WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: DECEMBER 15, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:		**OTHERS PRESENT:**	
SUPERVISORS	GERAGHTY	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD	
	BELDEN	PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY	
	O'CONNOR	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD	
	CHAMPAGNE	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES	
	KENNY	RICK MURPHY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF FISCAL SERVICES	
	SHEEHAN	SUPERVISORS	BENTLEY
	MERLINO		GIRARD
	TAYLOR		PITKIN
	STEC		SOKOL
			STRAINER
			TESSIER
			THOMAS
			VANNESS
		DAVE CEDERSTROM, *THE CHRONICLE*	
		DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*	
		AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST	
		PLEASE SEE THE SIGN-IN SHEET FOR ALL OTHER MEETING ATTENDEES	

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior Committee meeting, subject to approval by the Clerk of the Board.

Copies of the agenda were distributed to the Committee members, a copy of which is also on file with the minutes.

Mr. Geraghty apprised that subsequent to the negative feedback received at the public hearing held on the evening of December 10, 2009 at the Special Board Meeting to discuss the proposed 1% sales tax increase, he had forwarded an email to all Department Heads requesting additional reductions of 3% to each Departmental Budget. He noted that the agenda included a spreadsheet entitled "2010 Budget - Changes", which outlined all of the budget reductions offered, as well as a number of emails from Department Heads respective to the matter.

Mr. Taylor questioned if all of the changes suggested in the spreadsheet were new budget reduction ideas and Mr. Geraghty replied affirmatively, adding that all of the items presented totaled a $387,359 net reduction to the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Geraghty gave the Committee members the opportunity to review the details of the 2010 Budget - Changes spreadsheet and then proceeded to poll each of the Committee members, as well as the other Supervisors present, for further budget reductions ideas.

Mr. Belden suggested that they consider the sale of the County's interest in the Gaslight Village Property as a means to reduce the budget. He said that it appeared sewer and other improvements would be required in connection with the property which would exceed the income generated through the parking fees collected. Mr. Belden stated that in the past there had been some interest by the 3E's (Environmental Groups) to purchase the County's portion of the property and he felt they should pursue the option to sell. Mr. Geraghty responded that the sale of the County's portion of the Gaslight Village Property would not help to reduce the 2010 Budget; however, any proceeds received from the sale could be used to replenish the Surplus Fund. Chairman Monroe agreed that if the property was sold, the proceeds would be placed in the Surplus Fund; however, he said, it was not wise to include any anticipated revenues from the sale based on the assumption that the 3E's were willing to purchase the property.

Mr. Kenny said he advocated the projects proposed for the Gaslight Village Property as he felt the potential existed to return significantly more revenue to the County than the amount invested. However, he added, he was concerned with where the funds would be found to make the necessary improvements to the property so that it could be used. Mr. Kenny stated that he felt a substantial investment would be required to upgrade the property while they were trying to reduce spending. Therefore, he noted, if a vote was taken on the issue, he would have to join the group in favor of selling the property.

Paul Dusek, County Attorney, entered the meeting at 9:09 a.m.

Mr. Geraghty advised that a budget had yet to be developed outlining the prospective maintenance costs associated with the Gaslight Village Property and until one was established, he did not think any members of the Board of Supervisors were in favor of proceeding with developments on the property.

Mr. Dusek apprised that the purchase price of the Gaslight Village Property was being bonded by the County and he did not know if those bonds were callable, which would allow them to be paid back before the specified bonding term expired. Frank O'Keefe, County Treasurer, advised that he too was unsure whether the bonds were callable and noted that there was some question as to whether or not the bond would be taxable. Mr. Dusek apprised that the taxable nature of the bond was in question due to the proposed uses of the Gaslight Village Property. He added that in light of these bonding issues, if there was some inclination on the part of the Board of Supervisors to sell the Property, the matter should be addressed rather quickly.

Mr. Taylor said he agreed with the initiative to sell the Gaslight Village Property and felt that the sale could be incorporated into future plans to maintain a reasonable budget and restore the Surplus Fund balance. He advised that he did not have any specific items to propose for budget reductions, but suggested that the contracts be revisited to determine whether additional reductions could be made. Mr. Taylor noted that $50,000 in County funding had initially been removed from the contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), but had subsequently been restored by the Budget Officer. He stated that although he felt CCE offered valuable programs to the public, he felt that the County funding offered should be reduced. Mr. Taylor concluded by announcing his feeling that the Budget Committee should continue to review the budget for further reductions and should not adjourn until they had developed an acceptable budget for presentation at the December 18th Board meeting.

Respective to the sale of the Gaslight Village Property, Mr. O'Connor questioned whether there was any guarantee that the County would receive financial compensation for the property if they were to sell it to the 3E's. Mr. Geraghty replied that in prior meetings there had been comments made indicating that the 3E's were willing to purchase the County's share of the property; however, he said, a purchase price had not been discussed. Mr. O'Connor noted that the 3E's were primarily supported by Federal funding and since the Federal and State Governments were facing budgetary constraints similar to those faced by the County, he did not know if it was likely that any funds promised for the purchase would be realized. He added that in his opinion the Gaslight Village Property was a place where tourism would flourish in years to come and unless the County was guaranteed compensation for the property, he was not willing to support the sale. That being said, Mr. O'Connor apprised that he had no budget reduction suggestions to present. Chairman Monroe stated that to his knowledge, only one comment respective to the purchase of the County's share of the Gaslight Village Property had been made and that was by Peter Bauer, Executive Director of the Fund for Lake George, who later indicated that he did not have the approval of the Fund to officially make any suggestion regarding the purchase. Therefore, he added, he did not know whether there was any real willingness on the 3E's part to purchase the property.

Mr. Stec said he was very pleased with the efforts made by the Department Heads in further reducing their budgets. He noted that during the last meeting of the Budget Committee he had raised a few issues to be addressed, such as the lack of collections of DWI fines and the prospect of closing the Countryside Adult Home, and he reiterated his previous statements that a procedure should be implemented to capture the outstanding DWI fines and ensure that they were collected in a timely manner for the future. Mr. Stec then stated that a large portion of the 2010 Budget was dedicated to overtime and part-time salary costs and he proposed a decrease in overtime for all Departments with a specific percentage decrease amount to be determined by the Committee. He said he applauded the PBA (Police Benevolent Association) for offering temporary reductions in their labor contract with the County to address the current economic climate. Mr. Stec added that County officials had also met with representatives of the other two employee unions, one of which they were still negotiating with, while the other had declined any changes in their labor agreements. Despite the efforts made by the PBA, he said that salary expenses continued to present a problem for the County and he advised that the only solution would be a third round of position reductions which would include no less than 10 to 15 positions. Mr. Stec noted that the specific positions could not be identified currently and the issue should be discussed between the Committee and the Department Heads to make those determinations.

Mr. Kenny stated that he foresaw this meeting as the last chance to adjust the 2010 Budget before it was adopted and this had led him to prepare a listing of suggestions for further budget reductions. He added that some of the items were modifications of suggestions presented and rejected in the past and that all would be painful cuts for the County. Mr. Kenny proceeded to present his list of suggestions as follows:

1. $25,000 reduction in funding to CCE;
2. $35,000 reduction in funding to the EDC (Economic Development Corporation);
3. Elimination of the Director of Parks, Recreation & Railroad position. Mr. Kenny noted that the position elimination would save the County $67,000 in salary costs and the duties of the Director could be shared by the remaining Foremen;
4. Sale of one of the boats previously used by the Sheriff's Boat Patrol. Mr. Kenny noted that it was no longer necessary to retain all of the boats as the Boat Patrol was no longer in operation. Bud York, Warren County Sheriff, noted that four boats were used by the Boat Patrol, two of which were used on Lake George;
5. Reduction in staffing of the Board of Elections Office to two full-time Commissioners and two part-time Deputy Commissioners. Mr. Kenny stated that he was unsure whether this reduction could legally be made but noted that the change would net a savings of $39,000 in salary costs to the County;
6. Reduction of one full-time Naturalist position at Up Yonda to part-time. Mr. Kenny advised that there were currently two full-time Naturalists and one full-time Education Administrator on staff at Up Yonda and the reduction of one Naturalist position to part-time would lead to a $17,500 savings to the County;
7. Reduction of one County Coroner position. Mr. Kenny advised that the County currently funded the staffing of four Coroners and he questioned whether this number was mandated or if it could be reduced by one position. Mr. Dusek replied that he was unsure whether the number was mandated and would have to review the matter before making an advisement. Mr. Kenny said that the current

cost to the County was $7,500 per position and this amount could be saved by reducing one position;

8. Reduction of $50,000 in the .4 Codes for both the Sheriff's Law Enforcement and Corrections Divisions. Mr. Kenny said that he had reviewed both sections of the Sheriff's Budget and found that there was a considerable amount of funding included under the .4 section, which included supplies, uniforms, foods and other such items, with $1.4 million in the Law Enforcement and $1.2 million in the Corrections portion. He noted that he did not feel that a $50,000 reduction in each of the two budgets was unreasonable considering the size of the budgets and would net a $100,000 savings to the County;
9. Elimination of the Airport Manager position. Mr. Kenny questioned the need for an Airport Manager as the FBO (Fixed Base Operator) Rich Air employed a General Manager that could conceivable continue operations at the Airport with the assistance of a working County Foreman, for a savings of $70,000 in salary costs;
10. Elimination of one Cook position from the Corrections Division. Mr. Kenny apprised that the Corrections Division employed three Cooks and one Cook Manager and he questioned whether one of the Cook positions could be eliminated for a savings of $35,000 in salary costs;
11. Reduction in the number of Nurse positions employed by the Public Health Department. Mr. Kenny recited the number of Nursing professionals retained in each portion of the Public Health Budget and noted that although he was aware that typically, most of the positions had some sort of revenue to the County attached. However, he said, he felt the number of Nurses employed by the County might be somewhat superfluous and suggested that the elimination of a couple positions would be sensible, provided that the County would not suffer a loss of attached revenues;
12. Elimination of the Bio-Terrorism positions employed by the Public Health Department. Mr. Kenny said he was amazed that Warren County sustained any type of Bio-Terrorism staff, specifically a Bio-Terrorism Educator with a salary $17,000, and a Bio-Terrorism Liaison with a salary of $21,365, and he suggested eliminations in this area;
13. Reduction in the number of positions funded under the General Mental Health portion of the Budget. Mr. Kenny apprised that the General Mental Health budget included funding for several positions which he outlined for the Committee's benefit and he noted that he felt there was an opportunity for a reductions of positions in this area, as well.

