

**ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**NAME OF COMMITTEE:** Government Operations and Efficiency

**DATE:** July 7, 2010

**TIME:** 6:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** UCOB, Library Conference Room, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor

**LEGISLATORS PRESENT:** Chairperson Bernardo, Legislators Madsen, Maio, Petit, Zimet and Ronk (arr. 6:15 PM)

**LEGISLATOR EXCUSED:** Legislator Shapiro

**OTHERS ATTENDING:** Marshall Beckman, Deputy County Exec.; Elliott Auerbach, Comptroller; Kristin Jackson, Assistant to the Comptroller; Len Bernardo, Chairman, UC Independence Committee; Tom Kadgen, LOWV; Victoria Fabella, Deputy Clerk, Legislature

- The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bernardo at 6:10 PM.
  
- Rules of Legislature Regarding Sponsoring Resolutions:

Reading by Chairperson Bernardo of the statement from Deputy Clerk of Finance, Karen Spinozzi:

"To resolve the concern about a committee voting on a resolution that the members haven't seen, the committee chair will now be the sponsor of any resolution that comes directly to him/her. It will then go to the appropriate committee, who will act on it. If approved, that will be so indicated on the resolution. As the sole sponsor, the chair can submit or withdraw the resolution."

Legislator Ronk informed the Committee that he had a conference call with Chairman Wadnola and Counsel Ken Gilligan, and the above explanation was what they ascertained. Legislator Ronk believes that this resolves any concern, and he told the Chairman and Counsel that he would bring the information back to this Committee to get feedback.

Legislator Zimet believes it's a step in the right direction.

**Legislator Ronk motioned, seconded by Legislator Zimet to adopt the following:**

The Government Operations and Efficiency Committee adopts the subsequent procedure in regards to the process of authorizing a resolution to appear in the packet:

*The committee chair will be the sponsor of any resolution that comes directly to him/her. It will then go to the appropriate committee, who will act on it. If approved, that will be so indicated on the resolution. As the sole sponsor, the chair can submit or withdraw the resolution.*

**All in favor. Carried.**

Legislator Ronk volunteered to speak to Ken Gilligan to see how the rules can be changed in regards to setting an advance period of time in which a contract must be brought to the Legislature for ratification.

**Legislator Zimet motioned, seconded by Legislator Madsen** to authorize Legislator Ronk to investigate how to proceed with large expenditures and complicated contracts in regards to a timeline for Legislative approval. **All in favor. Carried.**

- Mandates Resolution:

Chairperson Bernardo reminded Committee members to speak to their colleagues before and during caucus to encourage support of the Resolution, as it will be voted on during the July 20<sup>th</sup> Session.

Legislator Zimet: Q./ What is the process and timeline to submit budgets? Marshall Beckman: A./ It is the Executive's budget so the Executive's Office takes a first look at it and has input on it. Then, the department heads would be presenting and explaining to the Legislative Committees what can be brought forward. The Departments had a deadline of June 21<sup>st</sup> to submit their budgets. October 1<sup>st</sup> is the due date for the County Executive to deliver the budget to the Legislature.

Legislator Petit: Q./ When does the Legislature vote on the budget? Legislator Ronk: A./ The first week in December.

Legislator Zimet: Q./ When can the department heads start presenting to the Legislative Committees? Marshall Beckman: A./ I have not yet had discussions with Mike Hein on that. I would make the suggestion that Mike and the Leadership group have a discussion to make the determination.

Chairperson Bernardo believes that the Resolution calls for the Department Heads to submit to the Legislature any mandates that they complied with when they submitted their budget to the Executive. Since the budgets were submitted on June 21<sup>st</sup>, after the Resolution is passed, we can begin looking for that information to ensure that they are interpreting those mandates correctly and looking at whether they are funded or unfunded.

Legislator Zimet commented that Frank Mauro from the Fiscal Policy Institute thinks what the Committee is doing here is a fascinating undertaking that could possibly be very revealing and help deliver programs at a more efficient cost. He said he would get me the information on the mandates that were repealed as of this year.

