

**Herkimer County Legislature
County Planning & Development and Ways & Means
Friday, February 5, 2021
Via Zoom
9:30 a.m.**

Persons Attending:

Kurt J. Ackerman (Chairman of Co. Planning; W&M committee member)
William Weakley (Co. Planning committee member)
Peter J. Campione (Co. Planning committee member)
Gregory Malta, Sr. (Co. Planning committee member)
Bob Hollum (Co. Planning committee member)
Patrick E. Russell (Chairman, Ways & Means)
Raymond Smith (Ways & Means committee member)
Raymond Johnson (Ways & Means committee member)
Frederick J. Shaw, Jr. (Ways & Means committee member)
John P. Stephens (Ways & Means committee member)
Vincent J. Bono, Chairman of the Legislature
James W. Wallace, Jr., County Administrator
Brandy Serow, Secretary to Co. Administrator
Lorraine Lewandrowski, County Attorney
Sheri Ferdula, Budget Officer
Steve Billings, Personnel Officer
Karin Piseck, Director of Employment & Training

(Non-Committee Members Signed In)

Legislator Mark Gaworecki
Legislator Robert J. Schrader
Legislator William E. Keeler, Sr.
Legislator John L. Brezinski
Legislator Peter F. Manno
Legislator Ray Donley

Absent:

N/A

Mr. Ackerman and Mr. Russell called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Items discussed:

COUNTY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT/WAYS & MEANS:

1. Approve Office Space Permit Agreement with The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital dba Bassett Community Health Navigation for office space at Herkimer Working Solutions Career Center
2. Authorize renewal of agreement with Strategic Development Specialists
3. Other

Committee Vote Record

COUNTY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT/WAYS & MEANS:

Mr. Ackerman: "I don't have that agenda Pat. I know there are two things on the agenda and one is for Bassett Health Center for renting some space from us."

Jim Wallace: "Yes and Karin is on the phone if you would like her to speak to it."

Karin Piseck: "This is an office space agreement just because it expired. It goes for one year so it's an office space agreement for Bassett to remain here at our Working Solutions. The difference this year is that they really have had nobody back yet to work in the office except the Director John and they asked if they could reduce the amount of money because of this. I don't want to lose them totally so of course I said yes but anytime we lose a little bit of rent over here then the Employment and Training Office budget picks it up. We are going from \$24,000 from last year to \$12,000 for this year but like I said, they are a great fit here. I don't want to lose them but most of them are working from home as is every other office in here."

Mr. Ackerman: "Is that this coming year? If that changes and they come back in the office are they going to readjust that figure?"

Karin Piseck: "That's what the Director John tells me yes because he does not want to find any other space. It works perfectly for them and he is a little frustrated of why some of his people don't want to come back and certainly they don't need to be made to come back. So I assume when things get a little bit more back to normal we will have it back but I don't know for this whole coming year if it will change."

Mr. Ackerman: "Okay. Thank you. Any other questions for Planning and Development? I need a motion."

Item #1 - On motion of Mr. Weakley, seconded by Mr. Campione for the County Planning & Development Committee and on motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Stephens for the Ways & Means Committee, Item #1 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Ackerman: "Second thing on the agenda is to renew agreement with Strategic Development Specialists. I believe they do a little bit of work with us and the IDA. Correct on that Jim?"

Jim Wallace: "Correct. This year Kurt they did about \$1.582 million for us in projects between the IDA and the County."

Mr. Ackerman: "How much is the contract for Jim?"

Jim Wallace: "It would stay at the \$5,000 per month, this is the third year, which is about \$60,000 and incidentals up to \$3,000 but we usually don't approach that."

Mr. Ackerman: "Okay. Thanks Jim."

Jim Wallace: "You are welcome."

Mr. Ackerman: "Any other questions for anybody?"

Mr. Johnson: "Mr. Chairman, I have a question. I talked to Mr. Wallace the other day. The County uses about one third of this and the IDA uses two-thirds. I feel that the payment should also be equally divided. The IDA is using it more than the County, I think they should anti up and pay for it. I think it should be split one-third and two-thirds."

Mr. Bono: "I think I can answer that. We told you a while back the IDAs do not hire a lobbyist and that's why we go through the County."

Mr. Johnson: "Okay so we can take the two-thirds out of the \$200,000 then is all I am saying. If you guys are using it more Jim then you should at least pay for it."

John Piseck: "To answer Ray's question, we are doing this for the good of the County residents. I don't see a separation here. For some reason Ray feels as though there is a separation between the County and the IDA when it comes to this. All of those projects are for the betterment of the County. Look at the help they provided us with the water transmission line that's not going to fully support your constituents Ray but everybody else along that. Over a third of the population. To try and separate that out just seems strange to me unless you have some other information that I am not seeing here."

Mr. Johnson: "I'm just saying who is using John, I guess. That's all I am saying."

John Piseck: "The County is using it Ray."

Mr. Johnson: "No, the IDA is using it more than the County John."

