



Tioga County Worksession Minutes **April 8, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.**

Legislators Present:

Legislator Balliet
Legislator Hollenbeck
Legislator Monell (*Arrived at 1:02 p.m.*)
Legislator Mullen
Chair/Legislator Sauerbrey
Legislator Standinger
Legislator Sullivan

Legislators Absent:

Legislator Roberts
Legislator Weston

Guests:

None

Staff Present:

Peter DeWind, County Attorney
Cathy Haskell, Legislative Clerk
Amy Eiklor, Deputy Legislative Clerk
Douglas Camin, Chief Information Officer
Drew Griffin, Deputy Director of ITCS
Linn Bruce, Civil Service Administrator (*Departed at 1:29 p.m.*)
Bernadette Toombs, Republican Commissioner of Elections

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Sauerbrey opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

90-Day Hiring Freeze Discussion: Chair Sauerbrey reported the Legislature is receiving numerous resolutions asking for a waiver on the 90-day hiring freeze. Legislator Sullivan explained the 90-day freeze was put in place last year when Tioga County's fiscal future was unknown. Tioga County is expected to receive over \$9 million from the COVID-19 Relief Plan. Legislator Sullivan no longer thinks the hiring freeze is necessary. Chair Sauerbrey concurred and suggested the abolishment of the 90-day hiring freeze be a late-file resolution. It was decided that a resolution abolishing the 90-day hiring freeze will be drafted as a late-file and adopted at the April 13, 2021 Legislature Meeting.

Senator Schumer Visit Update: Chair Sauerbrey reported Senator Schumer made a stop in Tioga County on April 2, 2021. Chair Sauerbrey, Commissioner of Public Works Gary

Hammond, and Director of ED&P LeeAnn Tinney met with Senator Schumer in the Hubbard Auditorium. Chair Sauerbrey stated Senator Schumer is always respectful when he visits and described him as, "a friend to Tioga County." During his visit, Senator Schumer stated funding is on its way for various industries, such as movie theaters. At this time, details are limited on how much and when funding will become available.

Chair Sauerbrey reported a major topic of discussion with the Senator was on broadband. According to Chair Sauerbrey, Senator Schumer is aware of the complications with broadband access in Tioga County and said he is working on a solution. Chair Sauerbrey stated rural and outlying areas, such as Anderson Hill Road and Waits Road, should benefit from monies the County receives.

Chief Information Officer, Douglas Camin, explained that a detailed study about broadband accessibility was conducted last year. The study was done by Southern Tier Network, in collaboration with five counties. The study included Tioga County, as well as Yates, Schuyler, Chemung, and Steuben Counties. During the study, all broadband access points were mapped throughout those counties. Mr. Camin explained the study created a plan for expanding infrastructure to unserved or underserved areas. He stated funding comes at a good time as the plan includes cost estimates on constructing broadband to much needed areas. Mr. Camin mentioned the study discovered Tioga County was fairly well-served, in comparison to the other counties. Mr. Camin reported about 93% of Tioga County has broadband access, mostly due to local provider, Haefele.

Legislator Hollenbeck reported he has a meeting with Southern Tier 8 and will hopefully get more information and input about broadband accessibility from that meeting.

Approval of Worksession Minutes: On motion of Legislator Monell, seconded by Legislator Standing, the March 18, 2021 minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Items: Currently there are no action items.

Legislative Support: Legislative Clerk Haskell asked for approval of the March 4, 2021 Legislative Support committee minutes. On motion of Legislator Monell, seconded by Legislator Hollenbeck and unanimously carried, the minutes were approved.

Ms. Haskell went over the Legislative Support Agenda and reported the following:

- As of March 31, 2021, the Board of Ethics has one vacancy.
- Financial Disclosures are required to be filed with the County Attorney by May 15, 2021.
- Ms. Haskell has been coordinating with County Attorney DeWind and the Treasurer's Office on developing a Munis super user network group & training program. Ms. Haskell explained super users are those that have the most knowledge in Munis. Ms. Haskell reported numerous department heads have expressed interest in having more training in Munis. There has been no formal training on Munis since its inception in 2015. A meeting will take place tomorrow where an agenda will be drafted for a super user

meeting, which will help determine how to proceed with the development of the training program.

