

General Services Committee
November 28, 2023
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair James Nabywaniec, Legislators Philip Reed, Daniel McBride, John Peck, Jeremiah Maxon, Robert Ferris, Corey Grant, Chairman of the Board William Johnson

Others Present: Legislators Robert Cantwell, Patrick Jareo, Frances Calarco, Steel Potter, Anthony Doldo, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Sarah Baldwin, Planning Director Michael Bourcy, Highway Superintendent James Lawrence, Fire and Emergency Management Director Joseph Plummer, Airport Director Grant Sussey, Sheriff Peter Barnett, Undersheriff Kristopher Spencer, Probation Director Kristine Maloney, Interim Executive Director of Zoo NY Mark Irwin, JCC Assistant Professor Larry Danforth, JCC Director of Center for Community Studies, Assistant Professor Andrew Draper, WWNY TV7 Reporter Sandy Torres, Secretary Torri Richmire

Chairman Nabywaniec called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He offered privilege of the floor, however no one present wished to address the Committee. The minutes of the October Committee meeting were approved as presented.

Interim Executive Director of Zoo New York Dr. Mark Irwin addressed the Committee stating that they have been having financial issues at the zoo and upon completion of a budget projection for 2024, it was determined that they are not on track to be fiscally solvent. He stated that staff have been reduced to zoo keepers, one maintenance person, a part-time bookkeeper and himself volunteering to be the interim executive director to keep things on track. He wanted to assure the Committee that their priority is making sure that the animals are being taken care of.

He advised that the City of Watertown has offered support through the austerity budget to get them to May 2024 and stated that they don't have an opening date at this time but do plan to be a part of the Eclipse in April. They have received phone calls regarding membership at the zoo and those memberships will be extended at the time that the zoo reopens. He stated that a Blue Ribbon Panel has been formed by the City of Watertown, appointed by the Mayor, existing of community members to come up with long term solutions for how the zoo can be funded and operated. They propose three models for the future, The City of Watertown can either close the zoo, operate it or the Conservancy could continue to operate the zoo under a management contract with set milestones.

Dr. Irwin stated that they will be having Winter Wonder Lights Friday and Saturday nights throughout the month of December at the zoo with free admission to members and \$7 admission for non-members. They will also be launching a fundraising campaign prior to years end so that it is tax deductible for those donating.

JCC Assistant Professor Larry Danforth presented results of a survey conducted by Jefferson

Community College Center for Community Studies on behalf of Zoo New York. He stated that they collected data in October 2023 from 571 county residents of which approximately 150 were city residents and 400 non city residents. Interviews were conducted via telephone, email and face to face on Fort Drum. The purpose of the study was to determine levels of support and opposition of Thompson Park and Zoo New York. Results of the survey were:

- Half of those surveyed had visited Thompson Park and only a third had visited the Zoo in the past 12 months.
- Approximately 77% were in support of local government financially supporting the Zoo at an amount closer to the national average and for Jefferson County to contribute more for operating costs and make improvements.
- They were then given three options for changing the local contribution by Jefferson County property owners and residents to allow the zoo to remain open:
 1. \$15 annually per \$100,000 assessed value, 57% were in support.
 2. \$25 annually per \$100,000 assessed value and provide free admission to Jefferson County residents, 50% were in support.
 3. \$35 annually per \$100,000 assessed value and provide free admission to Jefferson County residents, 47% were in support.
- Raising Bed Tax (or hotel tax) and using some of this to support the Zoo, 66% were in support.
- Raising Sales Tax and using some of this to support the Zoo, 39% were in support
- They were given two options for the future of the Zoo, with option one receiving overwhelming support.
 1. Finding a solution that involves increased government support to keep the Zoo running and growing.
 2. Close the Zoo.

In response to a question from Legislator Maxon, Dr. Irwin stated that 38,000 people visited the Zoo last year and 35,000 this year. Legislator Jareo questioned the population of cities with zoos that were used in comparison, Dr. Irwin stated that they had approximately 200,000-300,000 residents. Mr. Jareo pointed out that Jefferson County has approximately 115,000, which is half to three times the population used for the study. He stated that changes the numbers for taxation per capita of property value.