John Piseck: "I guess you don't see the bottom line. That's a shame."

Mr. Bono: "Well then the County can do the water line. The IDA doesn't have to do that. It affects your community."

Mr. Johnson: "I know it does Jim but all I am saying is the IDA uses more than the County uses it. That's all I am saying."

John Piseck: "We are the County representing all of your constituents. How is it not the County benefitting from this? Where do you draw the line Ray?"

Mr. Johnson: "John, I'm talking to committee. I didn't see your name on the agenda."

John Piseck: "Your Chairman of Planning and Development allowed me to speak."

Mr. Johnson: "Okay. I'm just stating a fact that I talked to the Administrator yesterday and he said a third and two-thirds. I just feel it should be based on that. It's my opinion and I will vote accordingly."

Mr. Hollum: "Since I've got on and I understand what Ray is saying, it is used by other departments but the County doesn't do this work and this is money to us and when I first looked into, I believe it was last year or the year before, they handled over \$4 million in projects and I know someone else is using it but we are benefitting from it so I see the positiveness of it even though it is \$60,000 and I do realize sometimes it doesn't seem to make sense. It gets us on the next floor in Albany whenever we need to do these projects and I have always seen it as a benefit. That's all."

Mr. Russell: "Kurt, we have two components primarily. We have a grant writing component and a lobbying component. I just want to make sure people know that. Second question is, the \$1.5 million, what was that for? That was for last years grants?"

Jim Wallace: "Yes Pat. We have been working together on several projects including the water transmission line, HPK Industries, our planning grant, a cyber security grant that was done here at the County. I know Bob has been involved with that with Kathy and also working on Duofold."

Mr. Stephens: "To John Piseck's point, doing the water line which benefits the village and it's been utilized for Duofold that benefitted the village. Am I correct in saying that?"

Jim Wallace: "Correct."

Mr. Stephens: "Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bono: "And we don't have to do those projects as an IDA but we do it because we realize the importance to the County and what it means. Jobs, clean-up, that's what we are about. If nine votes wants to sway it the other way then we could eliminate a lot of our work."

Mr. Russell: "Is there any way we can get this contract where we can talk about this during the budget time were it would be from January to December? That might help in any discussions that we have in the future instead of doing it now during the mid-portion of February."

Mr. Ackerman: "I don't see why we can't. Do you see a problem with that Jim Wallace?"

Jim Wallace: "No."

Mr. Ackerman: "Okay. I don't think there is any argument that they are doing good work. I just think maybe some people want to put it in the category where it belongs. It's benefitting the County either way. How we classify it or how we do some house keeping with it. I think that's what Ray is getting at. Put it in the right department. There is no negativity. It's just think some people want to separate it by what departments are using it. So whether that means we give more money to this slot or they take it away is another argument but I think they are doing good. They are helping us out."

Mr. Russell: "One of my concerns with doing this I understand but the IDA obviously hasn't budgeted for any of this so that's what part of my thought was to bring this forward now and then try and ask the IDA to come up with money for this contract. Difficult, I'm sure as it would be for any department."

Mr. Ackerman: "Back to Jim Bono's point, can they contribute towards it or is it something that has to go through us?"

Mr. Bono: "No. Under the law an IDA cannot hire a lobbyist and let me tell you, their fingerprints are on a lot of the projects if not all of the projects we do. We are on the phone with them daily. Jim Wallace can attest, John Piseck can attest and I can attest. We talk to them on a daily basis and there are a lot of other irons in the fire Ray now that we can't talk about. They are an integral part of what we do and listen, I understand. We have Assembly people, we have Senators that should be doing this work. I've heard that before but when you have a lobbyist, we would be the only County that doesn't have a lobbyist and since we have hired them a lot of good things have happened and it's not just about going to the second floor. They have a lot of contacts with a lot of people. Some of those Senators and some of those Assembly people who are in the minority don't know and we get the contacts and we get the conversations and if I took most of you guys to Albany you wouldn't even know what to say at those meetings because of those people. They put you in contact with who, what to say, who is involved with what, very integral part and to lose them would be a hit to this County and you would have to make it up some other way."

Mr. Russell: "Well, what I am suggesting maybe too down the road, is we have a meeting with the group so everybody knows who they are and what they do. Information is helpful."

Mr. Bono: "Absolutely Pat."

Mr. Johnson: "I was never stating it was bad. I just like with what Kurt was saying, just who uses it and what column it should go into."

Mr. Malta: "Mr. Chairman I will make a motion to move it to a Resolution."

Mr. Russell: “Does this contract start as of January first? I would really like this to go from January through December. How have we been paying it?”

Jim Wallace: “Pat, this start April 5, 2021 through April 4, 2022.”

Item #2 - On motion of Mr. Malta, seconded by Mr. Hollum for the County Planning & Development Committee and on motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Bono for the Ways & Means Committee, Item #2 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Item #3 – N/A.

On motion of Mr. Campione, seconded by Mr. Weakley the County Planning & Development committee adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

The Ways & Means Committee continued.