

**Laws, Rules & Government Services Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes**

DATE & TIME: November 10, 2022 – 5:30 PM
LOCATION: KL Binder Library, 6th Floor, County Office Building, Kingston
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chair Heppner
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk
PRESENT: Legislators Bartels, Gavaris, Levine (arrived 5:36 PM), Roberts & Ronk
ABSENT: None
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Legislators Erner and Hewitt, Legislative Counsel Gordon, Minority Counsel Pascale; Commissioners Dittus & Quigley – UC Board of Elections; Brian MacGregor – UC Insurance Officer; Commissioner Wilson – UC Human Rights Commission; County Attorney Johnson – UC County Attorney; Deputy County Executive Kelly – UC Executive’s Office

Chair Heppner called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

Motion No. 1: **Moved to APPROVE Minutes of the October 13th Meeting Minutes**

Motion By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

Discussion: None

Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Gavaris, Heppner, Levine, Roberts & Ronk
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 6
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: **Minutes APPROVED**

Chair Heppner thanked everyone for coming and recognized Human Rights Commissioner Wilson to discuss his department’s budget as presented in the 2023 Proposed Budget.

Commissioner Wilson advised the members that the two main additions to his department’s budget are personnel; a Human Rights Specialist position and an Administrative Assistant. He added that when he came on board there were a total of 7 cases for 2020. In 2021 the total cases were 23, and currently in 2022 the number is 32, with some still pending resolution. He briefly described the work and time involved in each case, as well as the time spent of directing callers to other departments and organizations for the appropriate assistance. In addition to the personnel, Commissioner stated that there was additional funding to hold regional conferences, as well as funding for mileage for commissioner travel and meals.

Chair Heppner asked if there were any questions for the Commissioner. Legislator Ronk stated his support for the caseworker position, but did not support any department administrative assistants or secretaries until the County Executive’s Office provides a better explanation for the Constituent Services Navigator (CNS) Department. He added that the Legislature was led to believe the CSN department was to act as a central repository for calls like those the Commissioner described receiving.

Legislator Hewitt stated his support for the additional staff recognizing that the increase in calls and cases would require additional support staff. He added that he put in an amendment to increase the conference line to \$5,000 to encourage more regional conferences for the public. Commissioner Wilson provided an explanation of the types of cases and ways the commissions responds and the ways they are trying to advertise the services offered.

Legislator Gavaris asked how Ulster County Human Rights Commission and budget compares to neighboring counties mentioning an estimated \$6,500 cost per case based on stats given. Commissioner Wilson responded that they spend a lot of time helping people with the application process as well as investigation if there is discrimination involved. He added that he re-initiated the Human Rights Alliance with Ulster, Dutchess, Orange and Westchester Counties and compared to them Ulster is second to Westchester in the number of cases.

Chair Heppner asked if there were any other budget related questions for Commissioner Wilson. Hearing none;

Chair Heppner recognized Insurance Officer MacGregor discuss his department's budget as presented in the 2023 Proposed Budget. Mr. MacGregor thanked the members for having him, adding that he has been in the position for one full month. He advised the members that the 2023 budget is similar to the previous years with one pay raise for an insurance examiner who has been with the department for 17 years. He stated that one fire department is leaving the self-insurance program, Vly-Atwood and Stone Ridge. Legislator Ronk commented that Vly-Atwood is being dissolved.

Chair Heppner asked if there were any questions. Hearing none;

Chair Heppner recognized County Attorney Johnson discuss his department's budget as presented in the 2023 Proposed Budget. County Attorney Johnson advised the members that his departments budget is similar to the previous year with some small raises and benefit adjustments. He stated that the office processed a number of real estate closings in house, some very complex, saving the county over \$35,000. He added that they are assisting the Sheriff's Office with increases due to the Red Flag Law.

Chair Bartels asked for clarification on the professional services line and the increase. County Attorney Johnson responded that the line is used for investigations and attorneys for decades old cases of alleged abuse that require the use of outside counsel.

Legislator Gavaris stated that attorney's salaries in the County Attorney's Office are far below attorneys in other offices. He added that the discrepancy was acknowledged last year and a salary study was started to hopefully bring them in line with the rest of the county. County Attorney Johnson thanked him for the acknowledgement. Legislator Gavaris stated his support for raising the salaries. Legislator Ronk stated his support for raising salaries in the department as well.

Chair Bartels shared a list of all the attorneys in the county with the clerk and asked her to share it with the members. She added that the attorneys in the county attorney's office and department of social services appear to be the lowest paid.

