

ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE REPORT

NAME OF COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee

DATE: May 14, 2008

TIME: 4:45 P.M.

PLACE: Library/Conference Room B
Ulster County Office Building
244 Fair Street - 6th Floor
Kingston, New York

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman A. Lomita and Legislators B. Cahill, F. Dart, D. Gregorius, J. Provenzano, S. Zimet (arrived 4:50 P.M.), S. Cummings, R. Gerentine (arrived 4:50 P.M.) and G. Noonan

LEGISLATORS ABSENT:

OTHERS ATTENDING: County Administrator M. Hein; Deputy County Administrator A. Smith; Deputy County Administrator S. Ronga; Deputy County Administrator M. Dellay; Sr. Management Analyst F. Fawcett; Legislators W. Harris and P. Terpening; Personnel Officer B. Bartholomew and Non-Legislature members of the Ad-Hoc Tax Reform Committee Tara O'Connor-Alisse, Tony Gajate, Joya Shebar and Bernetta Calderone

I) RESOLUTIONS CARRIED FORWARD FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolution No. 141 Requesting Reassignment Of One Clinical Supervisor Position From Chemical Dependency Division To Mental Health Division – Amending The 2008 Ulster County Budget – Mental Health

Motion offered by Legislator Cahill, seconded by Legislator Dart.

Legislator Lomita explained that there was a potential problem with Union rules but that in retrospect, that was not an issue after all.

Adopted unanimously.

Resolution No. 142 Reclassifying Staff Psychiatrist Position To Associate

Supervising Psychiatrist Position – Amending The 2008 Ulster County Budget – Mental Health

Motion offered by Legislator Gregorius, seconded by Legislator Provenzano.

Legislator Provenzano - concerned about passing a reclassification. In her own committee, reclassifications were denied to be even considered. We should stick to our policy once we make it. If one department cannot have a reclass, why approve it in another?

Legislator Dart – The position became vacant over two years ago and there has not been anyone appropriate to fill it. Now we have someone.

Legislator Provenzano – Will not oppose it because it is the right thing for us to do but is still bothered by our broken policies.

Legislator Gregorius – Since it passed through two committees, we should allow it to pass but agrees with Legislator Provenzano that it is unfair on the surface.

Personnel Officer Bartholomew – Explained that the reclassification came to Personnel already in resolution form two weeks before committee meeting. Since the position was vacant since 2004 it was foolish to not take advantage of a well-qualified job applicant.

Adopted unanimously.

II) LATE RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 163 Authorizing The Establishment Of A Designated Veterans Cemetery Area At The New Paltz Rural Cemetery And Amending The 2008 Ulster County Budget – Veterans' Service Agency

Motion offered by Legislator Zimet, seconded by Legislator Dart.

Legislator Zimet – We have intentions of amending this resolution from the floor with Legislator Harris as a second. The amendment would add the words "... or any other cemetery association."

Legislator Noonan – Concerned that the intent might be to allocate \$10,000 to each and every cemetery who might show interest or is it a

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total of \$10,000 regardless of the number of cemeteries? Also wondered if the Indigent Burial line in Veterans' budget was duplicating a line in the DSS budget.

Assistant County Attorney Havranek – Since this is a Late Resolution, we have not worked out all the terms and conditions yet. We cannot finalize agreements until the Legislature signs on to it.

Legislator Zimet – Resolution pushed through now to be ready for Memorial Day. New Paltz has a two acre site they are willing to designate for Vets only, with the potential for four acres.

Legislator Cahill – If there is already money in the Veterans Agency budget for indigent burials why do we need more?

Legislator Zimet – Key word is indigent. We provide specific benefit to indigent vets so they are assured of a proper burial. A vet who is not indigent, however, does not have a designated area to be buried in. We will not own cemetery – we will only be purchasing plots.

Legislator Harris – Dutchess County operates in this manner and funds 30-35 burials a year.

Legislator Provenzano – How did we pick New Paltz as the site? Why weren't all cemetery associations notified with an RFP type document? How did we arrive at \$10,000?

