

Council of Governments

June 30, 2005

7:30 p.m.

RUC Auditorium

Present: Tim O'Hearn, Frank Ganung, Ben Dickens, Dennis Fagan, Ken Dillon, Cedric Stewart, Dale Walter, Bob Carpenter, Dianna Overhiser, Judy Phillips, Alice Learn, Tom Brace, Monty Stamp.

Legislator Bingell and Legislator Larison were also present along with nine members of the public and two members of the press.

Schuyler County Administrator Tim O'Hearn gave a brief introduction of himself and his hopes of what this council might be able to accomplish. Administrator O'Hearn stated that this type of council is meant for discussion and collaboration. If that happens the next steps are up to this group. Introductions were made around the table. Administrator O'Hearn reiterated his thanks to all who attended. He also stated that his involvement in this council is that of a facilitator, seed planter for discussions. Administrator O'Hearn next introduced an exercise called Brain Writing in which all participants name their top concerns facing their municipality. This exercise took approximately twenty minutes to complete. The issues and concerns are attached. Administrator O'Hearn commented that they were all great suggestions and thoughts. Administrator O'Hearn then asked "Is a Council of Governments something you would like to pursue?" Mayor Overhiser stated she thought this was a good idea. The County needs to open up communications. Supervisor Stewart said each one has a unique township, that there needs to be a trust factor and somewhere a little bit of that has been lost. County Highway departments seem to be sharing services. Each has a different tax ability therefore making it easier for some of the more sizeable municipalities to make larger purchases. The main goal when you take office is to help residents in anyway possible. Sharing services is a function that he would be interested in. Supervisor Dillon added he thought that was a good concept. The things that towns do will affect surrounding towns. It only makes sense that we try to mesh together on some issues. Zoning would be one issue that he would like to see a little more uniform. Ms. Learn stated that the lack of understanding about what the board of education has control over and educating the community is a struggle for them. The state has a lot of control. Supervisor Dickens noted that there are pieces of equipment that can be shared. Sometimes funding can come from the state. There is enough opportunity in the County that we could share two pieces of like equipment. The county and the towns use the tax assessment role free of charge, however, when there is a court case they do not share costs. Supervisor Dickens also stated that they had considered implementing a fee for using the role. Administrator O'Hearn commented that some of these points are future agenda items and asked is this a forum you want to continue to use to air these issues? There is conceptually support for this council. Supervisor Brace said this forum is a good idea so we can work together toward resolutions that may save taxpayers money. He also added that it is just good to get together. He feels that communication with Legislature is lacking. Administrator O'Hearn noted that there will continue to be Legislative representation. Legislator Fagan added that he seconded Brace's comment on lack of communication. There are some things that the County may have issues with the towns and villages also. For example, HAVA is one issue that would fit right into this

forum. Mayor Walter said this could be called a forum and it is a good place to discuss cause and effect. Good to share information openly. Mayor Phillips stated that each municipality needs to develop respect for each other. Each individual level is very important no matter the size. We need to work together as a team.

Administrator O'Hearn commented that it looked like we are going forward and now we need to set up structure. Broome County Council's structure may or may not be appropriate for Schuyler County. In Broome County, the Council of Governments is set up somewhat formal with bylaws, slate of officers, President, VP, Secretary and Treasurer. You could choose to be less formal. After the type of structure is determined we should begin to identify issues. Supervisor Stamp stated the more informal the more effective it will be. Supervisor meetings are informal and well attended. Effective and fun you can get some ideas, not too big. Supervisor Dickens stated that each municipality should have an alternate designee also. Administrator O'Hearn noted that Broome County's Council does allow for a designee and said designee would have full voting power. Supervisor Brace asked what sort of authority this group would have. Administrator O'Hearn replied that the Council is just a way to facilitate results and that with regard to legal authority, actions would be advisory only. The public is welcome to be actively involved. Alice Learn agrees that for the most effective use of time there needs to be structure. Ms. Learn also stated she feels agendas are important and a facilitator helps keep that agenda on track. Mayor Phillips recommended that two or three people need to get together and come up with the suggestions. We need to work together and take something back to our constituencies. Mayor Philips feels the meetings should be held every month or two. Administrator O'Hearn asked for volunteers for a subcommittee to put together the structure for this council and to identify some initial issues to be discussed. Mayor Phillips suggested herself and Supervisor Dickens for subcommittee. Supervisor Dickens also suggested Supervisor Stamp to be on subcommittee. Administrator O'Hearn stated he would set up the meeting thru his office to get together. Legislator Fagan suggested that Legislator Gifford should also sit on this subcommittee. Administrator O'Hearn stated that if anyone else would like to be involved to contact his office. Mayor Phillips requested that everyone with an email address add that to the sign in as she feels it is the best way to communicate. Supervisor Stamp questioned as to how you isolate this group from politics. Administrator O'Hearn replied that politics, while sometimes unavoidable should not be influencing this forum. This group should not be mandating to towns and villages on issues, that is not the intended purpose.

#### Public Participation.

Ed Gates questioned if Administrator O'Hearn's office would be providing clerical and technical support. Administrator O'Hearn replied that he would facilitate. Mr. Gates also stated that without the citizen's support you will have a problem. Administrator O'Hearn noted that every meeting will be open and advertised. Jim Landon commented that he thought the Council of Governments is a great way of bringing everyone together. He believes that Schuyler County is not currently working together. This is a great thing. Mr. Landon encouraged the members of the Council of Governments to really put efforts forth to make this a success. Mayor Phillips commented that she would like to see a

different seating arrangement for the next meeting. Administrator O'Hearn concurred and stated that will be arranged. Administrator O'Hearn thanked all for attending and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15.

