

**Herkimer County Legislature
Administration/Veterans' Affairs and Ways & Means
Committee Meeting
Friday, May 1, 2020
Via Teleconference
Follows County Planning & Development and Ways & Means**

Persons Attending:

Bob Hollum (Chairman, Administration/Veterans' Affairs)
Gregory Malta, Sr. (Administration/Veterans' Affairs committee member)
William Weakley (Administration/Veterans' Affairs committee member)
Patrick E. Russell (Chairman, Ways & Means, Admin. committee member)
Raymond Johnson (committee member, both)
John L. Brezinski (Administration/Veterans' Affairs committee member)
Kurt Ackerman (Ways & Means committee member)
Raymond Smith (Ways & Means committee member)
Frederick J. Shaw, Jr. (Ways & Means committee member)
John P. Stephens (Ways & Means committee member)
Vincent J. Bono, Chairman of the Legislature
James W. Wallace, Jr., County Administrator
Brandy Serow, Sec. to County Administrator
Lorraine Lewandrowski, County Attorney
Sheri Ferdula, Budget Officer
Steve Billings, Personnel Officer
Kim Tranter, Commissioner of Elections
Anthony Fumarola, Commissioner of Elections
Sylvia Rowan, County Clerk

(Non Committee Members signed in)

Legislator Mark Gaworecki
Legislator Robert J. Schrader
Legislator William Keeler, Sr.
Legislator Peter F. Manno
Legislator Ray Donley
Legislator Peter Campione

Absent:

N/A

Mr. Bono stated "Next up, Admin and Veterans' Affairs along with Ways & Means."

Mr. Hollum called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

ADMINISTRATION/VETERANS' AFFAIRS/WAYS & MEANS:

1. Discussion for unknown election expenses in Board of Elections
2. Discussion on PLEXIGLASS in the DMV
3. Other - accept COVID 19 grant for Board of Elections

4. Other – Approve purchase of absentee applications, envelopes and mail service through the Phoenix Graphic Incorporated company

Committee Vote Record

ADMINISTRATION/VETERANS' AFFAIRS/ WAYS & MEANS:

Mr. Hollum stated “First on the agenda, discussion for unknown election expenses in the Board of Elections. Mr. Wallace and I met with Kim and Anthony yesterday and I will turn it over to Kim. There is a lot going on.”

Kim Tranter stated “Thank you very much. Good morning everybody. Now that it is election season our world is going to move very fast and last Friday the Governor issued his executive order ordering that absentee ballot applications be sent to every registered voter eligible to vote in the Primary Election of June 23rd. This includes active voters and non-active voters. We prepared a sheet and I believe you all got a copy and a hand out, about who is eligible to vote in that Primary Election and our grand total was 21,608 people, give or take. That will be processed through Mailcheck for either coming in or leaving and also new registrations so that’s probably a pretty fair number for purposes of our thing today. We are going with 22,000 for just a little bit of extra room and what this entails is 22,000 applications both front and back be sent. It involves two separate envelopes that both of course have printing on them and they need to be sent out immediately and then they will come back to us and we will process them. Each voter has their own bar code so the bar codes will have to be imbedded in the document so we know who gets what. It’s going to be very challenging for us. We believe that we have the ability to process the applications when they come back and then probably barring like a land slide but process the ballots themselves according to the barcodes, that’s an integral part of this. To cover all of this election stuff we received a grant, or we will be receiving a grant shortly for \$78,000 I believe that that’s in your paperwork too, your packet. It’s, as you can see at the top, it’s a Federal Grant of \$20 million with matching funds from the State. Mr. Wallace said yesterday not to count on those funds from the State, so even if we remove that percentage we will definitely be under our allowable amount. So this program, we’ve talked with several vendors and we have pretty much decided with your approval we would like to proceed with our vendor, Phoenix Graphics. Phoenix has been with the County for many years. They handle all of our ballot printing. They are just excellent. They are really prepared for this program. They know how important it is to get it right and for us to be able to track and work off of the information that they provide. They are \$1.17 a ballot or a voter plus \$0.15 for the back side of the application that has all the specifics that relate to our County and what they are supposed to do. On the back on the verbiage, we also have the opportunity to tell each where their voting site will be and that’s very important too because we are going to be changing some voting sites around this year because of the COVID-19. So we won’t have to do a separate mailing for that. That’s kind of a piece that just came about yesterday after we met. I guess we are looking to you for your approval. Any questions?”

Mr. Hollum stated “I just want to add one thing to it. The actual cost comes out to be about \$37,000 but obviously we do not have a choice with that and I will bring this back up under other for a vote. Does anyone have any questions for Kim?”