Legislator Zimet – Assistant County Havranek was comfortable with \$10,000 to initiate at approximately \$500 per plot. Legislator Harris chaired the sub-committee and after 23 years of doing nothing we are close to an agreement. Rosendale was the first to respond and New Paltz formalized their offer with a resolution so we followed through with New Paltz.

Adopted unanimously.

Resolution No. 164 Accepting The Ulster County Blue Ribbon Commission On School Funding And Tax Reform Recommendations As Forwarded To The State Blue Ribbon Commission On Tax Reform

Motion offered by Legislator Zimet, seconded by Legislator Gerentine.

Legislator Cahill – Believes the resolution is worded too strongly and

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would like verification of the specifics from the County Administrators Office. In particular it is not logical to push 100% of the blame back on the State since it is obvious the school districts have not done their share. We are committed by law to make the districts whole yet we have little input in the process.

Legislator Gerentine – These are just recommendations – a memorializing resolution with no obligation to the County. It is clear that something must be done to address property tax relief and we worked under a short time frame, without time for some specific recommendations to be formulated. It is simply a place to start, and Tom Suozzi's Commission has already picked up on many of these points.

Legislator Cahill – We list many issues but we are not addressing spending by the school districts. We have to reduce or at least rationalize our spending on education.

Legislator Gerentine – There are two sides to every equation, it is not our responsibility to tackle the school districts. Hopefully the State will address the districts. We just know that we cannot continue at this pace.

Legislator Provenzano – We all want the State to find a way to change the current system, but it is wrong to just write a list of things that the State must do. We have a functioning local group chaired by Carol Crouse that has been working on these issues for years. It would have been more appropriate if the Committee had consulted Carol Crouse's group in the process instead of striking out on their own.

Legislator Zimet – Informed the Committee that they had contact the local group and introduced four of their members who were present in the room. She expressed displeasure in the fact that their names had been removed from the resolution.

Legislator Lomita – Non-Legislator members of an ad-hoc committee are not capable of sponsoring a resolution.

Legislator Dart – Why is a committee making recommendations to the State instead of the full Ulster County Legislature? He sees this as a major problem and circumvents all the legislators weighing in on the subject. We didn't even see it until it was already sent and we still haven't seen the report you sent.

Legislator Gerentine – we just looked at the issue and sent a report to the

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Suozzi Commission so they could include some of our points in their May 22, 2008 report to the governor. We are now attempting to move it through the legislature.

Legislator Cahill – Asked permission of the Chair to address members of the Ad Hoc Committee through the Chair.

Non-Legislature Members of the Ad-Hoc Tax Reform Committee Tara O'Connor-Alisse, Tony Gajate, Joya Shebar and Bernetta Calderone – We helped Legislator Zimet's committee to write the report. Other counties have addressed the situation in a similar way. Our group has more expertise on school tax issues and unfunded mandates. This resolution is a broad based approach while some other counties like Sullivan focus on unfunded mandates alone. Tom Suozzi requested simple suggestions.

Legislator Dart – Still concerned that we are asked to approve a report that we have never seen based on a broad resolution that we have language questions on.

Legislator Lomita – On a personal note we probably should be merging our report with Assemblyman Cahill's bill.

Motion passed.

8 AYES

1 NO (Legislator Dart withholding approval until he review committee's report)

III) **DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION AT JUNE SESSION**

Draft Resolution – Authorizing The Chairman Of The Ulster County Legislature To Execute An Amended Renewal Of The Retainer Agreement With Mason-Johnson, LLC, As An Independent Consultant To Assist The County Of Ulster In The Final Phase Of Completion Of The Ulster County Law Enforcement Center On An As Call Basis

Motion to open for discussion offered by Legislator Provenzano, seconded by Legislator Gregorius.

Assistant County Attorney Havranek – Ralph Johnson has worked very hard on closing out the post construction UCLEC contract and we need to keep him on. He is worth every penny we pay him especially now that we are moving into the last phases of project.

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Motion to consider adopted unanimously.

Motion to adjourn offered by Legislator Provenzano, seconded by Legislator Gregorius.

Meeting adjourned 5:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Lomita, Chairman
Ways and Means Committee