

Audit Committee

Regular Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: September 23, 2021 – 3:00 PM
LOCATION: Powered by Zoom Meeting by dialing 1-646-558-8656, Meeting ID 858 0183 3924
PRESIDING OFFICER: John Parete, Chairman
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Amber Feaster
PRESENT: Legislators Herbert Litts, III, Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr. (arrived at 3:06 PM), John Gavaris, and Laura Petit (arrived at 3:13 PM); and Comptroller March Gallagher
ABSENT: Commissioner of Finance, Burt Gulnick
Burt Gulnick
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes
OTHER ATTENDEES: Deputy Comptroller Alicia DeMarco; Senior Auditor Randy Boughton; Descher & Malecki, Carl Widmer and Erica Handley

- Chairman Parete called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM and called the roll.

Motion No. 1: To approve the Minutes of the May 13, 2021 Regular Meeting

Motion Made By: Legislator Litts
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Gavaris
Discussion: None
Voting In Favor: Legislators Parete, Litts, Gavaris
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 3
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Approved

Chairman Parete introduced Carl Widmer and Erica Handley at Drescher & Malecki LLP.

Mr. Carl Widmer, Partner at Drescher & Malecki, thanked the Committee for the meeting, provided an overview of the audit's deliverables and an overview of what their external audit process is. Mr. Widmer continued in providing the Committee with a presentation of the County's key performance trends from December 31, 2020 and back 5-years. Mr. Widmer reviewed the Management Comment Letter, detailing the status on prior year comments and the recommendations for current year comments. Comptroller March Gallagher requested a model policy for Remote Work and for Revenue Recognition, as recommended in the Management Comment Letter. Legislator Gavaris clarified that the Management Comment Letter does not speak to deficiencies but rather best practice recommendations. Mr. Widmer disclosed that this has been a universal practice of Drescher & Malecki and offered to create a separate communications report for best practices moving forward.

Comptroller Gallagher asked the representatives from Drescher & Malecki if other Counties were running American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds entirely through the Capital Fund, explaining that the Finance Department is planning to do this for Ulster County citing multi-year accounting as it's basis for the treatment. Mr. Widmer answered that ARPA funds are outside of the scope of this agreement, but the firm is happy to contract for such services.

In reference to the Management Comment letter, Legislator Gavaris questioned whether the Health Department is deficient in its Cyber Security protocols and policies. Mr. Widmer answered that this comment is based on the county as a whole and he is unsure how it relates specifically to the Health Department.

Chairman Parete confirmed that Drescher & Malecki will complete the last year on the firm's current contract with Ulster County in the performance of the external audit for the year ended December 31, 2021.

Legislator Ronk expressed desire for the Committee to hire an outside firm to review Project Resilience funds, including the revenues received and expenditures going out, County personnel time utilized, and County positions utilized.

Legislator Petit requested the Committee review policies pertaining to properties that are on the auction block, including what the selection process is for removal.

Chairman Parete stated support for the informational request Legislator Ronk suggested.

Comptroller Gallagher provided a brief history of Project Resilience funding, disclosing her prior position with the Community Foundation, offering to aid in any Agreed Upon Procedures that are contracted for, and stating support for why such a review would be helpful for the Legislature. Further Comptroller Gallagher noted that her Office is interested in a number of aspects of the Real Property that the County holds, including the hazardous uncollectible list, how the auction is conducted, the properties that are removed, and more.

Legislator Gavaris suggested first requesting the Project Resilience information from the County Executive. Legislator Gavaris further informed the Committee that the question proposed on Real Property was asked of the County Executive who answered that properties were removed from the auction list based on the expectation that the Legislature was going to establish a land bank, acknowledging that he does not feel this was done properly or should have been done.

Legislator Petit questioned the timing between the removal of properties and discussions surrounding the establishment of a land bank, asking what happens to these properties, what are the procedures, if the properties should come before the Legislature for approval, and if there should be a formal evaluation process established for the review and repurposing of certain properties.

Legislator Ronk recalled that as part of authorizing the auction to proceed, the Legislature authorizes the Commissioner of Finance through broad authority to remove parcels, noting that potential environmental concerns are one of the reasons for such removal as these can result in a high cost to the County. Legislator Ronk suggested the Legislature review this authorization and agreed that the Legislature should talk about a policy regarding what properties come off and how they come off.

Motion No. 2: To request of the County Executive an accounting of Project Resilience including the details of monies in and monies out, County personnel utilized, the quantity of County personnel hours worked on the Project, and a detailed breakdown of all advertising or publishing costs.

Motion Made By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Gavaris

Discussion: Chairman Parete emphasized the request is not adversarial and is informational.

Voting In Favor: Legislators Parete, Litts, Gavaris, Petit, and Ronk
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 5
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Approved

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Chairman Parete asked the members if there was any other business, and hearing none;

Motion to Adjourn

Motion Made By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Litts
No. of Votes in Favor: 5
No. of Votes Against: 0

Time: 4:43 pm

Respectfully submitted: Amber Feaster
Minutes Approved: March 29, 2022

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- Chairman Parete called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM and called the roll.

Chairman Parete: We also have-, okay. The right honorable Controller is here with us today and other members. And so, if you let in Carl and Erica and they can introduce themselves and they're going to give us a, a statement of their, of their recent audit and findings. Amber.

Deputy Clerk Feaster: Okay. They're all set.

Chairman Parete: No, you know what, what we'll do - just one second. We do have a quorum. Somebody moved to, to accept the minutes of the last meeting, as presented. So, moved. Second.

Legislator Litts: Second.

Chairman Parete: All in favor.

Group: Aye.

Chairman Parete: Carried. Okay. You're on, folks.

Carl Widmer: All right. Good afternoon, everybody.

Chairman Parete: Good afternoon

Carl Widmer: Good to see you all. Again, I'm Carl Widmer, Partner at Drescher & Malecki and on the call with me today is Erica Handley. She is the Senior Manager on the job and she's, you know, we're both

