

**Laws & Rules, Governmental Services Committee  
Special Meeting Minutes**

**DATE & TIME:** July 14, 2021 – 5:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** Legislative Chambers, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, County Office Building, Kingston  
**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Chairwoman Bartels  
**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk  
**PRESENT:** Legislators Gavaris, Heppner & Ronk  
**ABSENT:** Legislator Roberts  
**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislator Petit, Legislative Counsel Ragucci, Commissioners Dittus & Quigley – Board of Elections, Commissioner Jackson & Deputy Commissioner Quesnell – UC DPW, Deputy County Executive Milgrim

Chairwoman Bartels called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM.

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Resolution for the July 20, 2021 Session of the Legislature

**Resolution No. 283:** Authorizing The Chair Of The Ulster County Legislature To Enter Into A Lease Agreement With Higginsville Station, LLC For Board Of Elections Office & Storage Space - Department Of Public Works – Buildings And Grounds

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution authorizes the Chair to enter into a lease agreement with Higginsville Station, LLC for Board of Elections office and storage space from January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2026 for a total estimated cost of \$726,397.45.

**Moved Resolution No. 283 FOR DISCUSSION**

**Motion By:** Legislator Ronk  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Heppner

**Discussion:**

Chairwoman Bartels opened the discussion and advised the members that they had been provided with a copy of the Comptroller’s Space Utilization report (appended to these minutes.)

Legislator Ronk asked whether the estimated costs at Enterprise West for asbestos remediation. Commissioner Jackson responded that the county is not doing the work so he did not have that information. He added that they looked at renovating the space to make it suitable for storing the voting systems and advised the members that the estimate was \$200k - \$250k for 7,500 of space just for the voting systems and ancillary equipment. He added that those would be out of pocket costs that did not include asbestos abatement, and stated that he did not know where the funding would come from.

Chairwoman Bartels asked for clarification on whether asbestos abatement was required throughout the building. Commissioner Jackson responded that the proposal is for the first floor of building 201. The members briefly discussed the types of asbestos in the buildings and the remediation plans. Legislator Ronk requested the abatement costs from the RFP for renovations for the Farm Bridge space. He added that the felt the renovation costs at Enterprise West seemed reasonable and was a viable option for the current BOE issue.

Commissioner Jackson stated that they did not recommend that option because of timelines to get the voting systems out of the Old Jail site, and advantages to consolidating BOE operations. Legislator Ronk commented that sounded more like aligning with the desires of the BOE rather than costs for taxpayers.

Chairwoman asked staff to reach out for a copy of the RFB for asbestos abatement. Legislator Gavaris asked for clarification on whether the entire floor needed to be abated. He added that a much smaller abatement project at the Ellenville Regional Hospital cost significantly more per sq. ft. Legislator Ronk stated that the numbers mentioned by Deputy Executive Rider were estimates and they should wait to see the actual figure on the bid documents.

Legislator Heppner asked when the machines needed to be out of the current facility. Commissioner Quigley responded that, in consideration of next year's Primary Elections, the ideal time would be a December – February window. Legislator Heppner asked when the demolition for the housing project was planned for. Deputy Executive Milgrim stated that the actual ideal time to move the voting systems was this November. He added that they would like to move the machines as usual for use on Election Day and then return them to the new location. He added that would save about \$1,000 by not having to move them again.

Commissioner Quigley said they were expecting demolition somewhere between January – July and the next timeline they could move the systems would be July – August. Deputy Executive Milgrim stated that they were hoping for a second quarter initiation for demolition. Legislator Heppner commented that they were considering using ARP funds to expedite demolition. Commissioner Dittus advised the members that voting systems were used for May School Elections which requires programing and testing in the end of April. Commissioner Jackson stated that his understanding on the timeline on the conveyance was the first of the year so demolition would take place after that.

Legislator Ronk stated that the property could be leased back to the county. He added that the county doesn't currently own the property as it has been transferred to the Golden Hill LDC. The members discussed the conveyance timeline and state funding streams for the housing project.

Legislator Gavaris asked for clarification on the additional cost of the lease over what the county currently pays; \$63k - \$64k/year. Deputy Commissioner Quesnell responded it's \$62k excluding the increased cost of utilities. The members discussed the estimated costs of electricity at the Wall St location at ~\$2/sq. ft. to be around \$6,000.

Legislator Ronk asked Commissioner Jackson to explain why the DPW did not recommend Enterprise West as a viable option. Commissioner Jackson responded that their assessment included cost/sq. ft. which was found to be favorable in terms of markets rates. The members discussed market rates and costs included in the lease, including triple net leases. Legislator Heppner asked for clarification on the finality of the lease itself, and whether it included a termination clause and if there was any truth to a minimum three-year commitment. Counselor Ragucci responded that per his discussions with he County Attorney, there is a 60 day written notice provision and no three-year minimum requirement.