Council of Governments

September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005

7:00 p.m.

RUC Auditorium

Present: Tim O'Hearn, Frank Ganung, Ben Dickens, Dennis Fagan, Cedric Stewart, Judy Phillips, Phil Davis, Tom Gifford, Wayne Chapman (Town of Catharine), Gayle Sedlack

Tim O'Hearn asked for round the table introductions followed by audience introductions. Prior to discussing agenda items, Supervisor Reed of the Town of Cayuta advised the Council of the Cayuta Board decision not to participate in the COG, due largely to a concern for loss of local control and the fear of the Council usurping the Town Board's authority. Supervisor Reed was assured by O'Hearn that this was not the intent of the COG, and that in addition to the adopted by-laws prohibiting it, this was also addressed in the Home Rule provisions of the State Constitution. It was again emphasized that the COG is an advisory body and resolutions are non-binding. The COG is designed to be a resource and forum to promote collaboration and sharing of ideas and resources. Mr. Reed thanked the group for their time and indicated that Cayuta may further discuss this issue in the future. Mr. Reed then excused himself from the meeting.

O'Hearn opened the agenda by asking if there were any questions or additions to the minutes from the August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. There were none. A motion was made by Supervisor Dickens and seconded by Supervisor Ganung to accept the minutes from the August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Motion carried unanimously. It was unanimously decided that due to the number of council members absent that election of officers and steering committee members would be tabled until next meeting. O'Hearn then introduced Linda Compton, Schuyler County Clerk. Linda explained in detail the mortgage tax distribution formula. Next O'Hearn introduced Margaret Starbuck, Schuyler County Treasurer, to clarify the sales tax distribution formula. Following a brief question and answer period O'Hearn introduced Beverly Morely, Town of Hector Assessor, Randy Deal, Towns of Catharine, Dix, Montour, and Reading Assessor and Thomas Bloodgood, Schuyler County Real Property Tax Director. The assessors spoke to the possibility of a county wide reevaluation. Their concern and subsequent recommendation come as a result of falling equalization rates in many parts of the county. In some cases this is driven by rapid growth and increased home sales, but it is the conclusion of the local assessors that property assessments are not keeping pace with the escalating property values throughout the county. Ms. Morely and Mr. Deal indicated that they were speaking on behalf of the Assessors Association and not the County. Should a reevaluation occur, the County would be used for technical support and as a resource only. There was lengthy discussion on the matter and there was a general acknowledgement of the issues facing the assessors as well as the impact on the local municipalities. The council decided as a whole that they would like to further explore the possibilities of said reevaluation if the assessors were willing to put together a presentation to be shared with council and individual town boards in the future. Supervisor Dickens offered himself as a resource to the assessors. O'Hearn wrapped up the meeting by stating that Peter Krog and Associates have delivered a draft review submission regarding the proposed hotel/conference center for final review and approval at the DEC level. Meeting Adjourned 9:15 p.m.

Council of Governments

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Village of Watkins Glen

Present: Tim O'Hearn, Dennis Fagan, Judy Phillips, Tom Gifford, Jim Frame, Dale Walter, Charles Franzese, Roy Craver, David Scott, Harvey Bishop, Tom Brace

County Administrator O'Hearn opened the meeting with round the table introductions. Newly elected Town Supervisors Franzese, Scott, and Bishop were welcomed by the group. The first order of business was review of the September 21<sup>st</sup> minutes. O'Hearn asked if there were any questions or additions. There were none. A motion was made by Legislator Fagan and seconded by Legislator Gifford to accept the minutes from the August 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Motion carried unanimously. A discussion concerning the by-laws and revisions thereof was held. (Proposed bylaws amendments attached, changes noted in bold italics) Next O'Hearn asked for nominations for President. Legislator Gifford nominated Dale Walter and Mayor Philips seconded the nomination. O'Hearn then asked for nominations for Vice-President and Mayor Phillips nominated Supervisor Dickens and Legislator Fagan Seconded the nomination. Both motions were passed unanimously. No nominations were made for the position of Secretary therefore O'Hearn agreed to occupy that office. It was agreed by the attending members of the Council to select the Steering Committee at the organizational meeting. The organizational meeting will be held on January 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm in the Legislative chambers at the County Building. As a follow-up to past discussions regarding implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), a draft Inter-municipal Agreement for Charge Back of Election Expenses was distributed and discussion was held on the same. O'Hearn asked that the draft agreement be reviewed for content and that any immediate concerns be voiced. There were no immediate concerns therefore it was asked that the members review at their convenience and contact the County Administrator's office with any questions or concerns. O'Hearn expressed the County's desire to have these agreements executed no later than March of 2006. It was at this time that newly elected President Walter assumed his role as President and facilitated the rest of the meeting. As part of the HAVA update, a discussion was held on the consolidation of certain town polling places. It was O'Hearn's recommendation that those Town's contemplating consolidation contact the County Election Commissioners. Legislator Fagan moved that the issues of 1) County wide assessment and revaluation and 2) uniform code enforcement, be the primary issues addressed by this council in 2006. In closing President Walter expressed his enthusiasm for the opportunities presented by the Council of Governments as a forum to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. He also encouraged the attending members to contact those absent prior to the January organizational meeting to ensure full attendance. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.