Mr. Pitkin stated that he had no specific ideas for budget reduction but applauded the efforts of the Department Heads in making their recommendations. He said he was concerned that the Committee might make some hasty reductions in personnel which they did not know the full ramifications of yet and he felt they should proceed with caution.

Mr. Thomas proposed a 5% salary reduction for all non-bargaining unit positions, including the Board of Supervisors and all managerial positions. Additionally, he suggested the elimination of all mileage reimbursement and the discontinuance of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

With reference to the closure of the Countryside Adult Home, Mr. Sokol said that the idea had been discussed several times since he began his tenure with the Board of Supervisors and he stated that he supported the movement to close the Home. He noted that there seemed to be some discrepancy with the Countryside budget as he recalled an operating budget of $660,000 for the facility, while the 2010 Budget included a figure of $1.7 million in operational costs, to which Mr. Geraghty replied that the $660,000 figure represented the County's contribution to Countryside and the remainder of the $1.7 million budget was funded by the State. Mr. Sokol stated that although he was aware that the closure of the facility would not be accounted for in the 2010 Budget, he felt that any funds received from its sale could be used to boost the Surplus Fund balance. He apprised that he was in discussions with representatives from NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research & Development Authority) and National Grid to investigate the co-generation facility at the Westmount Nursing Home to ensure that the appropriate energy cost savings were being attained.

Mr. VanNess said he agreed with Mr. Sokol in that it was time to alleviate the County of the financial burden presented by the Countryside Adult Home through privatization of the facility; he added his opinion that the Warren County Airport should also be privatized. He pointed out that if the Airport was sold to another entity, the County would continue to benefit from the positive transportation and tourism aspects of the Airport's presence, but would not suffer the associated operational costs as he did not feel there would be any decrease in the use of the facility if it was operated by an entity other than the County. Mr. VanNess suggested the sale of the Hartford Landfill property as another measure to assist with the lack of Surplus Fund. He said that he understood that the involved Supervisors had been working hard to sell the property or develop alternate uses for it, but he felt it was time to put all efforts behind the sale of the property. Mr. VanNess announced his agreement with Mr. Stec's suggestion to reduce overtime, noting that although overtime costs could not be removed from all Departments, the costs could be removed from the majority of them regardless of the fact that some services would be affected. Finally, Mr. VanNess apprised that over the weekend he had been advised there might be a situation in the Temporary Assistance Programs mandated by the State as the Federal Government mandated certain criteria and costs in association with the Programs and the State then added to these mandates to increase the costs and mandates. He said that as far as he was concerned, he felt the County should change the services provided to meet the mandates instituted by the Government and leave the remaining mandates to be addressed by the State. Mr. VanNess stated that he did not have all of the specific facts available as far as the difference in mandates, but said he had placed calls to the appropriate parties and was awaiting the return of the information requested.

Chairman Monroe said notice had recently been received from the Department of Social Services (DSS) advising that the State would be delaying another $161,000 in funding to the County and there was nothing in the 2010 Budget to address this lack of cash flow. Additionally, he stated it was highly likely that there would be further cuts in reimbursements from the State for 2010 and this was another issue not accounted for in the budget. Chairman Monroe apprised that the County's Financial Advisors and Bond Rating Agencies had advised that the County desperately needed to rebuild the Surplus Fund balance, and again, there was nothing in the proposed 2010 Budget to deal with this issue. In reviewing the proposed budget reductions, he noted that although they would serve to reduce the overall budget increase to 8% from 9.3%, $725,000 in revenues would be lost in the process by reducing positions that included high State reimbursement schedules and he questioned the wisdom of making these reductions. Chairman Monroe reiterated that none of the proposed budget reductions would reduce the budget increase to zero, nor did they address the need to replenish the Surplus Fund balance, nor the reductions in State funding that were likely to occur in the coming year, and he felt that they might be proceeding in a dangerous direction by imposing the proposed reductions. He stated that the only way to rebuild the Surplus Fund, and therefore the financial health of the County, while continuing to provide necessary services to the residents of Warren County, was to develop a realistic plan to rebuild the Surplus Fund and to refrain from making one time cuts to the County budget which affected the revenues received.

As he had announced in the past, Mr. Strainer said he felt that the Trash Plant was a large expenditure for the County which could be reduced by finding a way to encourage more residents to use the Plant, as they were already paying for its operation through their County taxes and he estimated that they were losing up to $3 million annually due to lack of use. Secondly, he noted that the County was losing revenues for license renewal fees when residents failed to renew at Warren County DMV locations. Mr. Strainer apprised that the County retained 11% of the renewal fees for any licenses renewed by residents at Warren County DMV locations and the associated revenues could be increased by encouraging residents to use County locations, without incurring any additional cost to the resident. Thirdly, Mr. Strainer suggested that the Committee review all maintenance contracts to determine whether they were actually necessary. He said that they should look into what the contracts were for and if they were actually being used, as possible cost reductions could be made in these areas.

Mr. Tessier said he agreed with Chairman Monroe in that there was nothing in the 2010 Budget which addressed the impending financial problems of the County which would be caused by the lack of Surplus Funds and decreased State funding. He added that he was opposed to any further layoffs, and noted that he did not see any concessions made in the 2010 Budget to address the unemployment costs to be incurred in 2010 which would equal 55% of the salary for each of the employees who had been subject to layoffs. Mr. Tessier said that further position reductions would put the safety of County residents in jeopardy by not having appropriate staffing to care for the County's highway infrastructure or to provide adequate law enforcement services. He agreed that there were additional cuts that could be made in the future, but he did not feel they could be made wisely in the very short amount of time left before the Budget had to be adopted.

Mr. Girard stated his feeling that the budget reduction process had been very functional to date as they had started the review earlier and when it was determined that position reductions had been deemed necessary, decisions had been made to do so in such a manner that structured the unemployment costs as best as possible. He added that the Department Heads had also been very helpful in the budget reduction process by offering reduction ideas and other savings measures. Mr. Girard said that he felt they should continue to run the County as if it were a business and make reductions sensibly and not without considering the repercussions of each. He advised that for every action there was a reaction and the County would feel the reactionary effects of the reductions made, some of which would have a monetary value attached that would require some action to rectify. Mr. Girard stated that although he felt the actions taken so far had been necessary and appropriately addressed, he said that reductions should not be made hastily and they should take the next year to look at all of the cuts addressed and continue to make reductions in an effective business manner to ensure that they would not make any reductions that would adversely effect the operations of the County. He noted that it was very important to consider not just the numbers associated with the primary budget cuts, but also the services and revenues lost when making reductions. Mr. Girard stated that he was opposed to any further reductions but was a proponent of further dialogue to review the operations of the County and opportunities for future reductions.

Mr. Bentley said he agreed with the statements made by Chairman Monroe and Mr. Girard. He added that he did not feel it was wise to cut positions and programs just to save a specific dollar amount when they were affecting the lives of both employees and residents.

Mr. Geraghty stated his belief that if the State intended to cease funding mandated programs, he felt that it was appropriate to take dramatic steps to discontinue those programs, regardless of the casualties involved, as the County did not have the funding available to continue support of unfunded mandates. He said that he agreed with Chairman Monroe's indication that the 2010 Budget would not alleviate the financial issues faced by the County and that the situation might actually worsen. Mr. Geraghty advised that he was not opposed to further position reductions but agreed with Mr. Pitkin's assessment that a thorough review should be performed before making them to determine what the results might be. He said the Department Heads had done a very good job of assisting with the budget reduction process and although some felt that County business would not function as well with reduced staffing, he did not agree and noted that in the private sector, where he had worked previously, job cuts during tough economic time were common and they just had to pull together to get the necessary work done during these difficult times. Mr. Geraghty concluded that the message to County taxpayers should not be that programs would suffer through reductions in staffing, but rather that they would not be affected as he felt they could provide the same level of service with less personnel.

In response to Mr. Geraghty's comment regarding the elimination of services and positions commensurate with reductions in State funding, Sheila Weaver, DSS Commissioner, said she was recently apprised by the New York State Governor's Office that they would be reducing Child Welfare funding beginning in the current month. She noted that the Child Welfare Division included foster care, preventive and child protective services divisions and reducing or eliminating those programs would be hurting the most vulnerable portion of the County's population, those being the children. Ms. Weaver stated that the DSS had already cut $279,000 in contracts which provided children's programs and she felt it was unfair to reduce services any further as they were jeopardizing the children's welfare. Mr. Geraghty responded that the State was the party cutting funding to these programs, not Warren County, and although the items could be left in the Budget and full staffing could be retained a clear message had been given by the taxpayers who spoke at the December 10th Board meeting to cut costs and reduce the 2010 Budget. He added that if the programs continued without State funding, the increased costs would be passed onto the taxpayers through increased property taxes. Ms. Weaver stated that if the Committee desired to keep the children of Warren County safe, reductions in funding to the Child Welfare division were not appropriate.

