

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMS, EDUCATION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES, HELD IN THE LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM, COUNTY OFFICE
BUILDING, KINGSTON, NY, ON THE 2ND DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

WAYNE HARRIS, Chairman
DAVID B. DONALDSON, Deputy Chairman
CARL BELFIGLIO
DONALD J. GREGORIUS
JACK HAYES
CATHERINE TERRIZZI
MICHAEL MADSEN

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

GRACE THOMPSON, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
CHRIS SILVA, Bardavon 1869 Opera House, Inc./ UPAC
BENJAMIN KREVOLIN, Dutchess County Arts Council
JAMES COSGROVE, Ulster County Library Association
MARGIE MENARD, Ulster County Library Association
LEE REIDY, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension
MARY MARSTER, Director of Programs, Cornell Cooperative Extension
VIC MELVILLE, League of Women Voters
SHAYNA HOVENCAMP, Student at Wallkill High School, Observer
JOSH GONZALEZ, Student at Wallkill High School, Observer
JANET SALANITRI, Recorder

A quorum being present, Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm, and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2010 meeting. Such motion was made by Leg. Belfiglio and seconded by Leg. Madsen, and upon Chairman Harris calling for a voice vote the minutes of the October 5, 2010 meeting of this Committee as presented were unanimously approved.

Ulster County Community Action, Inc.:

Chairman Harris advised that he had spoken with Larry Kithcart of Ulster County Community Action and Mr. Kithcart was unable to appear tonight. He said he had requested the same amount as last year \$15,000.00 but was again cut to \$11,250.00 and requested that his budget be restored to the 2009 amount of \$15,000.00.

At this time Chairman Harris said that CASA was not yet present but they had requested \$20,000 in 2009 which was reduced to \$15,000, this year had requested \$25,000 and the recommended amount was again held constant at \$15,000.

Chairman Harris also received a message from Chris Silva of the Bardavon House/UPAC that he was delayed in traffic but would be here as soon as possible.

Ulster County Library Association:

Chairman Harris recognized Margie Menard of the Ulster County Library Association who advised that they had again requested \$120,000 in the 2011 budget and were again held constant at \$67,500. She said they had made some cutbacks, but with incoming funds being held constant and with expenses constantly going up they were finding themselves worse off than last year. She said it looks like at this time they will have to cut a tutoring program, a job search program and the Historic New York Times data base.

There was a brief discussion on the tutoring program and how the use and payment sessions were figured. Ms. Menard said that additional funds paid into the program get you additional sessions. Leg. Terrizzi asked if there was a report of how many students are using the tutorial program. Ms. Menard said Plattekill Library finds it to be very popular and they have used up their allowed sessions. Leg. Marsten said he would also like to see some figures on the job search program and would also like to know how many people use the Historic New York Times data base. Ms. Menard will get those figures.

Leg. Gregorius said that as a county service he would like to see these programs and data bases available to all county residents rather than on an allotment system until the number of visits to the site we are allowed runs out.

Leg. Belfiglio asked if all libraries in the county were in the Mid-Hudson Library System. Ms. Menard said yes, all but four. Cragmoor, Ellenville, Gardiner and Wallkill were in the Ramapo Library System. She said we are in the Mid-Hudson Library System and we get a group rate on many search engines and data bases.

The report of Ulster County Library Association being concluded, Chairman Harris recognized Benjamin Krevolin of the Dutchess County Arts Council.

Dutchess County Arts Council

Mr. Krevolin said the Ulster County grants have been a huge boon to the arts and to the County itself. Many of these artists and arts organizations have been under-funded for many years. He said Ulster County, in all of the Mid-Hudson area, has been putting the least amount into the arts but has the most to gain in general.

Chairman Harris said that by using the services of the Dutchess County Arts Council we have had an unbiased distribution of funds and for a very minimal cost to the county, and we have been quite happy with their services. Chairman Harris said the original request for funding for the arts in 2009 was \$55,000 which was reduced to \$41,250.00 which funding has remained static since that time. He said the administrative fees were approximately \$4,900.

At this time Leg. Gregorius, for the benefit of the other departments and the student observers, explained why Dutchess County Arts Council was handling the Ulster County arts fund: that they had the staff and the resources; that the selections were made by a juried panel which was composed of judges are from Ulster County; Dutchess administers the program but Ulster juries the program. This way the selection is both fair and impartial with no favoritism involved.