familiar faces to Ulster County on the audit side. So, meeting, we're at the conclusion of the audit this year for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2020. And we wanted to get the group together prior to the issuance of the financial statements to convey the results and our overall observation. So I think last year, we did have a pretty good format and it facilitated a good conversation where we gave a brief introduction, but then we brought up that slideshow, which helped cover the key areas of the audit, the required communications, and then a little bit of the focus just on the general fund, like at a high level, and we included those. And that was distributed prior to the meeting too - the presentation slides. Again, we included some of the peer comparison slides where we pull information off the Comptroller's website where everyone submits their, their annual financial reports. And then after the presentation, we could cover the observations, you know, management letter, That was also a key item that we work this year. Let my team know "Hey, we want to get this together sooner than later" and worked with, you know, Amber really helped a lot to facilitate getting the final draft with up-to-date responses and information in there ready for today's meeting so that we didn't have to have a second meeting after September 30th, like we did last year. So we got it all in for today's meeting. Where we sit today, testing, that's complete. We are finalizing, you know, our work papers. We go through a couple rounds of review. So that is still being finalized. But we don't anticipate it, you know, affecting the financial reports or letters. The draft of the main financial statement, which is the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. And just an FYI, to the group, we were informed by the GFOA (the Government Finance Officers' Association) they administer the program for this type of financial report and it was informed of everybody participating that the acronym of CAFR, just for everyone here it was casually called the "CAF-ER". Previously, that is unacceptable language as it has been recognized as a negative term in some groups. So I will do my best to break the habit and not use it. I'll try to say "the annual report". Figured I'd give the group that the update for why I'm trying to do that. But the draft of the annual report and the management letter was circulated prior to today. I know it wasn't too much in advance. But working with a part time, individual and finance now with CJ, who's the primary author of the document that we work with. So we are working to get it out by the deadline. We got those two documents out to the group, so we can discuss it today. And then our plan is actually to have drafts of all reports and letters hopefully sent out just so you get a look at them by the end of the day tomorrow. We just, that, that's an internal goal. It carries a due date, you know per our contract of September 30th. We anticipate meeting that deadline but we'd like to circulate drafts before the weekend to give everybody at least you know a couple of days to take a look at it if you want it to prior to. And then before we get into the presentation, one item to follow up on from our main meeting, the entrance meeting, was that I thought, and Amber, if you want to chime in, that it was a pretty productive effort in reaching out to both Mental Health and Social Services regarding the submission of that cost report, the CFR cost reports. And I know there was some concern for the tardiness of when it's completed. But I thought it did facilitate a good conversation, both departments. Now they didn't really backed down, they provided their responses for why it is the way it is. And to report today, Mental Health was submitted on time by June 1. And we are currently a work in process with Social Services. We've sent out our requests for the detailed testing. And we're hoping as long as they're able to gather the support in a good time, we'll finish that up by September 30th, which has been a tough task to carry through in the past year. So it, it was worth bringing up. I think they did recognize that there was some room for improvement. And, and we saw a better response time. So I will go ahead and share the screen. Did anybody have any comments or questions just before we get started on the slideshow, just to bring up to the group?

Chairman Parete: Go ahead.

Carl Widmer: All right. Can I share? There we go. Oh, it still says disabled? Amber, are you able to change that? Or?

Deputy Clerk Feaster: Let me see what I can do.

Carl Widmer: If she isn't able to, is the group here...

Deputy Clerk Feaster: I have it pulled up on my screen, and I could do it.

Carl Widmer: That'd be fine. If that's easier. Excellent. All right, so we can move on. Right, right to the next slide. Has everybody seen that? Yep. Excellent. Thank you. So first off to cover: It looks like everybody on the call- these are familiar faces so you've been through this before. But just to recap, the deliverables, what you can count on at the end of our engagement each year. The financial statements, of course, that's going to have our opinion, that's the main report that everybody's looking to, for Drescher & Malecki to provide our opinion on. As an update, we do plan on providing an unmodified opinion, a clean opinion. As it stands, we don't anticipate straying from that clean opinion. Single audit: that references the federal compliance audit. There, the county is reporting just shy of 50 million dollars of federal awards for the fiscal year ended 2020. And we go through the process and basically act as an extension of the federal government to perform what's called the single audit, compliance audit over those awards and make sure that the county is administering this federal award money in an appropriate manner. So we follow their, what's called uniform guidance and we completed testing on four different programs. And successful with no reportable finance. Just to update we can say it, the Workforce Investment Act cluster, aging cluster, heap program, home, and Medicaid. So those are the four programs, those were clean, and we worked with the Office of employment and training for Workforce Investment, Office of the aging for the aging cluster, and DSS handled the, the last two. An auditor communications letter, basically reiterates what our responsibilities were, and some key communications. The next slide actually we'll, we'll look at a couple of those. A management letter you're familiar with, we'll cover at the end. And then a few other reports. There is another compliance audit that we perform, and that's over the State Department of Transportation awards, just over 4 million dollars this past year, but you're also subject to a compliance audit on that in which we audit the CHIPS program. And that was clean no reportable findings. Good job. And then there are a couple of agreed upon procedures for the jail commissary and Resource Recovery. Those we can distribute in draft form tomorrow. And then as I mentioned earlier, the Mental Health and Social Services CFR cost reports which Mental Health is done; Social Services is underway. Moving on the next slide, auditor communications. This group serving as the Audit committee on, on the county. There are certain communications that each year whether it was us or anybody else, these are required communications that they should make to the group on an annual basis, and the first is our responsibility under Generally Accepted Auditing Standards. And that is primarily our responsibility is to assess risk, design tests, perform tests, and ultimately gain a reasonable assurance that the county's financial statements can be relied upon. And we validate that by stamping our approval that they can be relied upon with our audit opinion. A reminder, our audit is not designed to detect fraud. It is designed to gain assurance over the financial statement amounts. All be it we are aware and believe that if anything significant or material came up, we would likely uncover it during performance of our audit. Nothing came to our attention. Significant accounting policies and estimates. These are basically in the spirit of transparency, so that this group is aware, if any significant policies or estimates were to change that affect the financial statements, we would want this whole group to be aware of that so that you could read the financial statements,

knowing what policy, policies and policies and estimates went into play there. You know, if you were to change a policy or change an estimate, that that may mislead a reader of a financial statement, if you weren't aware of the change. The only significant change this year came as a result of the implementation of a new GASB. It's called GASB Number 84.

I'd say the short story and Erica, you could probably back me up on this is GASB 84- It took a lot of time and effort, but its effect on the financial statements was pretty minimal. And to the average reader of the financial statements, it's not very significant. So finance handled it well. We reviewed the treatment and we know that these financial statements are presented in accordance with the new requirements of GASB 84.

Comptroller Gallagher: Can I ask a question, Carl, on on GASB 84? We'd inquired whether there was a work paper behind that that you guys had and you didn't. We did obtain one from finance, um, on leases. And it seemed like the language in the, in the note on GASB 84 was referring back to leases that have been terminated including Family Court, etc. So, um, I just wanted to bring that to your attention. And I you know, I did receive your documents today. The, the, the annual report. So I will go back and look and see but for your- family, the family court building renovation was a long time ago.

Carl Widmer: Okay, just to clarify leases as they relate to GASB 84, or in preparation of GASB 87?

Comptroller Gallagher: I'm sorry, 87. You're right.

Carl Widmer: Okay, so that is a future. That's not required for this financial statement. That's I believe, now with GASB 95 issuing those postponements, I believe the county has until the year ended 2022 to fully implement that.

Comptroller Gallagher: Sorry about that. Yep.

Carl Widmer: No, no problem. Um, independence, of course, this is pretty critical to serve as your external auditors. It wouldn't really be appropriate if myself or Erica, you know, we're related to, or were close with any key decision makers, or department heads that are related to the audit. So we can confirm, in fact and appearance myself, everybody at the firm, there are no conflicts of interest between us and the county of Ulster, and anybody that would have bearing over the performance of the audit. Other matters full scope audit, we were given access to all records requested. So all, all good reports there. So moving on, were there any questions on the performance of the audit? This next section of the presentation starts to delve into a high level general fund review for the fiscal year. But if anybody had any questions on, you know, the firm the way we operate, or the steps in the audit, we could pause.

