoman Zimet and Leg. Cahill said a meeting of the Oversight Committee could be called to let them know what is happening and try and keep the rest of the Legislature up-to-date on this matter.

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At this time Dean Burlingham discussed a matter she had previously discussed with the County Administrator. We had a situation where all computers were out of warranty. This year all of our servers will be out of warranty. We have replaced many of the computers but many more need to be replaced. We are looking at a lease with Citi Leasing. She said that each year we collect chargebacks from various counties, which funds are then turned over to the county to offset some of the costs. Our annual lease payments will be about \$64,000. The question is if the college would be allowed to use the chargeback money to fund the lease for the computers.

Dean Burlingham said seven servers will be out of warranty by the end of the year but we will be able to take that money out of the operating budget. The consensus of the committee was that the college proceed with looking at a replacement plan and present a proposal to the committee.

The report of Ulster County Community College being concluded, Chairwoman Zimet recognized Lee Reidy, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Cornell Cooperative Extension:

Ms. Reidy was happy to report that Cooperative Extension had received a \$600,000 grant for farm labor housing. She said about \$530,000 will go into rehabilitating farm laborers homes. She said she just found out about this on Friday and said they would be replacing trailers. They should be able to do between 16-20 trailers with 25% of the cost being paid by the farmers. Ms. Reidy said if we had to do some of the older houses we would have to do a lot of remediation work such as lead and asbestos abatement. Ms. Reidy also advised that they were going to do some educational seminars at the farms we will be working with.

Ms. Reidy reported that they will be doing an educational program jointly with Office for the Aging aimed at people currently between the ages of thirty-five and sixty on long-term care insurance. Leg. Bischoff asked why Ms. Reidy thought long-term care insurance was a good thing. She said all we do is provide education and information to people so they know what they should look for and can be fully informed. The program does not tell people they have to get this insurance but they should know about it. Also, said Ms. Reidy there are no private companies and no insurance plans are promoted.

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection Stream Management Plan study was discussed by Ms. Reidy who advised that DEP has extended the program through April 2008 and after that are looking at a five-year contract to do specific educational work with the communities involved. She said the City is very pleased with the work CCE is doing.

Discussing the budget Ms. Reidy said the requested county appropriation is \$400,000. She said this money is the money we use in Cooperative Education, going totally to fund our core program staff. They are the administrative staff that supports all of the core programs. She also said the grants and contracts provisions are requiring us to do in kind and Cooperative Education should be able to supply the administrative costs. She said that currently they are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the basic administrative costs necessary to support all the grants and contracts we have.

When asked, Ms. Reidy said Mike Fargione's salary is paid by Cooperative Education. He is the person involved with fruit farming. As an aside she said it is going to be a bumper year for apples.

Ms. Reidy referred the committee to the list of grants received and anticipated from from 2003 through 2008 which is expected to increase more than \$200,000 in total. She said grants and contracts bring in a lot of money but that Cooperative Education has not had an increase in its appropriation in eleven years.

She said at its annual meeting they would be discussing fund raising, expenses and revenues. She said that CCE does a lot of work with the Agricultural Farmland Protection Board in Ulster as well as in other counties. In other counties, the County picks up the cost but Ulster does not. She said they are having difficulty with finding qualified employees by not being able to pay them a decent wage.

Leg. Cahill said he believed everyone should be prepared to pick something in their budget that was expendable.

The report of Cornell Cooperative Education being concluded, Chairwoman Zimet introduced, on behalf of Ulster County Community College, a proposed Resolution ratifying the appointment of John Wadlin to the Board of Trustees. It appears that the appointment was incomplete as the oath of office was not taken within thirty (30) days. A motion to approve the ratifying Resolution was made by Leg. Harris and seconded by Leg. Cahill. Upon voice vote said Resolution was unanimously approved.

At this time Chairwoman Zimet recognized Anne Cardinale, Director of Ulster County Office for the Aging.

Ulster County Office for the Aging:

Ms. Cardinale reviewed her proposed budget for 2008 which was cost neutral to the county. She said there was an increase of \$68,144 in the budget but it did not affect the county share.

She reported that the annual NYSOFC evaluation was completed and their evaluation was that our case files are in terrible shape and for the past six years they have had negative findings for caseworkers' files. She said that the caseworkers have so many clients that they do not have enough time to do all of the paperwork. Ms. Cardinale reported also that there are people in some of our programs which we cannot adequately service because we just don't have enough caseworkers. She also said her office is doing some of the work which rightfully should be done by the Department of Social Services. She has amended her budget to remove the request for a Transcriptionist, and instead is requesting another case worker and a case aide. This should cost about \$56,000 which will be apportioned one-third to use and two-thirds to the state.

Ms. Cardinale said the vehicle cost may be amended to \$75,000 contingent upon on which one of the home delivered meal plans we go with. It may be more cost effective to deliver them in house rather than by contract. She also said the medical van also needs to be replaced.

The Director also discussed a proposed plan for an additional funding stream which would be a not for profit foundation under 501-5C3. It would be a separate entity from the County. She said this could fund some of the new programs the seniors are asking for but for which we do not have any money, such as social events.

The satellite programs are up and running but are not doing as well as we had hoped. We will have to revisit this and perhaps combine some of the sites. There followed a general discussion of the areas furnished and served by the current programs run by Office for the Aging.

Referencing the "Aging in Place" program, Ms. Cardinale said it seems we always have the funds to pay for people in nursing homes but not for people to stay in their homes. A general discussion of this matter followed and Ms. Cardinale said she would have more information for the next meeting.

Ms. Cardinale reported there was a trial run on the "freezer foods" for Meals on Wheels which was not successful. Various problems were encountered and it appeared Prestige was not equipped to do this. This will be studied further, she said, as freezer meals are the way to go in the future but have to be done by a company that really knows what they are doing.

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The Ulster County/New York Connects program was discussed. This is the Point of Entry and Ms. Cardinale said if we do not use the funding by the end of the year we will lose it. She discussed a lease of two rooms in the Business Resource Center which her office will be leasing to work on this program and will be able to pay the first years rent with this money. There followed a general discussion, raised by Leg. Cahill, of the lease with Ulster County Community College and Chairwoman Zimet said that no matter what happens with the college it is only two rooms and right next door to Office for the Aging and it shouldn't make any difference.

The report of Ulster County Office for the Aging being concluded, and there being no further business, Chairwoman Zimet declared the meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted:

*Janet Salanitri
Recorder*