Mr. Merlino pointed out a $295,000 reduction in funding to a DSS Daycare program which received 100% reimbursement and he questioned if it was sensible to make such reductions as families would be forced to find these services elsewhere. Ms. Weaver replied that this funding had been offered for budget reductions as they had been unable to spend all of the State funding allocated and were facing an impending reduction in funding for this reason. She added that services were now being provided to everyone seeking them and that the demand for such services had decreased commensurate with the increasing unemployment rate.

Respective to taxpayer feedback given at the recent Board meeting, Mr. Merlino stated that he was a proponent of the sales tax increase as a means to restore the Surplus Fund and alleviate the budget situation. He said he found it unbelievable that the negative feedback received from the 25 speakers present at the meeting opposing the sales tax increase was being applied for all 67,000 residents of Warren County. Mr. O'Connor said he did not think any of the citizens who spoke at the Board meeting were in favor of a child being harmed as a result of reduced protective services for children. He stated that he would prefer to see decreases in maintenance services, rather than reductions in programs that were in place to protect lives.

Mr. Taylor said he did not feel that reaching a 0% property tax increase was realistic and noted that a 4% increase might be acceptable. He reminded the Committee members of a taxpayer suggestion made at the last Board meeting that out-of-State season visitors that used their boats in the area during the summer months be required to register their water crafts in Warren County; he added that although he was not sure if this idea was feasible, or how much income it could generate, it was a valid suggestion that deserved consideration. Mr. Taylor then stated that regardless of whether or not the sales tax increase was implemented, he did not think the County's budgetary situation could have been improved without making budget reductions. He then questioned the bonding terms for the computers recently purchased for the new Human Services Building (HSB), noting that he did not feel it was appropriate to bond equipment with a three to five year useful life for the full 20 year bond term.

Mr. O'Keefe replied that a schedule had been developed to include each of the items being purchased under the HSB bond with the payment terms of each item being no longer than the determined useful life for each specific item. Respective to the Gaslight Village Property, he noted that if the purchase price for the property was removed from the bond it would leave a $400,000 gap in the 2010 Budget. He said that if the Board decided to sell the property, he would suggest that the purchase price be left in the bond to spread the $400,000 cost over a number of years. Mr. O'Keefe reminded the Committee that his Office had cautioned them in the past with respect to his projection that approximately $4 million in property taxes would go unpaid for 2010. He noted that they expected to receive approximately $2 million in payments for 2008 and 2009 property taxes; however, he said, there was no provision in the 2010 Budget to address the lack of payments for the remaining $2 million and there was no funding available in the Surplus Fund to compensate the deficit. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the 2010 Budget prepared would be insufficient to meet the financial demands of the County for the entire year.

Mr. Kenny said that during the public hearing portion of the December 10th Special Board meeting 25 people had spoken, representing a broad cross-section of the County and only one of the speakers had been in favor of the sales tax increase. He stated it was his interpretation of the comments made that the public would prefer to see a reduction in services rather than increases in either property or sales tax, although in subsequent conversations he discovered that other Supervisors had not received the same message. Mr. Kenny advised that another matter that needed to be revisited by the Committee was the sales tax issue and he noted that he was adamantly opposed to including any proceeds from the proposed sales tax increase in the 2010 Budget as he felt this procedure would be fraught with trouble. He added that the County's Legislative representatives had hesitantly agreed to move forward with the sales tax increase, although he felt they were not completely supportive of the action; however, he said, although sales tax increases had historically received final approval on the State level, these were uncertain times and it was not guaranteed that the approval would be received. Mr. Kenny said that even if the increase was approved, he was not sure whether the Supervisors being appointed in 2010 would be in support. He concluded that these issues only reinforced his belief that revenues associated with an increased sales tax rate should not be included in the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Merlino stated that while he was a proponent of the sales tax increase, he was also in favor of sensible budget reductions and in increased measures to ensure that all Departmental budgets, and the overall County Budget, were managed appropriately and effectively.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Stec and carried by majority vote to recommend that no proceeds from the proposed sales tax increase be included in the 2010 Budget with Messrs. Geraghty, Merlino, O'Connor and Sheehan voting in opposition, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Returning to the issue of reduction in State funding for mandated programs, Mr. Kenny stated that although he agreed reductions should be made in mandated programs affected by decreased State funding, he did not agree with reductions in programs involving child protective services, but noted that there were State mandated programs that could be eliminated or reduced. Mr. Stec agreed with these comments and added that efforts should be made to push for mandate relief at the State level. He noted that the last State review of mandated programs had been performed almost 30 years ago and since then the mandates had increased. Mr. Stec said he felt that it was time to seek out some relief for these costs and he assumed that there must be other Counties within the State in similar financial distress who were also seeking relief that might join with Warren County in this cause.

Mr. Pitkin noted that in the past the County Attorney's Office had been asked to research the possibility of establishing a class action suit incorporating other Counties against the State regarding mandated programs and he questioned the status of this research. Mr. Dusek apprised that the matter had been researched and it was found that past efforts by another County to enter into a class action suit were unsuccessful; however, he noted, in speaking with other County Attorneys on the matter, the feeling was mutual that if a legal way to pursue this avenue could be found, there were a number of Counties willing to join the effort. He explained that the problem with suing the State was that under law, the County was viewed as an arm of the State, allowing the State to do whatever they wanted to with the County, even going so far as to abolish it if they so chose. Mr. Dusek further explained that since the State essential "owned" the County, the County could not sue the State. He noted that there were exceptions to this rule which allowed for litigation, for instance if the State was not following a law, but as a general rule litigation was not an option. Mr. Dusek stated that the Court system was convinced that the Counties had no power against the State and for this reason traditionally did not rule in their favor. He concluded that he had not given up the search for a particular mandate that fits within the criteria that would allow a County to sue the State, but noted that he had found nothing so far. Chairman Monroe interjected that he believed there was an exception to this rule which allowed a County to sue the State if the State was trying to force the County to do something unconstitutional and Mr. Dusek replied that this was correct.

Mr. VanNess apprised that he had spoken with representatives of the Washington County Board of Supervisors and had found that they had implemented a two-day mandatory furlough program for all employees, including Department Heads and elected officials, and had included the associated savings in their 2010 Budget. He cautioned the Committee that the same steps had been taken by Albany County to implement a mandatory furlough program; however, he noted, a grievance and lawsuit had subsequently been filed leading Albany County to repeal their mandatory furlough program to avoid incurring litigation costs. Mr. Dusek interjected that he was unsure of the exact reasons for the repealing of Albany County's mandatory furlough program, but explained it was his understanding that the program had been introduced as an act of the Albany County Executive which the State Legislature had subsequently vetoed. He added that he was unsure whether the program had been cancelled in response to the threat of a lawsuit or by the discretion of the State Legislature. Mr. Dusek stated that a furlough lawsuit had occurred in connection with a municipality in the State of Maryland wherein the District Court finding had ruled against the municipality and they were now facing a deficit of around $1 million. He concluded that implementing a mandatory furlough program was very risky under the current state of the Law. Mr. VanNess stated that his reason for introducing the matter had been to indicate that it was a bad decision to implement such a program, based on the results of municipalities that had attempted to do the same.

James Seeley, CCE Executive Director, addressed the Committing respective to additional reductions proposed for CCE. He advised that for the past 93 years Warren County had supported CCE programs. Mr. Seeley said that currently, CCE funding had been reduced by 35% which they felt was disproportionate to reductions in Warren County funding to other agencies. He said that a 50% reduction in funding could conceivably close the CCE Office. Mr. Seeley apprised that CCE's educational services were needed during the current state of the failing economy more than ever and they had been working hard all year to reach a fair allocation and additional reductions would negate these efforts. He said that additional program funding reductions to CCE would make a small difference in the County Budget but would greatly affect the CCE programs offered. Mr. Seeley implored the Budget Committee to reconsider any movement to further reduce CCE program funding, based on the effects they would have on the 17,500 residents assisted by these programs during the past year.

Mr. Thomas proposed that more of the sales tax collected from the Towns be retained by Warren County to assist with the budget crisis. Chairman Monroe pointed out that this action would greatly impact all of the Town budgets which had already been adopted by each. Mr. Thomas responded that he had more control over the budget for the Town of Stony Creek than the County Budget and felt the reduction in the Town budget was preferable.

Brenda Brown-Hayes, Director of Countryside Adult Home, addressed the Committee regarding the prospective closure of the Countryside Adult Home. She noted that although she had mixed emotions about the closure of the facility as an employee, she felt it was important to point out that the State was very adamant about the steps that would have to be taken in order to close the facility. Mrs. Hayes apprised that if the decision was made to close the facility, it would take 120 days to complete the process during which the County would have to secure adequate housing for each of the 42 people residing at Countryside Adult Home. She said that because it would take four months to close the facility and there would be resulting unemployment costs for the 28 employees working at Countryside, the elimination of the facility would not save funds in the 2010 Budget; however, she added, she was in agreement that reductions should be made in other budgetary areas in order to save programs that assisted children.