Legislator Petit: I mean, could you just go over the steps that you, you take in this audit, you know, is it an actual hands on audit? Do you do, you know, future projections? So you know...

Carl Widmer: Sure.

Legislator Petit: It doesn't have to be that involved. But yeah, thank you.

Carl Widmer: No, that's fine. Um, so as a whole our, I mentioned before our job is to give an opinion on the financial statements? So we'll be looking at those, those key pages in the annual financial report. And then we say, well, it's our duty to say that those are fairly stated. So how do we get to that point? And the logistics of it, it has morphed over the past couple of years, whereas we're performing the majority of the audit in a remote fashion. Whereas previously, we were on site much more. We work most directly with finance, just, they're the ones who authored the financial statements so it does make the most sense that we'll have the most questions and follow up with them. But ultimately, they keep track of the general ledger for the year that creates the financial statements. And then we're going to perform procedures to gain assurance on the amounts in there. So that involves assessing risk on the different areas of the audit. We look at each of the balance sheet items, basically as separate transaction cycles. So cash is its own section. receivables is its own section. Long term liabilities has its own section, and so on and so forth. And we assess risk to each cycle. And based on that risk assessment and industry standards, we come up and design our testing so that at the end of our testing, we have that reasonable assurance that we feel comfortable saying this number is fairly stated. So we go through that process, and that's called fieldwork, we pull samples and do detailed testing, we do a lot of analytic testing. In the government municipal sector, specifically in funds that have adopted annual budgets, measuring to the prior year is, is a great way of gaining assurance over if there's anything weird going on, because it would jump up or down from the prior year. In this, in this sector, the prior year is a good measurement tool and analytic testing is used on quite a bit. And at the end of that, if there are any exceptions, you know, we follow up with the staff or department head that that transaction cycle is handled by to address any concerns. But after that, we start reviewing the financial statements that we obtain from finance and say, are the numbers in these financial statements, the same numbers that we tested in our audit, we want to make sure nothing changed. And after that, we're right here, we meet with the group, the decision makers, and make sure that everybody is comfortable with the process before those financial statements are ultimately issued and provided to the public. So how is that? That works? All right.

Chairman Parete: Wonderful.

Carl Widmer: Alright, so moving on the first few slides, they come right from the county's financial statements. And these should look familiar from prior year. Um, the presentation is basically last year's information rolled forward with 2020 added. So what you're going to see here is the five year trend of money coming in versus money going out, the red is going to represent your spending. So as such, you'll see if the red was above the blue fund balance decreased because you spent more than you brought in. So it is that, that basic logic here. And what you see is that your, your blue line- 2016 was a little bit high, but from 17 on a pretty steady slow increase. And that is typical of county government. You also will, on a long term, see that same trend on the spending side. But spending has a little bit more volatile. Excuse me, volatility from year to year tends to be. So 2019 stuck out. As you can see there was a large gap and the county actually used just about seven and a half million dollars of fund balance. In 2020. They've more than recouped the deficit that was spent last year and revenues of just about 280 million exceeded spending 268.7 so that your net change was 11.1 -1 1.2 million dollars. Your general fund fund balance increased because revenues were that much higher than expenditures. This is pretty indicative of a COVID here on what you saw was, you know whether it be controlled and measured controlled spending. You know, a little bit more of a conservative measure on the spending side because of the uncertainty. And also people, you know, people- municipalities could have put in practice to freeze certain department budgets or ask that, hey, if you don't absolute, absolutely need that piece of equipment this year, we would ask that you

defer it till a future year. So spending was controlled here. And also a big spend in the county, which we'll see in a later slide relates to state mandated programs, you know, all your social services and everything, there was a decrease in overall activity of just about everything during COVID, because people were home. Your revenues thankfully, last year, at this time, were a lot more concerned with where some of these revenue sources could go. They held on and still had their slight increase so it was that, a favorable year in 2020. On the next slide you take this line graph, and we're going to consider those same amounts total revenues and total expenditures, and put them into a ratio form. And the purpose for it is, it kind of helps illustrate whether you increase fund balance or decreased fund balance, anything over a perfect 1.00 fund balance increased, anything under 1.00 is going to be a decrease to fund balance. So you see here, it actually is up, down, up down up over the last five years. And that isn't such a bad thing. When you look at a five-year average, which that's something that management, philosophy and budget monitoring is going to have a better impact over something like a five year trend rather than one year, because there are some events that you can't control. Over the five year your average is 1.002. That is awful close to a perfect 1.0. And I say perfect 1.0. If you think about government, its purpose is to provide services to its residents, and raise enough money to do so. It's not to raise money to make a profit. And it's also not to provide so much services and be short on revenue, that you create a deficit. So perfect 1.0 means you're raising the dollar for every dollar that you spend. So a five year average of 1.002 is definitely very close to that 1.0. So how does it tie to your fund balance or your equity position. On this slide, we have a bar graph and it's representing total fund balance at the end of the fiscal years for your general fund. And underneath the, the year number, you'll see that's your total fund balance amount. So for example, 2020, finished the year at 61,694,000. The classification or the breakdown is meant to focus on your unassigned fund balance and that's your light blue portion there. I've, I've said it before but if someone is going to read the county's financial statements and retain one piece of information, it's likely going to be the unassigned fund balance in your general fund. It's, it's the most common number that a reader the financials will use to evaluate the county's health to compare you to other counties. So this graph is meant to make that number stand out. All of the other classifications of fund balance being non-spendable, restricted, and assigned are grouped into the red category. Those are amounts that vary on how, you want to say how liquid they are, or how available they are for the county to spend. They have purposes attached to them. Whereas unassigned is more of a savings account and can be used for whatever the general fund needs to use it.

You'll see the big increase is in unassigned fund balance went up just about 13 million dollars from last year. And on the other side is it was at the expense or, it's sort of reclassified, from the red portion. You know, if you look at the red last year, 26 and a half million, now it's down 4 million dollars from there. The Tax Stabilization Reserve was tapped into, you know, 1.4 million dollars. The amount that was appropriated in the budget adoption went from 9.7 million down to 5.6. So those, those decreases essentially by default reclassify into your unassigned fund balance here, so on top of that, during the year fund balance grew 11 million dollars. So what you see is unassigned fund balance had a large improvement at the highest level it's been in the last five years.

So the next slide starts the information that we pull from Office of the State Comptroller: Open Book, New York. And it just puts it into this database that we maintain for all municipalities. And what it does is it enables us to pretty easily type in Ulster and then type in a few peers and see some of this data amongst your peers or compared to your peers. So the first couple slides are meant to just provide some detail to the total revenues and total expenditures that we saw on the line graph earlier, your 280 million dollars of revenues, this is how they're broken down. You can see the last five years of data, pretty consistent, no big

swings from last year to this year. The next slide is going to show the other side you're spending. Spending, you can see the total bar, we mentioned a COVID year there was some savings there, decreased spending of about 16 million dollars, 17 million dollars. And the lion's share of that is within Economic Assistance and Opportunity, which is your largest portion. So in 2020 was 110.9 million dollars. That's down 16 million dollars from the last year. And that's tied to those state mandated programs, Social Services programs that I mentioned before, so that, that area was the main area that saw the decrease from last year.

