

**Government Efficiency & Review Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes**

DATE & TIME: September 19, 2016 – 5:00 PM
LOCATION: COB, 6th Floor, Karen Binder Library
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chairman John Parete
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk
PRESENT: Legislators Briggs, Greene and R. Parete (arrived 5:10 PM)
ABSENT: Legislator Belfiglio
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Kevin O'Connor and Kathy Germain – RUPCO, Michael Berg – Family of Woodstock, Tom Kadgen – League of Women Voters, Planning Department Director Dennis Doyle

Chairman J. Parete called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM.

Motion No. 1: **Moved to Approve the Minutes of the July 19, 2016 meeting**

Motion By: Legislator Briggs
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Greene

Discussion: None

Voting In Favor: Legislators J. Parete, Briggs, Greene
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 3
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Minutes approved

Chairman J. Parete informed the members that there were no resolutions before the committee. He thanked the guest speakers for coming and explained that the committee was formed to keep track of policies, capital projects, laws, etc. passed by the Legislature and to evaluate how successful they are or have been. He added that the committee was not designed to be critical but to be more of an analytical tool.

He stated that housing has always been a concern of his. He asked Ms. Kathy Germain from RUPCO to talk about her acceptance into the Achieving Excellence Program at Harvard University. Ms. Germain said that she had completed her first week there and described it as amazing. The three week program is centered on leadership skills, critical thinking, project administration, and community development.

Chairman J. Parete shared his feeling that there is a lack of affordable housing in Ulster County effecting many demographics and economic levels. He added that the reasons for the lack of housing were many, including infrastructure, politics, public resistance, etc. He referenced a report

issued by the NYS Comptroller's office in 2014 which rated Ulster County as one of the worst in the state for the availability of both affordable rental properties and homes to purchase.

Mr. Kevin O'Connor, RUPCO CEO thanked the members for inviting them and said he is happy to discuss housing needs in the county any time. He agreed that there was a lack of affordable housing for individuals across the entire spectrum of housing including seniors, the homeless, college students, individuals with special needs and more. He added that housing has been an issue for the 28 + years he has been working in the industry. He highlighted a number of the services RUPCO offers including the Section 8 Housing Voucher program, Housing People with AIDS (HAPA,) providing more supportive services through the NY Connects Program. He also touched on the criteria an individual or family must meet in order to qualify for the programs. He informed the members that the waiting list for Section 8 Vouchers would be opened up shortly and expected 1,500 – 2,000 applications; about 1,000 will be chosen through a lottery.

Mr. O'Connor informed the members that RUPCO is working with the New York State Department of Health to offer more services to seniors in their housing developments along the 9W corridor, in the City of Kingston and in Woodstock. He added that they are also working with Sunny Mae to convert zombie properties in the City of Kingston and Middletown into opportunities for first time homebuyers.

He informed the members that RUPCO has served as an administrator for the Ulster County Housing Consortium since it was established in 2002. He added that over time the Consortium had seen some success including the 2005 Priority Housing Strategies report that was produced. He continued by saying that it was a great report which still resonates. More recently, the Consortium's responsibility to administer the Continuum of Care for Homeless individuals was increased due to changes in HUD's reporting requirements and the HEARTH Act in 2013. At that time the Consortium dissolved and became the Continuum of Care with new bylaws.

He continued to say that the Continuum of Care has been very successful with securing funding to address homelessness in Ulster County. He added that RUPCO is ready and willing to partner with anyone who would like to discuss and address housing needs. He stated that he recently attended a meeting with representatives from OASAS who highlighted the need for housing dedicated to individuals in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction and discussed funding changes that may help. He continued by saying that he attended the last meeting of the Legislature's UCAN committee where the same topic was being discussed. He mentioned the local community resistance to a recovery home being proposed in the Town of Esopus.

Mr. O'Connor introduced Michael Berg of Family who is the Chairman of the Board of the Continuum and Kathy Germain who is RUPCO's Vice President of Housing Services and a Continuum administrator. Planning Department Director Doyle advised the members that the county provides supportive funding around \$26,000 to the Continuum which enables them to qualify for federal and state funding. Mr. Berg complimented Ms. Germain on her work in securing the federal and state funds.