Mr. Geraghty announced that they would return to the suggestions for budget reductions made by each Committee member to determine which were appropriate for the 2010 Budget, the first of which was to sell the County's interest in the Gaslight Village Property. Mr. Kenny stated that he felt the projects proposed for the property were worthy and would eventually return profits to the County; however, he added, the County simply did not have the funding available to support the associated improvement and maintenance costs. Mr. Belden reintroduced his earlier apprisal that sewer improvements were necessary for the property and he noted that the County would be responsible for the maintenance costs for all 14 acres of the property. He added that he did not feel it was appropriate to retain the property, and fund the associated maintenance costs, while they were considering further employee layoffs to balance the 2010 Budget. Mr. Kenny questioned whether the County would be limited to selling the property to the 3E's or if the property could be marketed for general real estate sale. Mr. Dusek responded that the environmental easement attached to the property limited what could be done on the property; therefore, he said, he was unsure as to how marketable the property would be, noting that it may only be valuable to the 3E's or the Town and Village of Lake George. Mr. Taylor pointed out that the County had a history of involving itself in projects that required a lot of work, such as the Train Stations, and he feared that the Gaslight Village Project might be following this path. Chairman Monroe pointed out that the property had the potential to considerably increase revenues to the County and could attract grant funding for improvements if a plan was developed for its future use. He said that while he understood the desire to remove the County's interest, and associated expenses from the project, he felt if they were able to retain the property through these difficult times, they would benefit from the potential earnings to be gained in the future. Mr. Pitkin said that he agreed with Mr. Taylor's statements and added his feeling that the County was in dire straits and could not afford to continue its involvement in the Gaslight Village Project.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried by majority vote to proceed in selling the County's interest in the Gaslight Village property, with Messrs. Champagne, O'Connor and Sheehan voting in opposition, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Mr. Geraghty said that the next item to be discussed was further reductions in funding to CCE and Mr. Kenny proposed a $25,000 reduction in funding to CCE. Speaking as Chairman of the Extension Services Committee, Mr. Girard noted that CCE had struggled to prepare a budget commensurate with the reduced funding determined by the Budget Committee and that further reductions would prove traumatic to their organization. He suggested that they leave the CCE budget as it was to determine whether they could function on the reduced funding granted and refrain from making any further reductions. Mr. Thomas agreed and noted that if there were more CCE programs available he felt there would be a decreased demand for DSS benefits.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Taylor to reduce the CCE budget by an additional $25,000 and the motion failed with Messrs. Belden, Champagne, Geraghty, Merlino, O'Connor and Sheehan voting in opposition.

Mr. Geraghty noted that Mr. Champagne had prepared a listing of alternative measures for budget reductions and he asked him to present them for the Committee's consideration. Mr. Champagne began by questioning the amount of revenue projected in connection with the production of electricity at the Burn Plant and Mr. Geraghty responded that a revenue figure had not been included in the 2010 Budget; he added that they had been directed to include a $2.9 million shortfall for the facility, but he hoped that figure could be reduced. Mr. Champagne agreed that the figure should be reduced and he noted that a suggestion had been made that the projected revenue for electricity generation could be increased to something higher than the base number of $.06 per hour. He concluded that he felt the projected shortfall could be reduced by assuming that the facility would generate more electricity than predicted. Chairman Monroe interjected that this was a volatile situation as the County received either $.06 per hour or the avoided cost, whichever was least, with each cent equating to $1 million to the County. He noted that in 2008 when energy costs were high, the County had budgeted commensurately for 2009 which was a mistake as the energy costs had decreased below the $.06 base. Chairman Monroe added that he thought it would be as big a mistake to count on increased energy revenues in 2010 based on predictions as it would further increase the deficit if these predictions were not realized. Mr. Champagne replied that while he agreed with Chairman Monroe's observations, his inclination to reduce the deficit amount was based upon predictions made by the County's chosen consultant in estimating electricity revenues and he felt that the projected deficit could be reduced by $200,000 to $300,000.

As further budget savings measures, Mr. Champagne noted that the extensive Committee and Board meeting minutes produced by the staff of the Clerk of the Board were far more detailed than required and that changes in procedure to produce condensed versions would lead to the need for fewer staff members in the Clerk's Office, thereby lowering salary costs. Additionally, Mr. Champagne said he favored the sale of the Countryside Adult Home, regardless of the four month State imposed waiting period to do so and he felt that the Records Assistant position under the County Clerk's Office was another that could be considered for elimination. He noted that the Department of Public Works employed three Assistant Engineer positions and he felt that this staffing could be reduced also, in light of reduced DPW project funding. Mr. Champagne then suggested that the maintenance positions employed by the Sheriff's Office be transferred to the Buildings and Grounds Department to be overseen by the Superintendent of Buildings which could lead to the ability to reduce staffing in that Department. Finally, Mr. Champagne noted the lack of collections for DWI fines and he asked if an update was available to explain why the fines were not being collected in a timely manner.

Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, apprised that she had contacted Kate Hogan, District Attorney, with respect to the uncollected DWI fines, but had yet to receive a response. Mr. Geraghty noted that Jason Carusone, Assistant District Attorney, was in attendance and he asked him to speak on the matter. Mr. Carusone apprised that the DWI fine issue pertained to the felony DWI fines and that Judge Hall was trying to be more strict in enforcing the collection of the fines; however, he said, it would take some time to see the results of these efforts. He noted that when fines for felony DWI charges went unpaid, the offender was jailed, which cost the County more money.

Mr. Stec questioned whether legal provisions were available to allow for judgements against property or wage garnishing to be pursued in lieu of jail time as this was a less expensive alternative and Mr. Carusone responded that the Court could issue a judgement order and then the County would have to pay another party to enforce the order, which would incur a cost also; however, he added, the judgement process would be less costly than incarceration. Mr. Carusone noted that since an article was printed in *The Post Star* citing the uncollected fees, Judge Hall had been working diligently to enforce the payment of fines in a timely manner.

Discussion ensued.

Moving on, Mr. Geraghty asked the Committee for their feelings on the future of the Countryside Adult Home.

Mr. VanNess apprised that he had contacted Stanton Nursing Home in an effort to determine whether there was any interest in their purchasing the facility for privatization; he added that he had yet to receive any response on the matter. Mr. Belden noted that there were currently 42 residents at Countryside who were being cared for by 28 employees, which he felt was a high employee to resident ratio and Mr. Sokol replied that this was because the facility required 24-hour staffing.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Champagne to begin the process of closing the Countryside Adult Home.

Mr. Pitkin stated that he hoped the Committee would consider any rash movements to close the facility and instead would provide due diligence in researching the repercussions of closing Countryside as he was concerned that the Committee was making rash decisions without thinking their actions through. Mr. VanNess responded that the facility would not technically be closed, but rather privatized. Mr. Bentley noted that the majority of Countryside residents were indigent and the County would be responsible for funding their housing whether they remained in County-run housing or were transferred elsewhere; therefore, he said, there would still be some expense to the County. Mr. Taylor said he was not sure he was ready to vote in favor of closing the facility and requested that the motion be amended to begin researching the prospective closure of Countryside, rather than to move directly to take steps to close the facility. Messrs. Kenny and Champagne agreed to amend their motion and second as per Mr. Taylor's request.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion to begin researching the prospective closure of Countryside Adult Home was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Geraghty voting in opposition, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Returning to the review of suggestions for budget reductions made earlier in the meeting, Mr. Geraghty re-introduced Mr. Kenny's suggestion for further reductions to the EDC budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Champagne to reduce the EDC budget by $35,000.

Len Fosbrook, EDC President, noted that funding to the EDC budget had already been cut by $75,000, which was 25% of the total budget. He said that the State did not reimburse the EDC for maintaining the Empire Zone, $25,000 in funding for which had also been cut leading to a total budget reduction of $100,000, or 30%. Mr. Fosbrook stated that during the last Planning & Community Development Committee meeting, the Committee had voted unanimously to adopt the EDC's project priority list for 2010 and he felt the County received an immeasurable return on the investment made through the funding of EDC programs. He said that further budget reductions would be very difficult for the EDC to absorb and he hoped to be given the opportunity to discuss alternate funding strategies.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion to reduce EDC funding by an additional $35,000 failed with Messrs. Belden, Champagne, Geraghty, Merlino, O'Connor, Sheehan, Stec and Taylor voting in opposition.

Moving on, Mr. Geraghty revisited Mr. Kenny's suggestion that the Director position within the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Department be eliminated for a savings of $67,000 in salary costs, not including fringe benefits.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Champagne to eliminate the Director of Parks, Recreation & Railroad position.

Mr. Champagne noted that if they were looking to further reduce the Parks, Recreation & Railroad budget, it might be sensible to allow William Lamy, Superintendent of Public Works, the opportunity to make reductions as he saw fit, rather than mandating the position reduction. Mr. Geraghty said that he would be glad to let Mr. Lamy address the matter but noted that considerable reductions had already been made within this Department. He further noted that if the Committee sought to obtain a net salary reduction of $67,000 within the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Department, multiple position reductions would be necessary as there were unemployment costs to consider when mandating layoffs.

Mr. Lamy reminded the Committee that the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Director position had been suggested for elimination previously and at that time he was given the option of reducing the budget in other areas in order to retain the position. He said that he had subsequently reduced the Departmental budget by $70,000 through alternate measures and the total savings had been elevated to $110,000 when an employee with the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Department had decided to partake of the early retirement incentive program.

Mr. Lamy advised that the entire Public Works Division had been reshaped and programs had been adjusted in accordance with reduced budget funding and he anticipated that changes would continue to be made in 2010. He noted that other key employees, such as the Airport Manager and the engineering staff, had been targeted for reduction; however, he noted, there were two significant retirements expected in 2010 which would play a large part in the further reshaping of the Department, involving all divisions, and he felt that hasty position reductions could prove counter-productive for the Public Works Division. Respective to the engineering staff, Mr. Lamy advised that during the reshaping process the engineering department had been the main focus as he attempted to include staffing that could provide a considerable amount of the work previously contracted with private firms on an in-house basis and in doing so had saved the County a considerable amount of money. He added that staff reductions in the engineering department would negate these efforts and would not be sensible in light of the considerable construction projects being started in the near future, such as the Corinth and Beach Road Projects.

With reference to the Airport Manager position, Mr. Lamy advised that the Airport Manager was the key personnel responsible for coordinating with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) to attain grant funding and the next level of staffing in place at the Airport would not be able to fulfill the same duties. He noted that staffing reductions had previously been made at the Airport to the extent that DPW personnel were being used to clean and maintain the Airport property. Mr. Lamy concluded that he had a number of hard working employees that had stepped up to assume additional responsibilities commensurate with their education levels; however, he noted, there were certain duties outside of the capabilities of these employees that required the attention of managerial positions. He added that as the number of managerial positions were reduced, the corresponding duties were transferred to the engineering staff who were also responsible for all of the administrative work, in addition to monitoring the maintenance of the County's infrastructure.