This next slide is just bringing up that ratio that I spoke about before were your averages is, is very, very close to 1.00. This is just setting it up in our software, you see the last five years, again, for 2020, 1.04, because you did have such a favorable year with revenues over expenditures. And on the next slide, we take the last three years of that ratio, and then put in a few other county peers. We have a qualifying statement that this information, there are no conclusions to draw from this and certainly not as it relates to the audit. It is for informational use only. A lot of times it spurred some good conversation, or if anything, it's just something to sit back and digest. And it's interesting to see where Ulster compares to some of these other counties. We tried to put in, you know, it's both population, we tried to mix population, demographics, and geographic location into what peers we select but last year, I think we had Green instead of Putnam. Green actually doesn't have their 2020 information filed with Office of the State Comptroller yet. So we substituted in Putnam, but this is something that if any of you are interested in other counties, or maybe some of the other information that I've shown, compared to other counties, please reach out, let us know and it, it wouldn't take too much, maybe not in September, but it wouldn't take much for us to substitute in some different peers or give a larger list instead of just five. But on this one, again, this is your revenues to expenditures ratio. You saw significant growth from 19 to 20. There was growth in all, in four out of the five counties presented. Dutchess was the only county presented who didn't have an increase in their ratio for this past year.

The next slide, we take a look at the, the representation of your total revenues. So you, all the money that's being raised in the general fund and brought in- what percentage does your real property tax represent? And out of your total revenue, so we talked about something like 280 million dollars, 17% is represented by real property tax. You can see compared to the other four counties, you're among, you are the lowest as far as the proportion of real property taxes. So now there's, there's different observations you can make from this, but my duty today was, was to bring it and provide it to you guys. So another- the other large significant revenue that we're going to provide a similar comparison for is your net sales tax. So this is the number that is how much is retained by the county after you pass through to your local municipalities. So the sales tax here: Ulster's at 39%. This is pretty consistent with past years. And you also see the trend that from five years ago, which is the second set on the bottom of the slide here, you want to see, you know, have we become more reliant, less reliant, have sales tax gone up so much that it's taken over as a representation of total revenues, just about every county here has experienced an increase in the representation of sales tax, when compared to their total revenues. You know, that, that's a good thing. It's a sales tax, you have agreements in place so that you do receive that as revenue from the state. The tough part is, it's out of your control. But lately, you know, this has been a favorable agreement, to where it's, it's returning some good numbers to the county, and, and all New York State County.

Next step, and the last data point that we'll look at is your unassigned and assign unappropriated. From the AUD, it takes certain assigned fund balance, and adds it in with unassigned. So here's the last five years for

Ulster County in their state report. And what you can see is, this is that available fund balance that I was talking about that if anybody is gonna take away one number from the financials, it will be your unassigned fund balance. There's a little bit of assigned in here, but you still see that sharp increase from 19 to 20. And that goes back to the red and blue bar graph where you saw the blue portion- row from 19 to 20. This is reflecting that same information. When you move on and compare this amount of your unassigned available fund balance compared to a year spending: 18 to 19 Ulster County had a tough year, you know, 19, total fund balance went down, unassigned fund balance certainly took, took a hit went down to only 9.6% when compared to a total year spending. But in 2020, it's risen from that 9.6 up to 16.3%. And in past conversations, we've talked about how the GFOA has provided, you know, two months or 16.67% as a recommended minimum for this classification of fund balance. And you know, the 16% the county is much closer than they were in prior years. And when you're looking across your peers, Dutchess and Sullivan haven't quite gotten to that 16% if you're going to use that as a benchmark. But Rensselaer and Putnam certainly have adequate balances in their, their unassigned fund balance for their general fund. That and if you want to pull that down, Amber, thank you.

The last slide just to point out, it does have our contact information if you guys don't have it readily available. But you know, just encouraged if anything comes up. I know we've worked with you, a few of you throughout the year on different areas and, and we enjoy helping out. So please don't stop. The last item that, that we definitely want to accomplish on this call is to look through the draft management letter. I don't know how much in detail you guys would want to cover the prior year comments. The way that the county's asked us to put this communication together is to carry forward any comments that we've had in prior years that haven't been resolved. So what you'll see is an old comment, but then there's going to be a paragraph for each year that we have followed up in the audit to see what, what is the new status on this has any action been taken? So there are five prior your comments. I didn't know if if anybody wants to speak up as to do we want to go through one by one or I could provide more of a summary and then just open it up. If anybody had questions on any of the prior year ones. And then we could go through the, the newer ones in a little bit more detail since they're fresh.

Chairman Parete: I think a summary would be fine. Then we can move on.

Carl Widmer: Alright, thanks, John. So overall, there were five comments from prior years. One of them will always be carried forward to the next year. And that's because it is, it's called the future reporting requirements. And that's alluding to what the comptroller brought up before, those GASBs. They're always going to be coming out with new ones. So there will always be GASB comments in your management letter. But that's really just a roll forward and serves as an FYI for what GASB statements are coming up in the future years, not just necessarily next year. Two of the five had been resolved, but one was the Coronavirus comment from last year. And that's really because it was more of a just a record or best practice from us, there wasn't necessarily a, a direct action that we expected the county to respond with. So that has been removed because there is no direct action to respond. The other one that was actually, you know, something to be changed was in the Adoption Assistance Program last year, we noted that there was a checklist that could be used in all the applicant's binders or their, their files, to help ensure that everything is being done and everything is maintained in their file. And this checklist wasn't being utilized in all the files. So we followed up with the director there. And they provide a response that they are using that throughout their department now. So that one's been resolved, two of them will carry forward. The one relates to the different policies. It's called formalization of procedures. And there were five different

policies or areas that we had mentioned. One that has been addressed during the year is a bank reconciliation policy. That will be removed going forward. But there are still three areas that no new policies have been adopted or changed. And that is for revenue recognition, to which the finance department has their stance and a couple IT policies related to disaster recovery and a risk assessment. Comptroller.

Comptroller Gallagher: Yeah, I noticed I think we raised this last year, it says that we don't have cybersecurity insurance, but we approve the invoices for that. So I know that we do. Um...

Carl Widmer: I think that is the comments are going to read exactly as they did when they were issued. And then it would require the reader to look through each of the responses for the year and I believe we do state that cybersecurity insurance is, is purchased or in place. That might be in the next comment the cybersecurity comment also.

Comptroller Gallagher: Okay, I, alright. Again, you know, an hour to look at it. But...

Carl Widmer: Yeah.

Comptroller Gallagher: The top of page four in cybersecurity. The second line from the bottom of that first paragraph, further the county should consider purchasing cybersecurity insurance.

Carl Widmer: That is, that's the comment from 2017.

Comptroller Gallagher: Thank you. Okay, I gotcha.