Dr. Irwin stated that currently the Zoo's bare bones budget is \$900,000, revenues received are a grant for \$66,000 from New York State that every zoo receives, approximately 30% from gift shop and ticket sales, 30% government funding and the remainder is donations and sponsorship etc.

Legislator Reed advised that he is against raising or using bed tax money to fund the zoo as it has generally been utilized for promotional purposes and to use for other reasons would open the door for others to ask for a portion as well. Legislator Jareo stated that he is also against using bed tax to fund an enterprise, it would affect tourism, hotel business etc.

Chairman Nabywaniec thanked Dr. Irwin and Mr. Danforth for the update and review of the survey.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement with McFarland Johnson, Inc. in Relation to the Watertown International Airport Fuel Farm Project and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Ferris. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to the District Attorney's Department and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Ferris. There being no further discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Recognizing Increased Funding for State Aid to Prosecution, Establishing a Senior Assistant District Attorney Position and Amending 2024 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Grant. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement in Relation to the FY2023 New York State Public Safety Answering Points Operations Grant and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Ferris. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement in Relation to the FY2023 New York State Interoperable Communications Formula Grant and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Peck and seconded by Legislator McBride. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement and Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to the FY23 State Homeland Security Program Grant and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Ferris. In response to a question from Legislator Maxon, Fire and Emergency Management Director Joseph Plummer advised that both his office and Public Health are required to have a preparedness plan. This grant will be used for creation of an application with a dozen widgets within it, such as a weather application that will be connected to the National Weather Service, general citizen preparedness information and will also be dovetailed with fire departments with a widget that will allow fire chiefs to request additional assistance as needed. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to the County Road Machinery Fund and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Maxon and seconded by Legislator Peck. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to the County Road Fund and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly

made by Legislator McBride and seconded by Legislator Reed. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to Recycling & Waste Management and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator Grant. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Accepting Grant for Ignition Interlock Device Monitoring Program Funding and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator McBride. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement with Securus Technologies, Inc. for Alcohol Monitoring Services to the Probation Department and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator Grant. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement with Rubenzahl, Knudsen & Associates for the Provision of Psychological Testing, Evaluation and Recommendations for Treatment of JDs, PINS at Risk of Out of Home Placement, and Adult Sexual Offenders and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator McBride. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing an Agreement with Credo Community Center for the Provision of Court Ordered Evaluations, Assessments, Treatment and Counseling and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator Peck. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Amending the 2023 County Budget to Recognize Insurance Recovery and Allocating Same in Sheriff's Department Budget and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Peck and seconded by Legislator McBride. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement and Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation to the State FY23 State Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program Grant and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator Grant. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing FY2023 Operation Stonegarden Grant Agreement and Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Peck and seconded by Legislator

Ferris. In response to a question from Legislator Jareo, Sheriff Barnett stated that \$40,000 of the grant would be used to purchase license plate readers for installation on existing vehicles. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Recognizing NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Committee Child Passenger Safety Program Grant and Amending the 2023 County Budget in Relation Thereto and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Peck and seconded by Legislator Grant. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

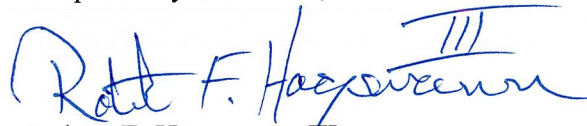
Chairman Nabywaniec introduced a resolution Authorizing Agreement with the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services (Distribution #14) and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ferris and seconded by Legislator McBride. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Nabywaniec stated that this being the last meeting of the year he wanted to highlight accomplishments spearheaded by this committee during the two year term.

- **Sheriff's Department** - Outsourcing of medical staff and purchase of body cameras.
- **Highway Department** - Massive investment in road improvements utilizing American Rescue Plan Act funds and plans are in place for a new Highway Office Building.
- **Recycling and Waste Management** - New weigh station building, new scales and baler.
- **Airport** - New Air Methods building and award of a grant for construction of a new terminal building.
- **Probation** - Upgrade their fleet of vehicles.
- **Dog Control** - New director and the establishment of an adhoc committee to implement new NYS regulations coming in 2025.

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Maxon seconded by Legislator Ferris and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board