

COUNTY LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE REPORT

NAME OF COMMITTEE: Government Operations & Efficiency

DATE: March 3, 2010

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Library/Conference Room B
Ulster County Office Building

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chair T. Bernardo; Legislators P. Hansut; M. Madsen; M. Maio; L. Petit; K. Ronk; B. Shapiro; S. Zimet

LEGISLATORS ABSENT: None

OTHERS ATTENDING: Legislator F. Wadnola; Comptroller E. Auerbach; L. Walls, Dep. Controller; M. Siegel, Comptroller's Office; B. Havranek, Co. Attorney; Dep. Co. Exec. M. Beckman; Personnel Officer B. Bartholomew; M. Kavanagh, Majority Counsel; H. Reynolds, Ulster Publishing; A. Lester, Midhudsonnews.com; T Kadgen, LOWV; P. Sive, Shawangunk Journal; Deputy Clerk K. Spinozzi

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bernardo. She introduced invited guests Elliot Auerbach and Fred Wadnola. County Executive Hein sent B Havranek, M. Beckman, and B. Bartholomew to represent him. Chair Bernardo indicated her sadness at M. Hein's non-attendance.

B. Havranek brought along folders containing information on nepotism for each member of the committee. She advised that the committee look at the Ethics Law and amend it, rather than pass a resolution, because the Ethics Law has more force than a resolution.

Chair Bernardo reviewed the study which predicts what relationships will fail based on certain actions by the participants. She has documented the structure of Ulster County government.

Legislature Chairman Wadnola stated that the Personnel Policy Manual needs to be updated. He would like a comprehensive review resulting in a new, all-inclusive manual. He would also like to see a policy on cars.

Comptroller Auerbach said that no personal vehicle use policy is currently in place. He felt that there is a need to look at reimbursement policies for county employees who use their own vehicles to perform their jobs.

Legislator Zimet questioned how we define policy vs. operation, i.e., Legislature vs. County Executive.

B. Havranek said that vehicle “policy” is really “operations.” Regarding nepotism, she said that the County Executive issued an executive order because he didn’t have the authority to create a policy. Elected officials can hire whomever they want. She said that some policies are really operations, including vehicle policies. She offered to sit with the committee to assist in crafting policy. Our definition of “relative” is the same as in other statutes that the State has adopted. She distributed packets which include the Executive Order regarding employment of relatives, some sample resolutions from other counties, and Local Law Number 11 of 2008 (Ethics and Disclosure Law). “Relative” is defined on page 2 of that local law. Civil Service Law has certain restrictions and requirements.

Legislator Shapiro said that the Board of Ethics currently exists. It is responsible for making recommendations for changes to the Local Law. It is also charged with looking at disclosure statements.

E. Auerbach has his employees sign an ethics certificate which holds them to a higher standard. He would be happy to share that certificate with this committee.

T. Kadgen would like to see a capital projects policy. Legislator Zimet noted that UCCC has a capital committee that reviews and approves capital projects before they get to the Legislature.

Chairperson Bernardo will invite the other three elected officials to a future meeting.

RESOLUTIONS

Draft Resolution 0320: Supporting The Submission Of A Local Government Efficiency Grant Application To The New York Department Of State For The Hudson Valley Local Government Cooperative Purchasing Project – Department Of Purchasing

Legislator Ronk questioned whether the municipalities could be included. It depends on how the specific grant is written.

Motion offered by Legislator Shapiro, seconded by Legislator Zimet.

Motion adopted unanimously.

Legislator Zimet brought up the subject of communication. She was concerned that the Democratic caucus had copies of information on bonding Sheriff's cars, while the Republican caucus did not. B. Havranek said that it is not the responsibility of the Executive's Office to distribute information to every legislator when one legislator had requested the information. Legislator Ronk indicated that his caucus would address this.

Motion to adjourn offered by Legislator Shapiro, seconded by Legislator Petit. Motion adopted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Bernardo, Chair
Government Operations & Finance

Legislator Zimet added the following to the above minutes:

Legislator Zimet suggested that if information is in printed form and shared with a legislator on an issue that will come before the entire Legislative Body, it might be a good policy for that information to be given to the Clerk of the Legislature so she can share with all legislators.