Carl Widmer: Yeah, we don't change the comments. They stay as they were issued to look for if something had been addressed or changed. It does require the reader to read those follow ups. At the end of the 2019.

Erica Handley: Yeah. Yeah, that's what I was just gonna say the last sentence of the 2019 follow up has the, the confirmation that, that you do have that insurance.

Comptroller Gallagher: Sorry, great, thank you.

Carl Widmer: Yep. So and then the other one was that cyber security policy, while insurance is taken care of, there is still no movement towards a, a formal cybersecurity policy that, that was recommended. So on the new comments. There are three comments this year, we- yes, Amber.

Deputy Clerk Feaster: It might be beneficial to add the statement to 2020 follow up that says the county has continued the cybersecurity insurance noted in 2019 or something to that effect to know that there's, that portion of the comments still taken care of.

Carl Widmer: Got it. Yes.

Deputy Clerk Feaster: Thank you.

Carl Widmer: All right. And then beginning on page six of the draft management letter or the current year comments. The first one is titled Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards Reporting. That Single Audit, federal compliance audit, that we perform it It is based off of this SEFA, the Schedule of Expenditures, and the financial statements as a whole. The governmental funds are reported on a certain basis of accounting called the modified accrual basis of accounting. And there were a couple programs that were reported in the SEFA on a basis other than the modified accrual basis, they used the cash basis. We noted this during the audit, followed up with the department, I believe it was the Office of Employment and Training. And it's basically already addressed because that individual didn't know that it should be on this sort of accrual basis. So it needs to be recognized when a service is received, rather than necessarily when a check goes out. So I would expect that next year's follow up, this is already going to be resolved. Second one was something that if you recall, in the entrance meeting, Luke Malecki, another partner with us, he had mentioned looking into a remote work environment, policy, and essentially, you know, as much as we're doing so much more remotely, even on the audit side, what about all the county employees? You know, what opportunities? What are they entitled to, as far as working from home or working remotely? And what policies are in place to govern how all of that works? Who do they have to ask to get approval to work from home? What are they subject to as far as the equipment that they can use? There's a few different areas that you can look at, but it's becoming more and more significant. Now, if you have an individual who works from home, they don't come into work. And you call them to say, well, I'm working from home today, would you be able to say that they are in the right or in the wrong per a county policy. So that's really what the, the idea of the comment is, is to get to a place where you feel comfortable with the structure that working from home is going to come back. And then the last one is just called new financial reporting standards. And that is the one that I mentioned is going to be there every year. This is a list of all GASB statements that have been issued, and are going to be required for future implementation. So these are things that we can definitely serve as a resource going forward. We did serve as a resource with GASB 84 and finance and implementing that. So it's a for-your-information up to GASB statement 97 at this point. But that's, that's all of the, the material for today's meeting. I know it is a longer communication, I hope everybody benefits from us trying to get everything together in one meeting. Now before everything's issued, rather than having the management letter trail afterwards, I think this was not a more efficient way to do it.

Chairman Parete: Amber, you have anything you want to chat with? Or the right honorable controller?

Deputy Clerk Feaster: No, thank you.

Comptroller Gallagher: I have a quick question. If you, if you have a county that you think has a good remote work policy, we'd love to see, you know, a county policy. Yeah.

Carl Widmer: Okay. We can, we'll definitely follow up. It is a newer item that I don't off the top of my head of one that I'd say, oh, yeah, let me get you it. But we can look into it. And I'll keep an eye out over the next month or two and forward something.

Comptroller Gallagher: I think we've talked about revenue recognition every year. So just put it as a standing request. If you see a great revenue recognition policy. You know, we'd love to see it. We understand finance's position.

Carl Widmer: Yep.

Chairman Parete: Any of the committee members want to chime in chat, ask a question, make a statement. Okay,

Legislator Gavaris: Can I...

Chairman Parete: Thank you.

Legislator Gavaris: I do have, John, if you can make time for a second. The management letter. So I'm confused. It sounds like from my experience, you're combining an opinion letter and a management letter into one. My experience with management letters are that they are things that are actual deficiencies, not necessarily best practices. But it sounds like you're putting them both together into one and anybody like myself, I hear all this and I'm thinking we've got a manager letter with all these things on there. But in reality, some of them are just pointing out like future requirements. We're not deficient in those, those areas.

Carl Widmer: And that's been our firm's approach on management letters for pretty much universally, I understand what you're saying and I think a common reaction to hearing management letter is more so like a report card and what are our findings? We've tried to add in, we think this is the best forum to include things like best practices that we have. Because while it might not be a deficiency, it could be an area of improvement to consider. There are al-, alternatives. We don't have to put it together this way. In fact, this, the communication of this letter isn't even required. We have it in our contract. So we will provide one but if there are no reportable findings, and those are the serious ones, you guys don't have any, we wouldn't need to produce a management letter. And at an end of audit. Oftentimes, it is requested, because groups, decision makers, boards are interested in areas of improvement, even if they don't have findings, necessarily. So that's how we've treated it. I mean, if it was a concern of the group, we certainly could consider now maybe having a separate communication, and it's, it's only best practices, and a management letter would only include what you're referring to more so as like control deficiencies.

Chairman Parete: Anyone? March.

Comptroller Gallagher: Of course, I'm going to just keep, keep grilling you. Sorry, I have questions. Um, I, unfortunately, was not able to attend the prior meeting with Mr. Malecki. But I did review the minutes and listened to the audio. And it was very helpful to hear you guys talking about ARPA and the CARES money. I wanted to just confir that you maybe were aware that we have put all of the ARPA funds into capital projects, even though we do anticipate some operating expenditures out of them. I'm unable to find any other county that in New York that has treated the ARPA funds that way. And I'm wondering if you have any experience with any of your other clients who may have done that, or any thoughts with regard to that?

Carl Widmer: I'd say it's probably a separate conversation, if we're gonna get into the weeds. If you wanted to send me, if there's any good document that states dollar amounts, and the purposes that they're being allocated to by Ulster, we, we can look at that, and then kind of move forward. You know, there,

there's many different purposes of the different capital projects and ins and outs. So if you want to start that conversation, you know I could certainly take a look at it. And I'm sure, Luke would be interested to.

Comptroller Gallagher: Well, that's really in the hands of the Legislature. So I'll confer with the chair to see if he's open to that. But yeah, we just want to make sure that we're doing it right. And obviously, you know, I think finance was having to make decisions, prior to guidance from OSC at the beginning. And, and now we're looking at I mean, I think the, the decision was made because it's easier for multi-year planning.

Carl Widmer: Yes.

Comptroller Gallagher: Yeah.

Carl Widmer: Everything is still before final guidance, because its still not out yet.

Comptroller Gallagher: Right.

Carl Widmer: Yeah, we have been, I mean, that is getting into another service. We've, we've been hired by a few other counties and municipalities to help on the compliance side. And we do kind of like a continuous auditing. So rather than on an annual basis, as transactions occur, or as plans are put into place for ARPA, we can compare it to the available compliance guidance. You know, that's something where we're putting contracts out there to work with people.