Deputy Chairman Donaldson said we cannot continue to fund the arts as we are doing. We have to put more into them and we have been lucky to have the Dutchess County Arts Council especially in handling the problems of who gets what. He said Ulster County has a significant art culture and it is not a frivolous thing, but is a multiplying factor that weighs heavily in any economic equation.

At this time Deputy Chairman Donaldson started to move to recommend the addition of funds to the budget to upgrade several of the budget lines; however, after a brief discussion with the committee he decided to reserve his motion to later in the meeting after all the departments present had been heard.

Mr. Krevolin said that in the latest round of applications they had received eighteen applications, but were only able to fund seven of those. Total funding requested was between \$90,000 and \$115,000. He said all of the applicants were told that we were doing our best to fund at 70% or higher and to try and not ask for extras. Mr. Krevolin said what is getting funded is getting funded at a high level. The report of Dutchess Arts Council was concluded at this time.

At this time Chairman Harris recognized Grace Thompson, Director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Ms. Thompson advised that like all of the community service agencies, CASA is struggling not just with government finances, but also with individual and with corporate finances which have also pulled back. She said as a result, they have had to reduce the number of children served.

Ms. Thompson said that the cost to keep a child in foster care averaged \$200,000 but the cost to provide a CASA volunteer was \$1,300 and the child will probably be able to remain in their own home. She said her total budget was \$85,000 and the only paid staff member was herself and the rest are volunteers. Expenses are for office supplies and equipment, mileage, travel expenses, etc.

Leg. Belfiglio requested confirmation that CASA's request was for \$25,000 and they were in the budget tentatively for \$15,000 and she confirmed this. Chairman Harris also wanted some confirmation that at the \$25,000 budget figure they were serving about 110 children but at \$15,000 they would only be able to serve much fewer and she also confirmed this but did not have the exact number. In reply to a question from Deputy Chairman Donaldson, Ms. Thompson advised that the children are referred through the Family Court system and she does have to turn some referrals down for lack of funds. Deputy Chairman Donaldson reiterated that this is again a case of the County being penny wise and pound foolish in not spending a small amount to keep a child out of foster care and then spending a large amount to keep them in foster care.

The report of CASA being concluded, Chairman Harris recognized Chris Silva, Director of the Bardavon 1869 Opera House, Inc. (UPAC).

Bardavon 1869 Opera House, Inc. (UPAC)

Mr. Silva said he very much appreciated the support the County of Ulster has given to UPAC over the years, especially since the City of Kingston had withdrawn their support some time ago. He said that the money from the county goes towards a nearly \$50,000 annual heat and electric bill.

UPAC's main focus, advised Mr. Silva, is to bring the highest caliber of entertainment to Kingston. He listed many of the important headliners who have appeared over the past year, running the gamut from opera to rock to comedy. Mr. Silva said UPAC is a vital part of the economic engine for Ulster County as well as an integral part of the county's cultural scene.

In reply to a question from Chairman Harris, Mr. Silva said the theatre capacity is 1505; however, it is closed in July and August because the air conditioning is not sufficient or sometimes just not working.

Chairman Harris reiterated that UPAC's requested budget was \$25,000 and their tentative allotment was \$18,750 which was constant for the past three years.

The report of Bardavon 1869 Opera House, Inc. (UPAC) being concluded, Chairman Harris recognized Lee Reidy and Mary Marsters of Cornell Cooperative Extension:

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Ms. Reidy said the budget this year is allocating her agency \$266,475 which is the same amount as 2009 and last year. She said she was told a long time ago to try and lessen Cooperative Extension's dependence on the County; however, said Ms. Reidy, they still need a core base of funding from the County in order to attract and qualify for many of the grants we apply for and obtain. She said the County's portion of Cooperative Extension's budget was only 17% of its funding.

Ms. Reidy also reported that again the 4-H Program experienced a direct 25% hit on its funding. We requested \$275,000, we got \$266,475 and the difference will have to come from 4-H, there is no place else we can take it from. The good news is that we just got another \$4,000 from our 4-H Horse Association which money will go to partially fund 4-H activities.

She also advised that Cooperative Extension has just received word that it had received a substantial grant under the family consumer science program which will be partnered with two or three different departments. At present she is not authorize to discuss the details of this grant but will do so when permitted.

Ms. Reidy said that she had a proposal into Cornell for shared business networking, and also that there would be program of 4-H Fall Events at the Ulster County Fairgrounds on Sunday from 12:00 to 3:00pm.