Resolutions: Ms. Haskell reviewed the agenda and resolutions for the April 13, 2021 Legislature meeting with discussion occurring on the following:

- **Supreme Court Order-Town of Owego:** Chair Sauerbrey reported the Hampton Inn in Owego challenged their assessment with the Supreme Court of the State of New York. The hotel was successful and won a reduction in their assessment. Legislator Monell inquired how the change in assessment will affect the monies Tioga County receives. Chair Sauerbrey replied that she does not know at this time, but believes County Treasurer, Jim McFadden, will bring it up at the Finance, Legal & Safety Committee Meeting next week.
- **Renew Software Maintenance and Extended Warranties with Dominion Voting for Three Years:** Ms. Haskell reported this resolution did not go through committee, but Republican Commissioner of Elections, Bernadette Toombs, is available for any questions. Ms. Haskell explained Democratic Commissioner of Elections, James Wahls, worked with Chief Accountant, Stephanie Jerzak, to develop a payment plan that will save Tioga County money. The total cost of \$30,090.00 will be paid up front and Mr. Wahl's budget will be charged \$10,030.00 per year over the next three years.
- **Amend Employee Handbook: Amend Section I. Rules of the Legislature; Subsection 2-Committees and Subsection 4- Appointments:** Ms. Haskell reported she is working on an orientation manual for newly elected officials and Department Heads. In reviewing personnel policies, Personnel Officer O'Rourke and Ms. Haskell discovered titles and Departments were outdated and in need of updating.
- **Amend Employee Handbook: Add New Policy to Subsection IV. Personnel Rules, Subsection S. Entitled Tioga County Employee Identification Badge Program:** Legislator Sullivan asked if employees are required to wear their badge while on-site. Ms. Haskell responded, yes. Legislator Sullivan inquired if department heads are aware of the policy change. Ms. Haskell stated the badge program was discussed at last month's Leaders Meeting. Chair Sauerbrey explained that once the resolution is passed, a memo will be sent out.

Other:

- **Budget Update:** Chair Sauerbrey distributed a New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) County Impact Report to the Legislators. Chair Sauerbrey asked the Legislators to take the report and read it over.

Chair Sauerbrey reported Tioga County will receive more than \$9 million in stimulus money, but is still waiting on guidance from the Treasury on how that money can be spent. She explained last year, \$5 million was taken out of the fund balance and hopes money can be used to replenish that fund.

- **Tioga Downs Tax Decrease:** Chair Sauerbrey reported Tioga County and surrounding areas receive 20% of the 37% tax monies Tioga Downs pays. Going forward, Tioga

County will only receive 20% of 25% tax monies from Tioga Downs. Chair Sauerbrey explained casino tax in New York State has decreased, therefore, Tioga Downs will be paying less taxes. As a result, Tioga County will receive less money from Tioga Downs. Chair Sauerbrey spoke with the owner of Tioga Downs, Jeff Gural, who was upset about the tax decrease. Mr. Gural indicated he appreciates paying less taxes, but doesn't think it is right to decrease Tioga County's share.

Legislator Sullivan inquired how the decrease will affect the County budget. Legislator Monell replied that casino monies are put into the Reserve Account. Legislator Mullen stated Tioga County does not use casino monies for everyday expenses.

- **Proposed Gun Control Legislation:** Legislator Standinger expressed his disappointment in President Biden's proposed gun control measures. He is concerned about the proposal and believes if passed, will have a big impact on Tioga County residents. He explained there are three proposed gun control laws in the House of Representatives, but nothing about addressing mental health issues or addressing existing laws. Legislator Mullen agreed and stated mental health issues are the biggest factor in mass shootings. He explained the issue is not the gun, but the individual's mental health.
- **CSEA Contract Negotiations:** Legislator Hollenbeck stated Personnel Officer O'Rourke was scheduled to discuss CSEA contract negotiations, but was tabled for Executive Session at the April 22, 2021 Legislative Worksession.
- **Legalization of Marijuana:** Legislator Monell inquired if the new Law legalizing the recreational use of marijuana allows counties to opt out of having dispensaries. Chair Sauerbrey replied towns and villages, not the County, have the ability to opt out of dispensaries. Chair Sauerbrey explained towns and villages have until the end of the year to decide. She called supervisors and mayors in Tioga County, but did not get a yes or no answer from anyone.

Legislator Hollenbeck reported it will take roughly two years for New York to form a committee that can oversee the regulations. Chair Sauerbrey stated it will take a couple of years for planting, harvesting, and selling to get up and running.

Legislator Sullivan asked if the Law states marijuana use is now legal or if that will take effect later. County Attorney DeWind responded that smoking marijuana in public is now legal in New York State. There are some places, such as college campuses, where marijuana is not permitted. In general, anywhere that tobacco is permitted, marijuana use is also allowed. Legislator Sullivan asked if individuals are now allowed to grow their own marijuana. County Attorney DeWind explained it can only be homegrown eighteen months after dispensaries have opened.

Executive Session: With no confidential topics of discussion, an Executive Session was not necessary.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Thursday, April 22, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Eicklor

Deputy Legislative Clerk