Comptroller Gallagher: Okay, great.

Chairman Parete: All right. Anyone else?

Legislator Gavaris: Just one more question about the priv-, you mentioned the cybersecurity before. Does that also extend to the Health Department? Are they also deficient as well? Or you didn't get that deep- that detailed?

Carl Widmer: Off the top of-, I couldn't tell you an answer directly right now. I think our comment would be for county-wide policy. But that's not to say that the health department has something in place themselves.

Legislator Gavaris: Okay. Just from a HIPAA standpoint, which is what my experience is, I'm just now concerned. When you said that I just started thinking of Privacy Act and those requirements and if we're deficient there, then we have multiple problems. Potentially very expensive ones.

Carl Widmer: That is, that's an area that's not covered in our audit. So I don't want to speak outside of our scope.

Legislator Gavaris: Yep. We could look into it internally.

Chairman Parete: Okay. Anyone else? Amber, you have anything? Thank you to the, to the firm. Thanks for coming down and sharing this with us. If my memory serves me correct, the legislature next year we'll be looking for RFPs. Because aren't you, you're in your last year of our, our arraignment, aren't we?

Carl Widmer: Yeah, I believe we just got renewed to do the audit for the year ended December 31, 2021. And that's the last option year on our current contract.

Chairman Parete: Right.

Carl Widmer: Yes.

Chairman Parete: So that's something that the next group can be, going forward, concerned with. Well, that's new business, any old business, anything else? It was very action packed. Me- Yes. The Honorable Legislator Ronk.

Legislator Ronk: It's actually not for Drescher & Malecki. So if we want to finish up with them, I just have a piece of new business for the audit committee to discuss that they may or may not need to be here for so.

Chairman Parete: Well, you're welcome to go now. I mean, however, you guys work it. All right.

Carl Widmer: All of you, thank you very much.

Chairman Parete: Thanks very much.

Carl Widmer: We'll be in touch. We'll probably, we're gonna utilize Amber as the, the liaison to carry forward with issuing.

Chairman Parete: Yes.

Carl Widmer: But our goal is to get everything out by the September 30th deadline.

Chairman Parete: Okay, thank you.

Carl Widmer: All right, thank you.

Erica Handley: Thanks everyone.

Chairman Parete: Alright.

Legislator Ronk: May I, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Parete: Legislator Ronk. Yeah, you got it.

Legislator Ronk: Um, so, one thing that we're tasked with other than just, you know, the business we just dispensed with, is any other audits or agreed upon procedures that we may want to tackle. One thing that I've been concerned about for, I guess, probably the last, you know, what's it, you know, eight months or so, is the County Executive's Project Resilience. I really think that we should take a look into how that money was spent, where it was spent. Not only where the money came from, and where it was spent, but also county resources that were utilized. Either staff hours, or, you know, you know, buildings and maintenance and, and things of that nature. You know, I just, I'm not even saying that there was anything untoward or bad that happened with it, but I think it'd be a good exercise for the legislature to engage a firm, to really do some work to delineate to us and the public, you know, where the money came from, where it went, and what county resources were used for it. Um, and the way I would move forward on that, if, you know, if, if I had my way was, would be to have Amber draft up an RFP for an agreed upon procedures, from an auditing firm, or an accounting firm to be able to look through that information. Of course, with the County Executive's, you know, assistance and cooperation.

Chairman Parete: Alright.

Legislator Ronk: I just wanted to put that on the table for discussion, see if anybody else had a thought on it.

Chairman Parete: Legislator Laura Petit.

Legislator Petit: Thank you. I'm, I'm also interested in, you know, some of the new programs that we have coming up and one in particular has been causing quite a few phone calls to me. That's the review of properties that are on the auction block, and what their selection process is and, you know, there was a statement that, you know, first it was five properties that came off and other keep saying four that there, there was no interest and I know, at least two of them, and I have a feeling one of those is the one that came off, you know, the the interest list, had quite a bit of, you know, neighborhood interest, you know, that the adjoining neighbors wanted to purchase them. So I, you know, we're looking at audits and policies and what properties we really should be pulling that would benefit the public more, you know, in other programs, I think, you know, this would be one of them.

Chairman Parete: But where do we go? I mean, to Ken Ronk, Legislator Ronk's position, certainly the last year and a half has been a tumultuous year. There were some, what I think some very successful programs to try to help sustain everybody. And that means I think a good review would probably be a good idea for a whole variety of reasons. Things seem to have worked well. And I don't think anybody has anything to be ashamed of, to hide. I think it was quite frankly successful. So I agree with you Ken on that. I don't know where to go with yours, Laura. I mean, we don't really I don't know where our authority I think it ends after today. So you You know, maybe that would be Ways and Means Committee? Somebody? Laws and Rules? Any reviews are good reviews. And folks have concerns. Well, that's even more reason for a good review. Ken.

Legislator Ronk: Just to, just, just to continue on the point that I was making, and then I've got a comment to make on the point that Laura made. You know, I agree that, you know, that a lot of things work really well. I'll tell you, one thing that concerns me is that during the discussion that the Legislature just had on the Communication Specialist position, the person who on the day after session, just so everyone who isn't

aware is aware, the day after session, the person that we all thought was going to be hired for the position was, in fact hired for the position of Communication Specialist. And that, that was obviously you know, as we all know, Hillary Harvey who, prior to that was an Accountant, was in an Accountant position in our previously adopted budget in the Innovation team or formerly ACE. Just after January 1, that position was reclassified as a separate CSEA position without the legislature's knowledge and or weight in, and she kept being described to me by the County Executive's office as the, you know, Head of the Resilience Service Center, which is another, you know, semi division of the county that the Legislature was never made aware of, nor weighed in, on nor approved. So those are some of the things where, you know, I would be interested in the progression of Project Resilience. We've been using the word "resilience" a lot around Ulster County government lately, and it doesn't have a clearly defined role. And it doesn't have clearly defined staff. And it hasn't had any weigh in by the Legislature. So I think that, you know, it would be a good exercise for this Legislature to ex-, to execute a little bit of oversight on Resilience county wide. And I think the first step towards that is finding out, you know, where the dollars came from, where they went, how we got here, and what county staff were involved.

Chairman Parete: If I, what I'm hearing is two concerns, and there may be many other concerns out there. Sometimes you hear these concerns in bitch sessions, and other times you hear them in a good setting like this. Who would be the one? What's their narrative on? How we could go forward? What is the mission statement of this committee? Quite frankly, what do we do have two meetings a year? Would they be the Investigative Committee for budgetary issues, finance issues? I mean, I think we need a little guidance with that. Look at I won't be here. But I think your point is extremely well taken.

Legislator Ronk: You will be for the next couple of months, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Parete: That's about all and that's going to go like a blink of an eye. I know real life, but your point is well taken. It's not necessarily adversarial. It's informative. And it's all I don't, I don't disagree with you at all.