The members briefly discussed the salary of the machine technicians and if additional personal could be hired with he saving from locating operations in county-owned property. Commissioner Quigley joked the conversation about hiring additional personal would be forthcoming.

Legislator Ronk commented that based on available information it appeared that it would cost \$200k-\$325k to renovate property owned by a space owned by a county subsidiary which will need to be renovated to sell the property anyway. He questioned how that was not factored in to a cost benefit analysis. He recognized that the proposal presented an ideal situation for the BOE, but stated it was not necessary. Chairwoman Bartels stated that she feels the legislature is between a rock and a hard place but recognized the inadequacy of the current facility. She added that she would like to see the BOE moved to county space and questioned whether and why the County Executive's office has not been looking into purchasing or building property in the City of Kingston. She advised the members that she

has brought up the Van Dale property on the millions of dollars that has been spent to rent what is essentially hanger space. She added that she is concerned about delaying the BOE move.

Legislator Heppner stated that he agreed with the difficulty of the decision and the need to further assess the county's space issues. He added that the current BOE space is inadequate and a needs to be addressed immediately for the sake of properly administering elections and providing the best service to Ulster County voters. He added that he feels it is not the perfect fix, but is the best fix at the moment. He stated for the records that he was originally frustrated that the matter was postponed, but is appreciate of the conversations that have developed because of that action. Legislator Ronk commented that he did not think the best option is to move forward with the lease. He added that he would classify the BOE space as not ideal rather than inadequate. He reiterated that the 9-1-1 center is unequivocally inadequate and expressed his frustration that the members were spending this much time on the BOE and no time addressing a far more pressing issue. He stated that there are other options even if the DPW is not being permitted to relay them. He added that he did not the BOE would be out of the Freeman Building in five years.

Chairwoman Bartels asked Legislator Ron kif he was referring to Enterprise West as the other options. He responded that he was, that Enterprise West was a stepping stone, and added that the County Executive's Office has failed to study and address this issue. He added that South Manor is a possible option and should be more aggressively evaluated. Chairwoman Bartels agreed that a discussion needs to had about moving forward with a holistic space study to evaluate the needs of other departments, including 9-1-1. Legislator Heppner asked Legislator Ron kif the lease is not signed, what he thinks is a reasonable timeline for the BOE to remain in the current location. Legislator Ronk responded that the BOE needs to be out of the Old Jail sooner rather than later, and believes Enterprise West is a viable option. He expressed his frustration with the current relationship and make up of the EDA. He added that he believed the BOE could continue operating at the Wall Street until county-owned space is secured, specially if branch offices were pursued. He stated that if the legislature elects not to sign the lease the County Executive would be forced to address the matter. He reminded the members that the discussion was only being had because the Commissioners of Elections took it upon themselves to find the new space and initiate conversations about the time sensitive situation with their voting systems and machine technicians.

Chairwoman noted for the record the arrival of Legislator Petit and asked if she had any questions or comments. Legislator Petit stated that she would reserve comment for the time being.

Legislator Gavaris stated that he was looking at the Comptroller's Space Assessment and believes that purchasing property and moving a number of county departments that currently lease space into it. He added that the cost savings from the various leases would pay off the price of the building quickly. Chairwoman Bartels stated that the Comptroller was going to look into whether the NYS Dept. of Labor paid for a portion of the Office of Employment & Training lease. The members discussed space leased at the Gold Hill Building and the services they provide.

Legislator Ronk agreed that a space utilization study is important for them to handle. He added that he thinks it's important for the legislature to tackle it to ensure all available information is provided to the legislature. He added that he expected push back from the Executive's Office. Chairwoman Bartels agreed that an actual space study would delve into needs and future needs. She added that it would be interesting to look at the recommendations of the 2007-2008 C&S study and see what was actually followed. Legislator Ronk stated that the number one recommendation in that study was to move out of the building at South Manor because it was going to cave in.

Chairwoman Bartels asked if there were any other questions and what the members would like to do with the Resolution. She asked if the members would like to wait until the next meeting to vote on the measure. The members agreed they would like the opportunity to update their caucuses on the committee's discussion and hold off taking action on the Resolution until next week's regular meeting.

**Disposition: NO ACTION TAKEN**

Chairwoman Bartels thanked Commissioner Jackson and his staff for their time and thanked the members for the extra time they have spent discussing the matter.

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**Adjournment**

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

**No. of Votes in Favor:** 4  
**No. of Votes Against:** 0

**TIME:** 5:50 PM

**Respectfully submitted: Deputy Clerk Mahler**  
**Minutes Approved: August 16, 2021**