Chairperson Bernardo asked that Legislator Ronk report back to the Committee after he speaks to the Leadership group to ensure that everyone has the same vision of dividing up the budget amongst the Committees to ensure responsibility for every line in the budget and looking at the mandates.

- Wi-Fi at the County Building:

Marshall Beckman informed that Committee that this project has already been approved and planned to be completed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year or the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of next.

Chairperson Bernardo read information from Legislator Rich Parete: We could get a dry DSL circuit from Verizon within a few days. IT could put the jack in the Chambers and we could have it programmed in 20 minutes for wireless use. The cost is about \$30/month and we shouldn't need permission to just have IT put a jack where we want it.

He thinks the County's intention is to put up the County's Wi-Fi up there for us to use. If that happens it will be password protected.

Legislator Madsen commented that his friend's company has met with Michael Hein and is doing work in the Office of Employment and Training. This company has been thinking about giving back to the community in terms of what they can do with the Digital Corridor, possibly including what we are talking about here. This is something we may be able to tap into.

Legislator Zimet suggested, and Chairperson Bernardo agreed, to invite both Legislator Rich Parete and Sylvia to the next meeting to further discuss this issue.

- Personnel Manual: (See copy of UC Personnel Policy Manual handed out by Chairperson Bernardo)

Legislator Maio has been working with Brenda Bartholomew who has updated many of the titles on the first few pages of the manual. Brenda will continue working on the titles and language, and will scan the document since there is no current electronic version.

After the document is scanned in, Chairperson Bernardo requests that the "Track Changes" WORD program feature be turned on to illustrate changes made by marking them in red, as this will be the best way for the Committee to view and measure progress.

The Committee agreed that Mary Beth will continue to work with Brenda to ensure the beginning of the manual, the parts which contain basic policy, are up-to-date. The Committee will address the ethics portion of the manual, including the addition of a nepotism clause.

Legislator Madsen: Q./ Have we looked at other counties ethics disclosure statements? Chairperson Bernardo: A./ Karen Binder was reaching out to other counties to request copies of their personnel manuals and nepotism policies. Some were complying, some not. Vicky Fabella will check with Karen Binder to see where we stand and have the information forwarded to the Committee members.

Legislator Ronk suggested that at some point the Committee put a request out to the current Board of Ethics to get input on what has/hasn't worked in the past year.

Chairperson Bernardo suggested that the Personnel Policy Manual Subcommittee have a meeting, including any other Committee members who would like to help and have input on the ethics portion of the manual, sometime before the next monthly Committee meeting, time and date to be based on the availability of Ken Gilligan. The Committee members agreed to have this meeting at a location further south of Kingston, such as at New Paltz Town Hall. Vicky will speak to Karen about Ken Gilligan's schedule and the possibility of booking the requested location.

- Administrative Code/Charter:

Legislator Zimet suggested that the subcommittee to define Policy vs. Operations take the Administrative Code and the Charter and go thru them line by line to understand how the Charter was interpreted via the Administrative Code. Thru that process it will help us to get a better sense of what we can say is clearly policy, and what is clearly administrative and operational. We can then start to add into the Administrative Code to define what is policy and what is operations. Legislator Zimet thinks that it is essential that the Committee gets a handle on this topic.

The Committee was in agreement. Legislator Ronk commented that he feels it is critical.

- Authorization to Explore Potential Lawsuit Against NYS on Behalf of Property Tax Payers:

Legislator Zimet reiterated her passion for this issue and updated the Committee on the work she and Legislator Hayes have been doing. She wishes to explore potential openings for a suit.

Legislator Ronk remarked he would support a class action suit with other counties.

Legislator Zimet noted that her goal is to find a legitimate lawsuit we can win.

Legislator Zimet requested that the Committee authorize she and Legislator Hayes to investigate opportunities to see where and how the county can pursue this lawsuit.

**Legislator Madsen motioned, seconded by Legislator Petit. All in favor. Carried.**

- Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 PM with a motion offered by Legislator Zimet, Seconded by Legislator Ronk, with all in favor. Carried.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Terry Bernardo/vf  
Chairperson, Government Operations and Efficiency Committee**