Legislator Ronk: So the Legislature has a Other Fees for Professional Services line where we pay out the, you know, annual audit out of and there's usually funds left in there. The Legislature from the last couple years has been appropriating some extra funds for things like this. We've done different, you know, financial picture agreed upon procedures over the years out of that funding line, and it's been this committee in the past. I mean, I think that it started when I was the Chairperson of the Legislature, that this committee was tasked with finding out what we wanted to spend those funds on. When it came to, you know, I don't want to use the word audits because they're, we're not asking for an actual audit. Um, but you know, with these agreed upon procedures that we've done in the past on, on things like the Law Enforcement Center and the Sheriff's Department, among others, you know, this committee has been the one and Amber has done a fantastic job in both drafting the RFPs and working with the, you know, accounting and auditing firms to make them happen so that that's why I'm bringing it up here. I think it is part of our part of our charge our task.

Chairman Parete: Alright. I mean, the Law Enforcement review was so long ago I you know, sometimes I forget what I had for breakfast, but I mean, if that's where it's coming from, I absolutely agree with you that they're just plain informative. It's- we're not talking about adversarial things here.

Legislator Ronk: No.

Chairman Parete: It's just for the information. The money for the for the the the audit firm we just hired or heard from comes out of the Legislature budget.

Legislator Ronk: Yeah. And, you know, again, I think that there I have a lot of small questions. But the one overarching issue that made me bring this up today is that there seems to be a lot that this legislature has not been made aware of by the administration, about how Project Resilience and and its subsets have worked. And quite frankly, what staff, you know, and without getting too deep down a rabbit hole, you know, that that flows into the staff that were involved in the use of the universal basic income pilot, because every time I was asking the County Executive's office, about a the UPI pilot, and why the Legislature wasn't involved in the decision making there, I was told that the county doesn't have a role in it, that it's done by the University of Pennsylvania, and the NoVo Foundation, or the Community Foundation or Project Resilience, you know, all these things are used interchangeably. And, um, you know, I did see seven to 10, press releases go out talking about County Executive Pat Ryan's universal basic income pilot, which, you know, I can tell you, those press releases are written by county employees. So county funds were expended to, to, you know, to, you know, publicize the project. So, you know, these are, these are the things that I have an issue with when we're dealing with private, what are being told to us is all private funds, but the taxpayers are paying somebody to promote what's being done with the private funds. So it's not, it's not all sans, taxpayer.

Chairman Parete: March.

Comptroller Gallagher: I wanted to weigh in and just share what I know, because I'm, you know, I'm not a voting member of this committee. I am a member and I have a unique background because I was the president and CEO of the Community Foundation. And I do feel like and I agree with Legislator Ronk, there is a tremendous amount of information that is not public here. And is not known by the Legislature, which might change your opinions on decisions in certain matters. But I want to share with you what my understanding of the Project Resilience funding genesis, you know, where that money came from, and where it went to, to the extent that it would be helpful and I will be more than happy to work with any outside auditor or viewer that you request or hire. I don't think I'm appropriate because of my dual hats on, you know, my previous role. When, I don't know if you recall, but County Executive Mike Hein made an announcement that he had secured four million dollars for restorative justice. That funding was made as a grant from the NoVo Foundation to the Community Foundation's of the Hudson Valley for the purposes of restorative justice programming at Ulster County, in Ulster County. The grant was set up originally to not flow through the county except for one million dollars of that which was for the Mid-Hudson Linear Park. The Restorative Justice Funding was slated to flow directly to service vendors, like BOCES, of SUNY Ulster, and a smattering of other agencies that were supposed to be providing restorative justice programming, ostensibly for Raise The Age youth in the 14 to 16-18 category. What we saw over the very beginning of our program, while I was still at the foundation, was that we did not have a tremendous number of youth in that category. And that money was not, honestly was not, you know, going out the door to those agencies in a substantial way. I do not know what conversations occurred between the County Executive, Novo, and the Community Foundation once I was here with regard to that money, but my understanding is that that Project Resilience money is that same fund. And I do think that's an important thing to note because it was laid out to the public and to the Legislature as if it was restorative justice

funding, and maybe it makes sense to reposition money that isn't being used. I mean, that, that, that is something that has to be considered. Now, how that money flowed out, and I think this is important with regard to you guys hiring an outside auditor because I'm not sure how you may need to get the consent of these other bodies. That grant went to United Way of Ulster County, that Project Resilience grant money. There was definitely more work being done. And our office was starting ask questions at the very beginning of Project Resilience. Who's making the decisions? We were asking Amanda Laval, we were asking Evelyn Wright, because they were making decisions about certain restaurants being paid and we were concerned that the county was weighing in on what restaurants would survive the pandemic, by making a resource allocations through Project Resilience that we didn't have a clear picture of. So I just, I wanted to share with you that, that piece of it to say, you know, I come from that prior hat, I want to fully disclose that to everybody here on the record, I am more than happy to work with anyone that you retain for that purpose. And I will share gladly any information that I can, on that matter. On the matter of the real property auction, I want to say that, as you know, our office called for the Executive to abandon the plan to have an in person auction. They did so and they went online. And we were very pleased that that occurred. But we are interested in a number of aspects of the real property that the county holds. Meaning, the hazardous uncollectible list, how the auction is conducted, what properties are taken off for public purposes, such as affordable housing or other means, what are the criteria used, whether or not the legislature should be weighing in on that, as well as a number of other aspects like what happens to properties that are redeemed in between? Are buyers required to meet certain standards in terms of them taking a you know, say, for example, and making an affidavit under oath that they have no associated connection to the prior owner? So there are a number of pieces of that, that we are very interested in, and may be able to accommodate some of the Legislature's questions with a deeper dive without any sort of cloud or conflict of interest, like their Project Resilience would have. So I wanted to just offer those two things and say that, you know, we'll, we'll look forward to following up with all of you on real property auction and being as helpful as we can and thinking about that going forward. Yeah, and I'm happy to answer any questions anyone has right now for me on either topic.

Legislator Gavaris: Mr. Chairman, if I can, just for a second. Two, two comments. So to Legislator Ronk. I agree, we need to figure out where the money went, how it was distributed, who was involved. But I think an interim step would be for us to ask for that information first, see if we're getting it, and then evaluate it, before we start bringing it, because I just don't understand what an auditing company would actually get out of this if they're not going to get the information. So I think we should ask for it first. And then move from there. Because we may get everything that we want out of it. I don't think that's true, but at least it's a good start. To answer the property question for Laura, I think you could speak with the Legislator Bartels, but I think she's already been down this road and the answer given was, the properties were removed because there was direction from the Legislature that we were going to be doing a property, a land bank, and that this was to go towards that. Now that that was the answer, given it's not a good answer. And it's not a legitimate answer. But that is the answer. The question would be then, what do we do about it? It was not done properly. It should not have been done. That's a decision for us to make, you know later. But that is the answer that was given at least,

Chairman Parete: Laura? Sorry for not using the, the prefix Legislator, I apologize.