The report of Cornell Cooperative Extension being concluded, Chairman Harris referred the Committee to the letter report of Family of Woodstock.

Family of Woodstock (Supervised Visitation Program)

Mr. Berg references in his letter the fact that his budget request was for \$25,000 and the amount allocated was \$15,000 and how the number of children and families participating in the Supervised Visitation Program were impacted by that reduction in funding. It was also noted by Chairman Harris that the original funding request in 2009 was for \$20,000 which was also reduced to \$15,000 which amount has been held constant. At this time Chairman Harris recognized Deputy Chairman Donaldson.

Deputy Chairman David Donaldson:

Dep. Chair Donaldson made a motion to restore some of the cuts made to these agencies. He said he found the cuts to be penny wise but pound foolish, citing as an example, CASA where the cost of keeping a child in foster care can mount up to over \$200,000 compared to spending approximately \$1300 to provide a CASA volunteer who will probably be able to keep that child in their home.

The motion on the floor made by Dep. Chairman Donaldson is to restore 2011 budget cuts to requested funding as follows:

- Court Appointed Special Guardians - cut from \$25,000 to \$15,00 – restore \$10,000;
- Dutchess County Arts Council - cut from \$55,000 to \$41,250 – restore \$13,750;
- Family of Woodstock Supervised Visitation Program - cut from \$20,000 to \$15,000 – restore \$5,000;
- Bardavon 1869 Opera House, Inc./UPAC - cut from \$25,000 to \$18,750 – restore \$6,250;
- Ulster County Library Association – cut from \$90,000 to \$67,500 – restore \$22,500; and
- Cornell Cooperative Extension – cut from \$275,000 to \$266,475 – restore \$8,525.

Dep. Chairman Donaldson said that the total cost of restoration of these budget cuts would be \$66,025 which is .08 of 1% of the total budget. He said he feels that these restorations can be made from sales tax revenues which he believes to be underestimated and that more accurate sales tax revenue estimated will not be available until after the first of the year.

At this time Chairman Harris opened the floor for discussion on the motion.

Leg. Terrizzi requested some information regarding RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). Chairman Harris said it was sponsored by Ulster County Community College and the senior volunteers work at different sites, such as the Tourism caboose. Ms. Reidy said they also work at other places and they often assist her office with large mailings.

Leg. Hayes said the committee which meets in this room directly after this committee (Public Safety) is going to look at cutting security in this building. Chairman Harris said if we look at other committees we are going to find the same question arises in many of them. Leg. Hayes said if we could have cut the entire Ulster County Budget by 2% he would have been much happier. Chairman Harris said \$66,000 sounds like a minimal amount, but on each committee of this Legislature you are on you are going to run into the same problem. There is always going to be a question of priorities.

Dep. Chairman Donaldson said people talked about taking \$12 million from the fund balance; that is what fund balances are for. He said when you talk about security in this building, they are going to secure it some way; ask the Sheriff if he can do it cheaper. Leg. Donaldson said the budget is always a struggle and is something we go through each year. He said our recommendation goes up to Budget and Finance which then reports to the entire Legislature on our input.

Leg. Belfiglio said yes, it is the committee's job to look at the funds for these agencies and he wishes we could give them all they ask for; however, he said, he also believes it is important for us to recognize that people are losing their jobs and their homes. Leg. Terrizzi said we all believe these are all wonderful programs but she doesn't see where the money is coming from.

Leg. Gregorius said whether it be expenses or income there is nothing absolute in the budget. Sometimes the sales taxes are higher and sometimes they are lower. The budget, he said, is always a work in progress.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Harris called for a second on the motion of Deputy Chairman Donaldson. The motion was seconded by Leg. Madsen.

At this time Chairman Harris called for a voice vote on the motion of Deputy Chairman Donaldson for restoration of funds for six contract agencies as heretofore set forth. The results of the vote are:

For the Motion: Deputy Chairman Donaldson
Leg. Gregorius
Leg. Madsen

Against the Motion:
Leg. Belfiglio
Leg. Terrizzi
Leg. Hayes
Chairman Harris

The motion was defeated.

There being no further business, Chairman Harris requested a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Leg. Belfiglio and seconded by Leg. Gregorius and Chairman Harris declared the meeting adjourned at 6:22pm

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Salanitri
Janet Salanitri, Recorder