Mr. Stec questioned whether the dollar amounts associated with the two significant retirements Mr. Lamy eluded to were included in the 2010 Budget and Mr. Geraghty replied in the negative. Mr. Stec noted that there were other retirements expected for 2010 which would attain considerable savings for the County and he suggested that all of them be included in the 2010 Budget in an effort to offset the expected deficit.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Messrs. Kenny and Champagne withdrew their motion and second to eliminate the Director of Parks, Recreation & Railroad position.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried by majority vote to eliminate one position within the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Department with a salary of no less than $38,800 to be identified by Mr. Lamy, with Messrs. Belden, Merlino, Sheehan and O'Connor voting in opposition.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec and seconded by Mr. Champagne to include the savings for the two significant retirements anticipated for September 15, 2010 in the 2010 Budget; however, the motion failed, with Messrs. Belden, Geraghty, Kenny, Merlino, O'Connor and Sheehan voting in opposition.

Continuing, Mr. Geraghty re-introduced Mr. Kenny's suggestion that one of the boats previously used by the Sheriff's Boat Patrol be sold and the funds returned to the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Taylor questioned whether an estimated value was available for the boat and Sheriff York replied that although he was unsure of the current value, he estimated that the purchase price was around $65,000 when the boat was acquired new 10 years ago. Mr. Kenny stated that regardless of the amount received for the sale of the boat, he felt that if they were not going to be used, they should be sold as the amount could potentially save a position that would otherwise be reduced.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to sell the most valuable of the boats previously used by the Sheriff's Boat Patrol for patrols on Lake George and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Mr. Geraghty announced that the next item for discussion was the proposed reduction in staff within the Board of Elections. When questioned as to the legality of such reductions, Mr. Dusek apprised that the Board of Elections was operated under complicated rules which required any changes thereto to be made in a certain fashion. For example, he said, the Commissioner's salaries could not be reduced during their elected terms and particular persons could not be targeted for reduction or elimination as the Law allowed the Commissioner's of the Board of Elections to choose the people working within their Office. However, Mr. Dusek noted, funding for the Board of Elections could be reduced to such a point that the Commissioner's would be restricted in their ability to fund staffing due to budget reductions. He added that the only restriction to this rule was that the budget could not be crippled to the point that the Office was unable to keep the parties balanced, meaning that the Commissioner for each party had to have the same amount of support staffing. Mr. Dusek further explained that if the funding was restricted to an amount which required each of the Deputy Commissioner positions to be reduced to part-time equally, that would be allowable and he reiterated that the Committee could not specifically dictate any position reductions or eliminations, simply the funding reductions to the Department.

Mr. Geraghty said it was his understanding that the Board of Elections staff were part of the non-bargaining unit and therefore would not receive any salary increases for longevity or cost of living pay and JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, replied that this was correct.

William Montfort, Board of Elections Commissioner, apprised that there would be several parties running in the November 2010 elections, such as the Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, Assemblyman, two Unites States Senators and a Congressman. He said that for these elections they needed sufficient staffing to educate the voters on the use of the voting machines, as well as to train the 464 inspectors on the machine use also. Mr. Montfort explained that the annual training was required for each of the inspectors which was provided by the Commissioner's of the Board of Elections, leaving the Deputy Commissioners in charge of running the Office while the Commissioners were away. He added that if forced to reduce the Deputy Commissioner positions to part-time, the Board of Elections Office would have to be operated in accordance with the part-time work schedule of the Deputy Commissioners whenever the Commissioners were working outside of the Office, thereby lessening their assistance to the public. Mr. Montfort apprised that the Warren County Board of Elections Office differed from those operated by other Counties as they functioned with two Commissioner and two Deputy Commissioner positions, while other Counties employed additional clerical staff, allowing them to implement part-time Commissioners along with four full-time staff. He noted that in Warren County, the four full-time staff employed by the Board of Elections consisted of the two Commissioner and two Deputy Commissioner positions, with part-time staffing being introduced during the election season.

Mr. O'Connor questioned whether they would be mandated by the State to continue use of the new voting machines which noone liked, or if they would be permitted to eventually return to the use of the older models which were more user friendly and Mr. Montfort replied in the negative, noting that so far there had been no indication that the State planned to allow resumed use of the older voting machines. He apprised that by the end of the week the new machines would receive State certification and those recently purchased by the County would be delivered no later than the end of March 2010. Mr. O'Connor then inquired as to the status of a prospective lawsuit being brought against the State for their mandated use of the new voting machines which had proved to be problematic in their use, storage and maintenance. Mr. Dusek interjected that he had heard news of a potential lawsuit but said that it had yet to be filed and Chairman Monroe added that there had been some indication that the lawsuit would be filed later that week, but he was not sure if the filing would actually occur. Chairman Monroe further noted that the new machines did not work as well as the old voting machines and would cause a number of problems that would require human intervention to correct; therefore, he said, it would not be sensible to reduce staffing in the Board of Elections Office.

Subsequent to further discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that they were not prepared to make any changes to the Board of Elections budget at that time.

With respect to Mr. Kenny's suggestion that a Naturalist position be eliminated at Up Yonda, Mr. Geraghty advised that the funding for the facility was based solely on contributions from the Up Yonda trust and included no County contribution; therefore, he said, position reductions would have no effect on the 2010 Budget. As for Mr. Kenny's proposal to reduce the number of coroners the County contracted with, Mr. Dusek apprised that the coroner positions were elected and he was unsure if the number could be reduced. Mr. Kenny then suggested that the matter be reviewed for possible reduction in the 2011 Budget.

Mr. Geraghty announced that the next suggestion to be discussed was the proposed $50,000 reduction in the .4 section of the Sheriff's Law Enforcement budget. Sheriff York noted that the funds in this area were used to support the various contracts held by the Sheriff's Law Enforcement Division. He added that the contracts had to be paid and if the Committee desired a $50,000 reduction, he would suggest that it be made from a more controllable budget code. Mr. Kenny apprised that he had requested and received a detailed listing of expenditures made from the .4 Codes to date, and had found that the 2009 Adopted Budget had included $1,587,000, with the actual amount expended so far in 2009 being $1,108,000, leaving approximately $480,000 available in the code and he did not believe that there was a commensurate total for outstanding contracts so late in the year. Mr. Kenny further noted that .4 Codes were not solely for contract expenditures as fees such as those for data processing, postage, repair of equipment, insurance, legal transcript, travel, uniform and safety equipment were also paid from these codes. He pointed out that the .4 Codes included a $40,000 budgetary line and only $6,000 of this total had been spent thus far and he questioned whether there would be $36,000 of safety equipment purchases made before the end of the year. Mr. Geraghty noted that he had discussed this issue with Sheriff York and had found that there were some contracts that would not be paid until late December, although he did not know whether all of the remaining funds would be expended. He added that while he was not opposed to further budget reductions, he felt it was important to note that a number of reductions had been made to the Sheriff's 2010 Budget already. Mr. Kenny replied that there appeared to be a considerable amount of over-inflation in the Sheriff's Budget based on the amounts remaining this late in the year and he did not feel that an additional $50,000 reduction was unreasonable.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Stec to reduce the Sheriff's Law Enforcement and Corrections Division budgets by $50,000 each.

Chairman Monroe cautioned the Committee on reducing funds as in many cases when the funds budgeted for one code were exceeded leftover monies within the same budget were used to offset them. He said that by reducing budget codes in this manner it eliminated the possibility of using under-expended budgets to compensate for overages in other codes.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion to reduce both the Sheriff's Law Enforcement and Corrections Division budgets by $50,000 each was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Merlino voting in opposition.

Mr. Stec questioned whether the savings attained from changes to the PBA agreement had been included in the 2010 Budget and Mr. Geraghty replied in the negative, noting that the anticipated savings were approximately $69,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to enact the savings to be received through changes offered by the PBA in their union contract in order to include them in the 2010 Budget and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Mr. Geraghty advised that the next item for consideration, whether or not an Airport Manager was necessary, had been posed as a possible savings measure by both Messrs. Kenny and VanNess. Mr. Kenny clarified that he was not specifically supportive of the position reduction, but rather wondered if the position was necessary and whether it could potentially be eliminated. Mr. VanNess stated that he was in support of privatizing the Airport by selling it to a private company.

Mr. Champagne said there was very little public interest for the purchase of the Airport as the facility could not function at its current capacity without the considerable Federal financial aid it received. He noted that until the County was able to profit from the operation of the Airport, it was not likely that a potential buyer would surface. Mr. Champagne stated that the Airport was highly conducive to the economic development of the area and he would be opposed to its sale.

Mr. Geraghty noted that the Airport budget had been reduced by $120,000 by lower contractual expenses and reducing staff. Mr. Belden said that he did not feel that any further funding could be removed from the Airport budget as it had been reduced to minimum standards already. Mr. Geraghty questioned if any information had been received respective to the possible sale of the Airport to the current FBO (Fixed Base Operator), Rich Air, and Mr. Belden replied that the matter had been discussed briefly at a prior Public Works Committee meeting during which it was indicated that Rich Air was not interested in purchasing the facility for privatization. Mr. VanNess asked when the last time the Airport had been advertised for sale was and Mr. Champagne replied that it had never been advertised for sale; however, he noted, it was his opinion that even if the facility were advertised for sale, it was not likely that a party willing to purchase the property would be found due to the lack of revenue generation associated with the facility.

Chairman Monroe noted that a study had been performed which reported that although the Airport did not generate a considerable amount of revenue, it did have a very positive impact on the County's economy. He said that the EDC (Economic Development Corporation) had performed another study relative to privatization of the Airport which had indicated a negative impact to the region if privatization were to occur.