Legislator Petit: Um, it I think the timeline is off on that, because this all came to light prior to any agreement to doing a land bank. And, you know, in fact, it was a constituent that called me up and said,

"Hey, I was interested in the property next to the house have been taken care of for 20 years and all of a sudden it came off of the tax rolls". So, so to say now that it was taking off because we were going to have a land bank, which I, it was my understanding the County Executive's office is not, or at least not at the time, you know, working with us to to get this through. You know, this was some- This was actually resolution that John and I put on a year and a half ago. So I, you know and again, I think the biggest question is, where are the policies? You know, what, what is the procedure? And then what happens to these properties? And to go back and say, Well, gee, you passed a resolution two years ago that said, we should look at these properties to see if they have more of a public value than to just sell them again. You know, have they been, you know, taking properties off and adding it into the the open space at Mohonk. Do they need to come to us if the properties are under 50,000 dollars in value? So that there's just a lot of questions. And again, I think it is a great use of property on the auction block, you know, certainly, you know, some of them may have more of a benefit, you know, to open up a trail or to get right of ways, but it just, it's, it was the way it was handled, you know, so I'm looking at something a writing and something to clarify. And, and, again, the timelines are off. I disagree that...

Chairman Parete: I guess we lost your Laura. Ken you're on. Laura, we lost the last part of your conversation. Okay. Well, don't run away. Ken, you're on.

Legislator Ronk: Thank you. Um, so we do, as part of, you know, authorizing the auction, give the Commissioner of Finance pretty broad authority to remove parcels. That may be what we want to look at as a Legislature if we don't want to allow him to do that. But, you know, this isn't the first time that parcels had been removed. Parcels are removed every year, as the Comptroller said for, you know, environmental concerns. And again, we don't know if the properties that we take off are contaminated, but as good stewards of the taxpayers dollars, you know, the, the county takes off potentially contaminated properties, because if we take it for tax foreclosure, and it turns out, there's a huge, you know, a, a huge oil or gas spill or, or, or some other kind of problem, you know, then the taxpayers are on the hook, we have a legal obligation to clean it up. If we own the property and know about it. Um, you know, we also routinely over the years have taken off properties to transfer to towns, other municipalities, not for profits, for park land, and things of that nature. Again, if we should definitely, maybe talk about a policy regarding you know, what properties come off and how they come off. But I don't I want to just make it clear, I don't think that the County Executive's office or the Finance Department did anything untoward by doing this, they have the authority to, but maybe that's something that we need to address.

Legislator Petit: But this is a different program. I mean, this is...

Legislator Ronk: It's for a different purpose, but it's the same general.

Legislator Gavaris: In large, just to clarify that the what I was referring to about the land bank was the fact that Legislator Bartels had been talking about it and had had draft legislation that she had not- she hadn't presented it yet. But she had, but it was in the works, that I'm just repeating what was said. I don't agree with it. I think it's not a good answer. But that is the answer that was given is that they knew it was in the works, and that's why they pulled it.

Chairman Parete: Alright, where do you want to go? Listen, as I said, I, I've only got a couple months left to do this. But it certainly seems to me that this committee potentially has a lot more responsibility in

terms of the operation of the county government, just talking about the things that you brought up, but I don't want to get involved in spinning my wheels. And, and I don't want to become political with this. I think that would be a mistake. Or even imply it. But by the same token, if we want to go down this road, and to some degree, you can just raise your hand and let me know. And I gotta make sure Amber and, and March don't go hide on me because I'm- it's gonna be a lot of stuff to get done. I agree with everything I've heard. I wouldn't know who to ask sometimes. Ken.

Legislator Ronk: Um, so on the Project Resilience issue, you know, Legislator Gavaris' point is well taken. I move that we authorize you, Mr. Chairman, through Amber, who's clerking it, to write a letter to the County Executive asking for a detailed accounting of Project Resilience, including but not limited to, monies that were spent, what it was spent on, and what staff were in-, what county staff were involved in the program.

Legislator Gavaris: And I will second it. And also, if we could just add to that any communications that were done and any advertising, marketing, whatever you want to call it, because I know they play games with words here. Any communication about the projects that also should be included in there as and I'll second.

Legislator Ronk: I'll accept that as a friendly amendment to what I was saying. Absolutely.

Chairman Parete: And I'd like to suggest that you folks, put that in writing so that I don't have to Remember it? And you all feel.

Legislator Ronk: Amber's got it.

Chairman Parete: Go ahead, Amber.

Deputy Clerk Feaster: I will take care of that for you. That's for me.

Chairman Parete: I get it. Does anyone feel that...

Legislator Litts: We're being taped.

Chairman Parete: That's alright. I mean, I do think it's our jurisdiction. Herbie, do you have any comments on it? I think there's been some legitimate questions raised.

Legislator Litts: No, I mean, I know that, you know, funds need to be reallocated and whatever, but it shouldn't be done behind closed doors. It should be transparent. It should be out in the open. And I'm not seeing a lot of that. So I agree on and I vote yes on the motion.

Chairman Parete: All right, we'll move the question. All in favor.

Legislator Ronk: Aye.

Legislator Litts: Aye.

Chairman Parete: Oppose? Carried. And to the author's will make sure you see a copy of it before we sent it out, because it has to be worded correctly so it's not coming off as, as adversarial or, or necessarily looking for a problem.

Legislator Ronk: Yeah, we'll work together with Amber on that for sure.

Chairman Parete: March.

Comptroller Gallagher: Yeah, I just wanted to mention that Novo is having a series of community conversations, that are Zooms of 12 people. I'm going to be in the one that starts at five today. And I wanted to mention to you that I had already previously gone to Peter Buffett in December of 2020, and told him that their grant making is bigger than government, and it's not transparent or democratic. And from where I sit, it doesn't work for me and my office. And so I plan to carry that message forward to these meetings.

Chairman Parete: Quite frankly, March, I don't disagree with you, I, I find it not necessarily completely inappropriate. But it's swords, has a tinge of influence peddling there.

Comptroller Gallagher: I'm thrilled to have generosity. But if they're grant making 200 million in a three year period, that's 66 million a year that is bigger than the City of Kingston or Poughkeepsie's budget, and...

Chairman Parete: I've been aware of it for a while. It's my feeling. Alright. Any other business? I think we've, I think I'm going to be wearing my welcome out before the year is over, but we'll go, we'll get it on.

Legislator Gavaris: Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Parete: Yes.

Legislator Gavaris: I just want to point out you have 2,376 hours left until the end of your term. You got plenty of time. There's plenty of time. That's a lot of hours. Well, 2,376 hours is a lot of time, Mr. Chairman and I think you got it.

Chairman Parete: Not to throw myself under the bus, but I'm going to have a glass of wine right now.

Legislator Litts: Therefore, I'll make a motion for adjournment.

Legislator Ronk: I'm gonna go to TRAC Committee so I'll trade.

Chairman Parete: Motion made and seconded. All in favor?

Group: Aye.

Chairman Parete: Opposed? Thank you very much everyone. It's really one of the more interesting ones over the years. Thank you very much.

Legislator Litts: Take care. See you soon.

Chairman Parete: Yep.

Old Business: None

Time: 4:43 pm

Respectfully submitted: Amber Feaster
Minutes Approved: March 29, 2022