Mr. Johnson asked “Kim and Tony, before you were there, and this was a while back, I brought up why don’t we purchase our own printing machine? I know the initial expense will be there. Can we look in to see what a machine would cost or rent or whatever and print our own ballots?”

Kim Tranter “I don’t know. Maybe Sheri wants to speak about it. I know it was before my time. I know that it’s so specific about the requirements of things and I think downstairs they have the ability to do a lot of our printing but like this project is too big for them. No ballots, they don’t have the ability to do perforations so that was an issue for them. I don’t know about the rest of it.”

Tony Fumarola stated “I know the perforations were an issue downstairs and also the barcoding that has to go through the scanner. I do know some Commissioners out west that have purchased their own printing machines and I can reach out to them for numbers and how that worked out if you would like.”

Mr. Hollum stated “Tony, definitely do that. I don’t think it is something we can do this year but for the future it would be nice to know it and give Mr. Johnson and the rest of us an idea but as of right now time is of the essence. Right?”

Kim Tranter stated “Time is of the essence and the manpower to do this in house we would not have. We don’t really have the ability even to have somebody print it and send for us. We just don’t have the manpower to do 22,000.”

Mr. Hollum asked if there were any more questions.

Mr. Campione asked “Kim, do you know where the polling sites are going to be?”

Kim Tranter responded “Well, in our mind yes. And we know which ones we have lost. We are just working on trying to do an abbreviated pole site voting. So we have 29 Elections sites in Herkimer County with 59 election districts. Last year we successfully reduced all of that for the Primary Election and we were looking to do a repeat of that. This year we are hindered a little bit more because most of our poll workers are seniors and we can’t really ask anyone over the age of 70 to take a chance. We are going to be reaching out over the next couple of days to every pole site and every poll worker to see what their thoughts are and their availability is. Right now we have 8 confirmed poll sites but we know we have lost all of the senior citizen housing complexes. We know we have lost a couple fire departments. In the Town of Ohio we lost the recreation building so we are trying to work out a plan that continuous towns can vote together.”

Mr. Hollum asked “Kim or Anthony, could you maybe explain a little bit how much less people you are going to need with people sending back these absentees? I think you gave me an example where you normally have a certain amount of tables set up to be able to break it down to one table showing like a savings of how much less people you will need for this election.”

Kim Tranter asked Tony if he would talk about that.

Tony Fumarola responded “Yeah, I don’t know if I have a breakdown of the cost that we will save but obviously if we go to much fewer sights we’ll have more poll workers at the site than we normally would but like Kim just said that we are cutting down like 20 something sites. That’s at least 4 Inspectors per site that we won’t need and 2 Coordinators per site we don’t need. As far as the absentees coming in, we normally have a crew of 4. They come in for after election stuff which we will utilize those 4 people to assist us with the ballots but will also probably are going to order the absentee ballots that can be scanned into the system through the machine so it will take much less time. We are expecting high volumes, at least probably come November anyway if not this election. So we will cut down just on overall manpower but I don’t have the actual numbers in front of me. I apologize.”

Mr. Hollum stated “It’s pretty hard to come up with those figures I was just trying to put you on the spot. What about savings without the Presidential Primary?”

Kim Tranter stated “We did. We put together a spreadsheet and because we didn’t have that Presidential Primary on April 28th, we figure it saved the County about \$90,000 give or take some in expenses so that was good news.”

Mr. Hollum asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Gaworecki asked “Could you repeat the total cost and does that include postage?”

Mr. Hollum responded “Mark, it runs about \$37,000 to send them all out at \$1.17. Depending on how many they send back, like if every single person, all 21,608 registered voters which are never going to send them all back obviously, I think Kim and Anthony were guestimating about 50% so you’re looking at about postage back of about \$5,000 at 50%, a little over \$10,000 if everyone sends them back. Does that answer your question?”

Mr. Gaworecki said ok.

Kim Tranter stated “And we are required under the Executive Order to pay for postage both ways.”

Tony Fumarola stated “And again these values will hopefully be recouped by the Federal COVID Grant.”

Mr. Gaworecki thanked them.

Mr. Bono stated “Just a word on the grants. We were informed yesterday that any and all grants and awards by the State, on the State level are subject to being chopped or not awarded so let’s not count on, especially the discretionary ones. They are most likely going to go away so for what it’s worth.”