Discussion ensued during which it was determined that the Committee was not currently interested in eliminating the Airport Manager position or in privatizing the facility.

Mr. Geraghty asked Mike Gates, Captain of the Corrections Division, to speak on the next budget reduction proposal, which was the reduction of one Cook position within the Corrections Facility. Captain Gates apprised that it was not sensible to eliminate a Cook position as overtime use would be required to continue services necessary to provide meals for as many as 200 meals, three times per day. Mr. Kenny questioned whether pre-packaged meals were served at the Corrections Facility or if the meals were made from scratch and Captain Gates replied that they had engaged in a program with the State to purchase some pre-packaged items, such as salad, at a lower price than what it would cost to make the meals in-house. Mr. Kenny then asked if the meals had previously been prepared from scratch by the cook staff and Captain Gates replied affirmatively. Mr. Kenny then noted that the same number of cooking staff had been retained, regardless of the fact that the Corrections Facility was now purchasing and serving some pre-prepared meal stuffs. Captain Gates replied that $30,000 had been removed from this portion of the Correction Facility's 2009 Budget and they expected to have about $40,000 savings in this code at the end of the year.

Mr. Belden asked if the inmates residing at the Corrections Facility were the only recipients of the food prepared by the Cook staff and Captain Gates replied in the negative, noting that meals were also prepared for the Corrections Officer staff while on duty as they were not afforded the opportunity to leave the Facility for meals. Captain Gates noted that the Corrections Staff were provided with the same meals prepared for the inmates.

Mr. Bentley questioned whether each of the four Cook staff worked an eight-hour shift and Captain Gates replied affirmatively, noting that four staff members were necessary to cover the 24-hour operation.

Moving on, Mr. Geraghty addressed the prospective reduction in staffing within the Public Health Department and he noted that the agenda included an email from Pat Auer, Director of Health Services, regarding this matter. He noted that Mrs. Auer was present and he asked her to address the matter further.

Mrs. Auer apprised that the Bio-Terrorism staffing questioned by Mr. Kenny was entirely grant funded and it was very well understood that the positions would be eliminated when that grant funding was discontinued. Respective to the nursing positions, she announced that the Public Health Department had converted to an electronic medical records system which allowed them to eliminate two Nurse positions and another member of the nursing staff would be retiring in January and that position would not be filled. Mrs. Auer advised that they had also downgraded a Supervising Nurse position to a Public Health Nurse, further reducing Departmental costs. She stated that if they were to reduce the nursing staff any further they would not be able to meet the demands of the public. Mrs. Auer said that the part-time Nursing staff were saviors to the Department as they did not require a guaranteed number of working hours and they worked clinics, which they were currently very busy with for H1N1 vaccinations. She added that although it appeared that the Public Health Department was overstaffed, such was not the case as they were responsible for providing a number of services to County residents.

Mr. Kenny said he had spoken with a resident receiving services from visiting nurses who was willing to forego a decrease in the number of visits provided per week if it would help to alleviate the budget situation. Mrs. Auer replied that they were looking at this to determine if visits could be reduced; however, she said, there were some patients who were under the misconception that they could receive less care than they currently received and this was not the case as they could risk greater harm by not receiving public health visits as directed. Mr. Kenny stated that he did not want to jeopardize the quality of home care provided by the Public Health Department, but was trying to find a way to decrease costs. Mr. Sokol interjected that the Point of Care System was moving along very well and in the near future he felt that they could see one or two more positions abolished.

Mr. Champagne noted that regular full-time Public Health Nurses who provided services on weekends and holidays were paid overtime rates, while per diem nurses were not. He suggested that they review the work schedules to use the per diem nurse positions to serve patients during shifts that would otherwise receive overtime pay to reduce salary costs.

Mr. Geraghty stated that the final item proposed was for reductions in staffing within the Mental Health program; he noted that Rob York, Director of Mental Health, was in attendance and he asked him to speak on the matter. Mr. York pointed out that they had undertaken a number of measures to reduce program costs to the County, firstly in the manner of structure. He advised that theirs was the only bi-County unit in the State of New York, established in connection with Washington County through an inter-municipal agreement which required Washington County to fund half of their budget. Mr. York said that additionally, the funding formula used in connection with the State was very favorable in the sense that right now the Counties paid 12.9% for Local Assistance, while the State paid the remaining 87.1%. He noted that this funding formula may be slated to change in July of 2010, changing to an equal 50% funding share between the Counties and the State; however he said, these were two favorable situations for the County in being a bi-County Mental Health organization and in receiving enhanced funding from the State. In terms of the specific positions listed, Mr. York apprised that the Assistant Director position actually served as a fiscal officer with a budget of $2.5 million to be managed, as well as grants and contracts with nine different not-for-profit agencies within the community. He advised that the fiscal responsibilities of the Assistant Director included reporting requirements for funding which required meeting deadlines to retain funding for services. Mr. York noted that the Assistant Director position had been reduced to part-time and they were studying the position to determine if it could safely retain the part-time status without reducing the services provided. He advised that the Deputy Director of Clinical Services provided two mandated functions as required by the State, those being an Assisted Outpatient Treatment Coordinator and a single Point of Entry for mental health residential and case management services. The Program Analyst, Mr. York advised, served as the agency liaison and provided grant management for housing services and assisted in managing all contracts held by the organization. He said that the Office Specialist served as the secretary for the office and also served as secretary for the two Community Services Boards. Mr. York advised that there were two budget lines that consisted of 100% County funding which were associated Court-ordered psychiatric evaluations. He said that they had underspent in this area in past years so they could reduce in these areas; however, he noted, the actual annual expenditures were unknown as the amount spent depended on the number of Court-ordered evaluations for any given year.

Mr. Champagne questioned how much had been budgeted for Court-ordered evaluations and Mr. York replied that it was about $50,000. He added that the closest they had come to this figure was $33,000 in 2006, and that only $3,000 had been spent thus far in 2009. Mr. York reminded the Committee that these were mandated expenses to the County; therefore, he said, some funding had to be kept for such expenses.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. Stec, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to reduce the 2010 Mental Health Budget by $30,000.

Mr. Pitkin noted that although an RFP had been released for a new time management system, it had been discussed that there might be the potential to develop a time keeping system on an in-house basis through the Information Technology Department and he asked Rob Metthe, Director of Information Technology, if this was correct. Mr.

Metthe replied that a system could be developed through his Department; however, he noted, they were undertaking a number of projects currently and did not have adequate time or manpower to address the project and maintain the current ongoing projects. He added that he felt the cost to produce this system in-house would be more than what it would cost to purchase a system from an outside source.

Chairman Monroe said it was his understanding that the cost for the time-keeping system for the new building was included in the bond for the new building; therefore, he said, there would be no reduction in the 2010 Budget if the system was produced in-house. Mr. Kenny questioned the results of the RFP for the new time-keeping system and Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent, apprised that the bids had been received but they were still being reviewed by the Treasurer's Office. Rob Lynch, Deputy Treasurer, advised that RFP responses continued to be reviewed, but noted that the low bid had been $72,000 while the high bid was around $330,000. He said that within the next couple of weeks the bidders would be coming in to make a presentation on the system offered.

Continuing, Mr. Geraghty addressed the budget savings suggestions presented by Mr. Thomas which included a 5% salary reduction for all non-bargaining unit positions, including management and elected officials; the elimination of all mileage reimbursement; discontinuance of the EAP and the retention of an increased amount of sales tax at the County level.

In light of the budget reduction demands already made by the Committee and the fact that they had already removed all salary increases for 2010 for non-bargaining unit employees, Mr. Sheehan said he did not feel it was fair to reduce salaries also. Mr. Stec questioned the cost of the EAP program and Todd Lunt, Human Resources Director, replied that it was about $14,000 annually. Mr. Sheehan then asked if figures regarding usage of the EAP were available and Mr. Lunt advised that there were a number of different ways to use the EAP which made the results difficult to track. He noted that 18 employees had contacted the EAP directly to discuss issues, which was a higher usage number than for 2007 and 2008, and there were a number of employees that contacted their website. Mr. Lunt stated that a dollar figure for the value of the program could not be placed on the program as it might have helped a specific employee save their job or family structure. Mr. Champagne said that he had argued in favor of the EAP when it was first introduced and he said he would continue to support its retention. He added that these were some of the most stressful times for employees and he was not in favor of eliminating the program. Mr. Kenny said that he was also in favor of retaining the EAP program as the benefits were immeasurable. He added that when considering a 5% salary reduction for all non-bargaining unit employees, it was important to remember that these employees had already absorbed no salary increase or longevity in 2010. Mr. Stec agreed, stating that he did not feel that the non-bargaining unit employees were the group that should be absorbing salary reductions as any chance for a salary increase in 2010 had already been eliminated.

Mr. Thomas said that in light of the fact that they were cutting positions and causing layoffs, it was important to show that the Supervisors were not above sacrifice and he said he was in favor of a 5% salary decrease for all members of the Board of Supervisors to illustrate this point.

Captain Gates stated that he was one of the many employees that would be affected by a 5% salary decrease for all non-bargaining until employees. He said that the Department Heads in charge of making budget reductions and administering programs were a large part of those who would sustain the salary decrease and it did not seem fair to expect these employees to do more work for a lesser salary.

Mr. Pitkin stated that he was in support of a salary reduction for the members of the Board of Supervisors, but not for all non-bargaining unit employees. He said that he felt it was unconscionable to reduce salaries for Department Heads when they continued to fund paid lunches for some employees.

Mr. Bentley stated that a 5% salary reduction and the elimination of mileage reimbursement would be a considerable reduction for him at about $4,000 per year. He said that if the mileage reimbursement was eliminated he would not be able to continue to make the number of trips to the Municipal Center for Committee meetings that he was making currently.