Chair Heppner asked if there were any other questions. Hearing none;

Chair Heppner recognized Board of Elections Commissioner Dittus and Quigley discuss their department's budget as presented in the 2023 Proposed Budget. Commissioner Dittus stated that at the time they submitted the budget they had factored in a special election because it was submitted before the August Special Election. She stated that it could possibly be factored out, but the costs are spread out across many lines depending on the item, i.e.: seals, equipment, etc. She added that the postage line was significantly increased because of the new absentee ballot process. Commissioner Quigley added that the cost of an election ranges from \$150,000 - \$225,00 depending on the type of election with costs spread out across part-time pay, ballots, etc. He stated that the board did add two positions and part-time staff that was passed by the Legislature last year. He advised the members that there are 6 – 9 part-time people working in the office during peak election periods to assist with mailing absentees, package equipment, etc. He advised the members that the two staff members added last year have gone above and beyond and he and Commissioner Dittus are seeking raised for them. Chair Bartels asked if the Commissioners could provide the specific budget lines.

Legislator Erner asked if the Commissioners had the ability to recruit a sufficient number of poll workers. Commissioner Ditus responded that the special election helped provide personnel. She stated that COVID concerns have complicated things, adding that some inspectors have expressed concerns about being harassed. Commissioner Quigley stated that increasing pay becomes cost prohibitive very quickly. Legislator Erner asked if the Commissioner would consider offering split shifts. Commissioner Dittus responded that many people do currently work split shifts, but it does provide complications. Commissioner Quigley added it was a growing trend.

Legislator Levine asked if the Commissioner were aware of what neighboring counties paid. The Commissioners responded that they were competitive regionally with an average pay scale of \$15/hour. Commissioner Quigley stated that there was legislation at the state level that could potentially set a statewide minimum of \$16-\$18, but it was not guaranteed to pass.

Legislator Hewitt suggested keeping the special election expenses and using that money to offset the requested raises. Legislator Gavaris asked for clarification of the miscellaneous contractual expense line noting that it was budgeted at a higher amount then amended down, with only 61% spent. Commissioner Quigley stated that they have not paid out all of the expenses for the 2022 elections which will account for much of that.

Legislator Erner asked for clarification on absentee mailing expenses. Commissioner Dittus advised the members that state grant money covered the cost of printing new envelopes because of the office move as well as some of the part-time pay for personnel who helped with absentee processing. Commissioner Quigley added that they worked with the Commissioner of Finance to cover costs without having to ask the Legislature for additional funding.

Chair Heppner thanked the Commissioners for their hard work and asked if there were any additional questions. Hearing none;

Chair Heppner advised the members that County Clerk Postupack was unable to attend the meeting but provided a summary of her office's 2023 budget via email which was forwarded to the members earlier in the day.

He asked if there was any further budget related discussion and hearing none moved on to Resolutions.

Resolutions for the November 15, 2022 Session of the Legislature

Resolution No. 509: Setting A Public Hearing On Proposed Local Law No. 11 Of 2022, A Local Law Amending Chapter 166 Of The Code Of The County Of Ulster Providing For The Administration And Enforcement Of The New York State Uniform Fire Prevention And Building Code, To Be Held On Tuesday, December 20, 2022 At 7:05 PM

Resolution Summary: This Resolution sets a Public Hearing on Proposed Local Law No. 9 of 2022 on Tuesday, December 20, 2022 at 7:05 PM to allow the public to offer comments.

Motion No. 2: **Resolution No. 509 MOVED FOR DISCUSSION**
Motion By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

Discussion: None

Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Gavaris, Heppner, Levine, Roberts & Ronk
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 6
Votes Against: 0
Disposition: **Resolution ADOPTED**

Resolution No. 537: Requesting That The Ulster County Commission On Reapportionment Reconvene As Soon As Practicable

Resolution Summary: This memorializing resolution requests that the Commission on Reapportionment convene a meeting as soon as practicable and redraw Ulster County’s legislative district map in a manner consistent with the redistricting criteria set forth in State and Federal Law.

Motion No. 3: **Resolution No. 537 MOVED FOR DISCUSSION**
Motion By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Levine

Discussion: Legislator Ronk asked County Attorney Johnson if he would stay for the discussion.

Motion No. 4: **MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION**
Motion By: Legislator Ronk
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

Discussion: Legislator Ronk stated the purpose of the Executive Session was to discuss pending litigation. The following individuals were permitted to stay: Legislators, Legislative and Minority Counsels, Legislative staff, County Attorney Johnson and County Executive staff.

Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Gavaris, Heppner, Levine, Roberts & Ronk
Voting Against: None
Votes in Favor: 6
Votes Against: 0

Disposition: EXECUTIVE SESSION ENTERED AT 6:21 PM

Motion No. 5: MOTION TO EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion By: Legislator Ronk

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Gavaris, Heppner, Levine, Roberts & Ronk

Voting Against: None

Votes in Favor: 6

Votes Against: 0

EXECUTIVE SESSION EXITED AT 7:28 PM

Discussion: Legislator Ronk stated hat no action was taken in Executive Session.

Disposition: NO ACTION TAKEN

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Ronk

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

No. of Votes in Favor: 6

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 7:29 PM

Respectfully submitted: Deputy Clerk Mahler

Minutes Approved: December 19, 2022