Mr. Hollum stated ‘Yes Chairman. Mr. Wallace actually pointed that out to us yesterday. That was the first thing he said so even if they are able to get half of it, it still runs \$36,000 from the Federal portion of it if you took out the New York State. I think we should just act like we’re not

going to get it and prepare for the worst. Any more discussion on that? I will be bringing those back up under other. Number 2 on the list is discussion on plexiglass in the DMV. Mrs. Rowan approached me. She is requesting and asking if we could put plexiglass in the DMV where ever the workers handle customers. I didn't seem like a crazy request. I do know we have bids coming in for it and NEP will be sending us a bid next week. Pretty much it's a discussion. If anyone's got any questions about it. I really can't go forward with any of it until we have an idea of cost and everything but if you have any questions I will be glad to try and answer them cause I believe Mrs. Rowan is busy catching up on phone calls and messages. Any questions?"

Mr. Bono asked "Will this be a permanent display or will it come down after the COVID?"

Mr. Hollum responded "It will be a permanent display."

Mr. Bono said ok.

Mr. Gaworecki asked "Is this something our maintenance can do?"

Mr. Hollum responded "As far as maintenance, I'm not really sure. I do know that we do have bids going out. Maintenance might be able to install it but to have it cut I believe we need someone like NEP do that but I do believe maintenance probably could install it and maintain it but I'm not a 100% sure about that."

Mr. Gaworecki said thank you.

Mr. Bono stated "Just a question. Are we talking plexiglass or glass?"

Mr. Hollum stated "Plexiglass."

Mr. Bono stated "If it's going to be long term shouldn't we look at glass. It's easier to clean. It doesn't scrape up and get foggy. I'm just throwing it out there."

Mr. Hollum stated "No. Sounds good. I don't really know anything about it so I think when NEP does their estimates they should probably give us an idea on both of them. I think that will be a good idea."

Sheri Ferdula stated "When I talked to Sylvia the other day about this she called and asked me about it and part of her concern was not only COVID but angry customers or people reaching out to get to the Clerks and I think with glass you have that fear of somebody breaking it or hitting it or causing it to break between the people."

Mr. Bono stated "I think if you used tempered glass it's tough to do. It's like hockey glass. I think it's worth it. If you're going to do it, do it right. I'm just worried if you put the plexiglass and then after you clean it numerous times and wipe it down it gets foggy and scratches and then it just looks undesirable. That's all. Can we price out both? Any objection to pricing out both?"

Mr. Hollum stated "Absolutely."

Mr. Bono stated "Alright. Thanks."

Mr. Ackerman stated "Mr. Chairman, I would think either way we go it would be easy to replace, I mean you're only talking 2 foot by 3 foot piece of plexiglass or glass and I would like to know the statement that Sylvia made about angry customer grabbing somebody. Has that ever happened in the past that we've had an issue with that? And number 2 we do have the Sheriff's department right there in the hallway if that ever happens. I don't know if that should go into our consideration."

Mr. Hollum stated "No. Mr. Ackerman, I don't know about one of the workers being grabbed, but the way she described it to me, someone reached acrossed and grabbed the paperwork. So I don't know. I didn't hear about a worker but you never know. There's different stories all of the time but I only heard that someone reached across and grabbed paperwork."

Mr. Russell stated "Usually glass is actually cheaper than plexiglass."

Mr. Hollum stated "I will get bids on glass and find out which ones better and we will go from there. I don't think we can really do anything until we get some bids back."

Mr. Johnson asked "Did that have to go to County Properties committee instead of your committee?"

Mr. Hollum stated "Hopefully. I think it should to be honest with you. We can figure that out when we go down the road. Anymore discussion under that one? Under other I actually want to bring up to a vote to accept the COVID 19 from the State and Federal, which ever one gives it to us. Is there any more discussion for that? Can I get a motion to accept that?"

Item #3 - On motion of Mr. Weakley, seconded by Mr. Brezinski for Administration/Veterans' Affairs, Item #3 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Russell requested a motion in Ways & Means.

On motion of Mr. Stephens, seconded by Mr. Russell for Ways & Means, Item #3 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Hollum asked for a motion to go forward with the purchase of the absentee applications, envelopes and mail service through the Phoenix Graphic Incorporated company.

Item #4 - On motion of Mr. Brezinski, seconded by Mr. Bono for Administration/Veterans' Affairs, Item #4 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Russell requested a motion in Ways & Means.

On motion of Mr. Ackerman, seconded by Mr. Shaw for Ways & Means, Item #4 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Mr. Hollum asked if anyone else had anything.

Mr. Wallace asked “On our first motion to accept the grants are the motioners and seconds ok with also doing creating accounts and amending the budget? That’s how we normally do it”

All agreed.

Mr. Bono asked “Any objection on both committees?”

There were no objections.

Mr. Hollum asked “Anything else under other? Can I make a motion to adjourn?”

On motion of Mr. Hollum, seconded by Mr. Weakley for Administration/Veterans’ Affairs, the committee adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

The Ways & Means Committee continued.