Mr. Stec said it was very easy for the Supervisors living in areas close to the Municipal Center to vote in favor of mileage reimbursement elimination. He said that he did not think the program should be eliminated and instead, those Supervisors who were willing to forego the reimbursement should refrain from applying for it.

Discussion ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to include a 5% salary reduction for all members of the Board of Supervisors in the 2010 Budget and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino to eliminate mileage reimbursement for travel to the Municipal Center for Committee and Board meetings; however as there was no second, the motion failed.

Mr. Geraghty then asked if there was any Committee support for the elimination of the EAP, there being none, it was determined that the Program would be retained for 2010.

Moving on, Mr. Geraghty noted that there were several Supervisors in favor of selling County-owned property as a means to build the Surplus Fund balance and he asked Mr. Dusek why it was such a long and difficult process each time they desired to advertise the sale of property. Mr. Dusek replied that County Law required the sale of property to be publicized and accept bids, or auction, the property for sale. He said that although they had previously gone through this process, they had subsequently closed the sale, requiring it to be re-opened and authorized once again as the previous authorizations had expired. Mr. Geraghty noted that the process to advertise the parcels located across the street from the Municipal Center Campus had already been authorized through the Finance Committee and he questioned if there were any other parcels that could also be advertised for sale. Mr. Kenny suggested that the Fairgrounds property be bid for sale also as it was very rarely used by the County.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Stec and carried unanimously to advertise the sale of the County-owned Fairgrounds property and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 18th Board meeting.

Mr. Geraghty announced that the Committee would break for lunch.

The Committee recessed from 12:23 p.m. to 12:58 p.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Geraghty announced that the Committee would address the budget savings measures proposed by Mr. VanNess. Mr. VanNess stated that he was in favor of the privatization of both the Airport and Countryside Adult Home. He noted that by privatizing the Airport the County would not suffer any loss of tourism revenue as the facility would continue to be operated, albeit by a private company, and the County would be saved all of the operation costs. As for Countryside, Mr. VanNess pointed out that a private company would likely prefer to retain the residents currently in place which would mean that the County would not be responsible for seeking out alternative housing. He noted that the sale of both properties would allow the County to resume collecting property taxes for them which would increase income to the County. Mr. VanNess said he also supported the sale of the Hartford Landfill property, although he did not feel that they should accept the offer they had recently received as it was very low. Finally, Mr. VanNess stated that he felt reductions in the Departmental overtime budgets were warranted and would help to reduce the overall 2010 Budget. Mr. Stec said he agreed that the overtime budgets should be reduced and he questioned whether a total was available for the amount of overtime included in the 2010 Budget. Mrs. McKinstry replied that approximately $1.26 million was included in the 2010 Budget for overtime costs. When asked for the amount of overtime used to date in 2009, as well as the total amount used in 2008, Mrs. McKinstry advised that she did not have those figures readily available and would have to run a special report to get those figures. Mr. Stec advised that reviewing these figures would help the Committee to determine whether the overtime figures could be realistically reduced.

Mr. Kenny said that he agreed with the suggestion to privatize the Airport, but said he wondered what effects the sale would have on the Federal grant monies received in connection with the facility. He noted that because the property had never been advertised for sale, they did not know if there were parties interested in purchasing the Airport, or what the potential sale price would be, as well as whether a repayment of Federal grant funds expended would be required. Chairman Monroe noted that Municipalities were eligible for far more Federal funding than a private company; therefore, he said, he did not know how a private company would be able to financially support the Airport operation.

Mr. Stec suggested that they proceed in authorizing a fact finding mission to determine what the effects of privatization for Countryside and the Airport would be in order to determine if these ideas were feasible.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. VanNess proceeded to read the overtime information as presented to him by Mrs. McKinstry which indicated that $1.3 million had been expended in overtime costs thus far in 2009 and that $1.7 million had been expended in 2008. He reminded the Committee members that $1.2 million had been included in the 2010 Budget for overtime costs and he suggested a 10% reduction to this figure.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec and seconded by Mr. Champagne to reduce the 2010 overtime budgets by 10% for all Departments.

Mr. Pitkin questioned how a 10% overtime reduction would affect the DPW, specifically the plowing services provided. Mr. Lamy stated that the majority of overtime funds allotted to the DPW were expended in connection with snow and ice events. He noted that in 2008, a year with a considerable number of snowstorms, a total of $238,000 had been expended for overtime costs. Mr. Lamy apprised that $190,000 had been budgeted for overtime costs in 2009, and although the year had started off with a number of storms, he was now confident that they would make it through the remainder of the year without requiring additional appropriations. He stated that although the Committee was certainly within its rights to reduce the DPW overtime budget, it was important to note that the DPW was required to respond to snow and ice events and plow the County roads, regardless of whether or not overtime funding was available. Mr. Lamy advised that although overtime costs were sometimes incurred in connection with other projects, such as moving employees from the old Social Services Building to the new Human Services Building and with the updates to the electrical switch in the Municipal Center, the majority of the overtime budgeted for Public Works Divisions was intended for response to snow and ice conditions. He added that alterations had been made to the paving operation to allow for the majority of the paving work to be done during regular business hours so as not to incur overtime costs as they had in the past. Mr. Lamy concluded that they were making every effort to curtail overtime use within the Public Works Division; however, he noted, overtime use in connection with snow and ice events was unpredictable and if the overtime budget was reduced, there might be a need for additional appropriations to be added to the overtime fund at the close of 2010 if the budget was exceeded.

Mr. Geraghty said during the budget process they had discussed alternate paving methods which would lead to less overtime use and Mr. Lamy advised that this had been taken into consideration when developing the current overtime budget.

Mr. VanNess stated that they had reached out to all three employee unions requesting some kind of concessions within the agreements to help alleviate the budget situation but had only gained assistance from one, that being the PBA. He said that although he was not in favor of any further position reductions, tough decisions had to be made in order to compensate for the budget deficit and a valid way to do so would be to decrease the overtime budgets. Mr. Belden noted that they were not attempting to target any specific Department for reductions as the overtime cuts would be made uniformly for all with a 10% reduction across the board.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion to reduce overtime budgets for all Departments by 10% was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Merlino voting in opposition.

Chairman Monroe reminded the Committee members that the Treasurer's Office had warned them several times about revenues budgeted for 2010 which would not be received due to uncollected taxes. He noted that although this problem had occurred in the past, they had been able to cover the cash flow issue by using monies from the Surplus Fund and this would be a problem in 2010 as there were no Surplus funds to use. Chairman Monroe advised that the projected impact for the shortage was estimated to be $2 million and he questioned whether this deficit should be accounted for in the 2010 Budget. Mr. Lynch confirmed Chairman Monroe's statement and noted that the State Comptroller's Office had suggested that the $2 million anticipated deficit be included in the 2010 Budget to address the potential cash flow issue.

Mr. Pitkin noted that there were other cash flow issues expected in 2010 and any deficit caused by late payment of property taxes would only compound the problem.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Geraghty proceeded to review the email submissions provided by certain Department Heads respective to the Budget Officer's request for a 3% decrease in Departmental budgets, copies of which were included in the agenda and are on file with the minutes.

The Committee began with a review of Mr. Lamy's proposal, which indicated that there were not sufficient funds remaining in the DPW budget to sustain an additional 3% decrease and proposed that $300,000 recently targeted to serve as the Local Share for upcoming Capital Projects be returned to the General Fund with the Local Share of each project to be bonded as the funds became necessary.

Following discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Champagne to proceed with Mr. Lamy's proposal; however, the motion failed with Messrs. Geraghty, Kenny, Merlino, O'Connor, Sheehan, Stec and Taylor voting in opposition.

Continuing with the review of email proposals provided the Committee accepted the following savings as presented by each Department Head:

1) County Attorney - $5,500 savings achieved through a $2,500 reduction in overtime costs and $3,000 reduction in Legal/Transcription Fees;
2) Fire Prevention & Building Code Enforcement - $8,000 increase in estimated revenues based on actual revenue figures for 2009;

3) Office of Emergency Services (OES) - $5,500 savings attained by eliminating the amount budgeted for storage of the OES emergency vehicle. This decrease was possible because the OES was able to attain free storage space rather than having to rent space as was previously anticipated; and
4) Weights and Measures - $3,000 increase in anticipated revenues as Herb Levin, Director of Weights & Measures, will begin charging for inspection services which would account for a minimum of a 5% increase to anticipated revenues.

When asked if there were any further reductions proposed for the District Attorney's Office, Mr. Carusone replied in the negative. He noted that two positions had already been eliminated from the District Attorney's Office and they were now trying to find alternate funding methods for expenses such as Expert Witness testimonies, transcripts and office supplies, which they hoped to fund with the percentage gained through asset seizures. Mr. Carusone noted that if 2010 proved to be a good year for asset seizures, they would use these funds to support the operation of the District Attorney's Office whenever possible in order to lessen the costs to the County.

Respective to budget reductions for the Tourism Department, Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk for the Tourism Department, advised that she was unsure as to why the Tourism Departmental Budget would be reduced as it was funded solely by Occupancy Tax funding which could not be returned to the General Fund. Mr. Kenny confirmed this statement noting that any reduction in funding amounts to the Tourism Budget would be transferred to another promotion related expense and would have no effect on the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Belden questioned the total savings achieved during the meeting and Mrs. McKinstry replied that it was approximately $703,000 which would reduce the budget increase percentage to 7.29%.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the budget reduction measures provided in the 2010 Budget - Changes spreadsheet.

Mr. Geraghty noted that there were members of the public wishing to address the Committee and he noted that each would be provided the opportunity to make their statements.