Legislator Greene asked for clarification on the mechanism by which the Housing Consortium was dissolved. Mr. O'Connor responded that the Consortium was dissolved and new bylaws adopted

with a primary focus on the administration of the Continuum of Care, specifically focused on homeless housing. Legislator Greene asked if the result of that dissolution invalidated the Resolution which created it. She questioned whether the Resolution should be updated.

Director Doyle advised the members that a letter explaining the change was sent to Legislature Chairman Terry Bernardo in October 2013. Ms. Germain gave a brief explanation of the HEARTH Act and the restructuring of the Continuum that was required in order to be able to continue to access federal funding. She stated that the 2013 letter explained the reasons for the change and requesting a Legislative representative to serve as a member of the board. Director Doyle explained the role of RUPCO as an administrator of the county's Continuum of Care. Mr. Berg and Ms. Germain explained a federal policy model change referred to as Housing First which no longer mandates clean and sober requirements for tenants, but rather emphasizes the importance of first providing safe, secure housing in order to promote and create an environment and opportunities for an individual to seek additional treatment, assistance and services.

Chairman J. Parete asked if the report compiled for the Housing Consortium was being updated. Director Doyle stated that the report was still applicable and was adopted as part of the county's comprehensive plan.

Mr. Berg provided the members with a list of the HUD services provided through Family including Emergency Shelters, etc. (attached.)

Mr. O'Connor commented on how long it took for the RUPCO development to be completed in the Town of Woodstock. He added that the agency could have accomplished so much more in that time if they were not met with so much community opposition and roadblocks. He continued by saying that there was state money announced for supportive housing services and that they have already been met with opposition to that as well. He said that he would welcome the support and assistance of the Legislature on future projects and to secure funding opportunities. He added that the change to a Continuum of Care focus was not in an effort to step away from broader housing concerns, but rather was in response to the increased reporting requirements of HUD. Mr. O'Connor shared statistics on the number of homeless in the county and distributed a spreadsheet with details (attached.)

Director Doyle mentioned the importance of the Legislature to support initiatives which support RUPCO's efforts such as the Flatbush Ave project. Mr. Berg added that the development of that property will significantly reduce the amount of money the county spends to house individuals in motels. Additionally, RUPCO is a partner with the County on the administration of CDBG funding. He mentioned that there are annual conversations within the Legislature which question why RUPCO is the partner. He added support for RUPCO during those times would also be welcome.

Mr. O'Connor stated that he would be keeping the Legislature better informed of the various projects and programs that RUPCO administered. He added that he looked forward to a continuing partnership with the Legislature.

Legislator Briggs complemented RUPCO on the services they provide and stated that he was not in agreement with those that have been critical of RUPCO b administering CDBG funds.

Director Doyle complimented RUPCO on their responsiveness to county concerns and for providing assistance in drafting grant applications on many occasions.

Legislator Greene asked what the recommendation would be in regard to Resolution 411 of 2002. She also asked about reentry activities. Mr. Berg responded that Family currently offers reentry services.

Chairman J. Parete commented that he understood the reasons for pivoting from the Consortium to Continuum and added that his interest in revisiting the Consortium was not intended to be in contradiction to their efforts. In order to encourage local municipalities to provide for affordable housing, Director Doyle suggested a Legislative Resolution addressing Fair Housing. He also suggested looking at the existing Shovel Ready legislation in relation to community development to help with infrastructure needs.

Chairman J. Parete thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting. Mr. O'Connor thanked the members for the opportunity to have the discussion.

Chairman J. Parete informed the members that a list of policies adopted by the Legislature from 2000 – 2015 was included in their meeting materials. He asked the members to review the list and identify any policies they would like the committee to review. He reminded the members that a list of Local Laws was distributed last month for the members to review. Under old business, Chairman J. Parete advised the members of the answers received in response to various memos the committee sent requesting information were received and forwarded via email. He asked the members to review the correspondence and relay any questions or follow up information requests.

Regarding the electric vehicle charging station policy, he said the Resolution did not make it through the Public Works Committee.

Chairman J. Parete asked if there was any other business, and hearing none;

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Briggs
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Greene
No. of Votes in Favor: 4
No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 6:06 PM

Respectfully submitted: Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk
Minutes Approved: October 17, 2016