Alan Hall Sr., resident of the Town of Warrensburg, was the first to speak, noting that he was a retired DPW employee not in favor of the one-person plowing procedure. He stated that there were instances when two employees were necessary to address mechanical issues, such as flat tires and out of place plow wings. Additionally, Mr. Hall said that although he was not in favor of tax increases, he was far more agreeable to an increase in sales tax than to a property tax increase. He pointed out that the majority of the Counties in New York State had already passed similar sales tax increases and he felt that the remaining Counties retaining lower tax rates would be increasing theirs in the near future. As a resident of the Town of Warrensburg, Mr. Hall said that he had voted for Mr. Geraghty not because of his views on the sales tax increase, but because of his ability to adjust his views based on the situation.

Jim Mandel, resident of the Town of Lake Luzerne, began by thanking the Committee for all their efforts to reduce the budget to an acceptable level and he said it appeared that every effort had been made to reach this goal. He said that at this point there were only two ways to fix the budget situation, those being with either a property tax increase or a sales tax increase. Mr. Mandel stated that he was in favor of a sales tax increase because buyers could choose what to purchase, thereby lessening the amount of tax paid, while property owners had no choice but to pay the increased property tax.

Connie Farrington, resident of the Town of Queensbury, advised that she had reviewed the 2010 Tentative Budget and had discovered that there were a number of clerical positions sustained by the County. She suggested that the hours for some of these positions be reduced from 40 hours per week to 30 hours per week, amending position titles if necessary. Ms. Farrington noted that this measure would lead to a 25% reduction in salary, personal and sick time benefits, and would also reduce the pension offering; she added that the paid lunch offered to some employees could also be eliminated to achieve additional savings. She said that the position would then include a 6 hour work day with a one-hour unpaid lunch and the associated Department would lose only 5 work hours per week, or 12.5% of the work time incurred for the position and a layoff would be avoided, thereby avoiding expenditures for unemployment costs.

Mr. Geraghty replied that the hour reductions proposed by Ms. Farrington required negotiations with the employee unions, which were not possible currently as the unions had refused to re-open their contracts prior to expiration. Mr. Dusek confirmed Mr. Geraghty's statement, but noted that it was possible to abolish existing positions and re-create part-time positions, which was allowed under the current union contracts. He advised that the County had no control over the pension system which was governed entirely by the State. Respective to the elimination of a one-hour paid lunch, Mr. Dusek advised that this could not be altered without union negotiations which could not occur until the current contract expired as per the indication of the labor unions. He said that although abolishing and re-creating positions might be a possibility, it remained to be seen whether this arrangement would work for the various Departments, as some included mandated hours of operation. Mr. Dusek concluded that the arrangement would have to be considered on a Departmental basis to determine in which this measure could be implemented and they also had to consider the fact that changing positions to part-time eliminated the availability of health insurance benefits to the affected employees.

Ms. Farrington said her second saving suggestion concerned meal preparation costs associated with the senior program operated by the Office for the Aging (OFA). She said she had emailed the OFA two weeks prior for more information but had not received a response; therefore, she noted, some portions of her proposal might not be feasible. Ms. Farrington apprised that the requested contribution for congregate and Meals-on-Wheels foods was $3.00 per meal, but she said she did not have an accurate figure representing the amount actually received. She noted that the minutes from a recent Committee meeting indicated that the average preparation cost for the same meal was $6.00 and she said that if they could not do anything more to increase the contribution amount, there might be ways to reduce the preparation cost. Mrs. Farrington advised that the 2010 Tentative Budget included 54 cooking related positions spread amongst the Nutrition for the Elderly program, the Countryside Adult Home, the Westmount Health Facility and the SNAP and WIC programs for total salary cost of $1.29 million annually, not including benefit costs. She said that she had recently visited the Hudson Falls/Fort Edward Mealsite and had spoken with the person in charge of the kitchen at the site, who was a volunteer. Ms. Farrington stated that a $2 per meal fee was requested at this site; however, she noted, there was no sign indicating the suggested fee, nor any attempt to enforce the payment. She said she had been advised by the volunteer at the Hudson Falls/Fort Edward Mealsite that all of the meals were prepared at the Washington County Jail which were then delivered to all of the meal sites in Washington County. Ms. Farrington said that although she did not know what the total preparation cost was for Washington County, she felt that it was probably less than $6.00 and she noted that a similar meal preparation scenario might be developed using the services of the Warren County Jail. She suggested that $200,000 be removed from the total food related personnel costs, as she was sure that there was some way to share nutrition coordinator and food preparation services between the various Departments and programs. Additionally, Ms. Farrington noted that additional savings might be attained by having some of the meals prepared at the Westmount Health Facility.

Ms. Farrington informed the Committee that the State Budget she reviewed online indicated that the Department of Correctional Services was permitted to sell food products made at its food production center to charitable organizations for a fee not to exceed the cost of the food and transportation and this program was designed to help organizations funded in whole, or in part, by Federal, State and Local funds. She said that it might be possible to utilize these services to attain lower cost meals for the OFA meal programs, thereby lessening the County's contribution.

Candy Kelly, Director for the OFA, said that she had not received an email from Ms. Farrington, but apologized for the lack of response on behalf of her Department and assured Ms. Farrington that she would be happy to meet with her after the meeting to address any unresolved questions she might have. Mrs. Kelly advised that the cost per meal was not $6.00 and that the true cost averaged between $2 and $4.08 per meal, based on the mealsite, and this amount included employee and food costs; she added that the cost per meal to the County varied between $1.12 to $2.91. She stated that the suggested meal contribution amounts had recently been raised and the lack of payment had recently been discussed within the Human Services Committee meetings to determine ways in which the contributions received could be increased. Mrs. Kelly noted that they had researched the possibility of preparing meals at either the Westmount Health Facility or through the kitchen at the Warren County Correctional Facility in the past, but neither of those options had proved feasible. Regarding proposed position reductions, she advised that a position had recently been reduced at the Glens Falls/Queensbury Mealsite and although all of the other mealsites had been reviewed for reductions, no position reductions had been made as there were only two employees at each site which were required for safety reasons.

Mr. Champagne said that he would appreciate a copy of Ms. Farrington's suggestions for further review in developing the 2011 Budget as those things that had not been feasible in the past might be applicable in the future. Ms. Farrington advised that she would provide the information at the close of the meeting.

Skip Stranahan, of We The People Foundation, was the next to address the Committee in reference to the public hearing held on December 10th. He noted that a number of people associated with the We The People Foundation had attended the public hearing to express their concerns relative to the sales tax increase, but he said he did not feel that any of them were in favor of cutting meal services to the elderly. Mr. Stranahan said that he appreciated the fact that a public hearing had been held during the evening so that the citizens of Warren County could have some input on the matter and he said that he was in favor of similar evening meetings being held to continue this practice. He noted that he felt citizen input was a big part of local government and that it would help now and in the future to address concerns at the County level. Mr. Stranahan stated that he was not against a sales tax increase of .5%, but felt that further justification was necessary before a 1% increase could be considered further as it would have a severe impact on business within Warren County, possibly creating a loss of more than $7 million in income to local businesses. He apprised that he was a business owner in the area and talked to many of his customers who indicated that they shopped in the area because of the lower sales tax amount and that business might be lost if the tax was increased significantly.

As there were no further members of the public wishing to speak, Mr. Geraghty asked the Committee if they were in favor of presenting the 2010 Budget as it stood with a 7.29% increase. Mr. Champagne said that he believed everyone had worked very hard on the budget to reach its current state and he did not think there was anything else to be reduced; therefore, he said, he was prepared to accept the 2010 Budget with a 7.29% increase, regardless of the fact that the Town of Queensbury, which he represented, would be affected the most by the increase.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, it was the consensus of the Committee that the 7.29% increase in the 2010 Budget was acceptable and would be presented at the December 18th Board meeting for the approval of the full Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Pitkin noted that as it seemed a 1% sales tax increase was opposed by a number of parties, a .5% increase might be acceptable and would still help to maintain lower property taxes for residents.

Mr. O'Connor apprised that more than one person had suggested a .5% sales tax increase and he noted that his replacement, William Loeb, who would be taking office effective January 1, 2010, was also in favor of a .5% increase; however, he said, Mr. Loeb would not vote in favor of a 1% increase.

Discussion ensued respective to the proposed sales tax increase.

Returning to the topic of the amount budgeted for operation of the Trash Plant, Mr. Geraghty stated he strongly believed that an additional 20% could be added to the electrical revenues anticipated for the Plant, which would ultimately serve to reduce the operational budget. Mr. Champagne agreed and indicated that he felt the budget for the Trash Plant should be reduced by $400,000 and not face a deficit at the end of 2010.

Mr. Pitkin cautioned the Committee on making this reduction, because if a 20% increase in revenues over the amount currently included in the 2010 Tentative Budget was not realized, the results could prove disastrous to the County as they would be looking for a way to recover additional deficits when already battling a bad budget year.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to reduce the 2010 budget for the Trash Plant by $400,000.

Mr. Geraghty announced that by removing an additional $400,000 from the Trash Plant budget they had achieved a 6.1% budget increase which would be presented at the December 18th Board meeting for the full Board's approval.

When questioned as to how the sales tax increase would be addressed at the December 18th Board meeting, Chairman Monroe advised that the Board of Supervisors had already approved a resolution requesting that the State Legislators enact legislation to raise Warren County's sales tax rate by 1% and the Board could vote to either rescind or amend the previous resolution. He added that a resolution approved by the Budget Committee at the current meeting would also be presented for the consideration of the Board, suggesting that any income from the increase should not be included in the 2010 Budget.

Mrs. Sady noted that the budget changes approved would be used to revise the 2010 Tentative Budget, which would then be presented for the approval of the Board of Supervisors at the December 18th Board meeting. She noted that an additional meeting would be required to approve the tax rates. Subsequent to further discussion, it was determined that a Special Board meeting would be scheduled for December 21st at 2:00 p.m., as per Mrs. Sady's direction.

As there was no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Taylor, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 3:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist