

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: COUNTY CLERK - MOTOR VEHICLES

DATE: MARCH 6, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
BELDEN
SHEEHAN
STRAINER
PITKIN

OTHERS PRESENT:

PAM VOGEL, COUNTY CLERK
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SUPERVISORS SIMMES
TAYLOR
THOMAS
VANNESS
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the County Clerk-Motor Vehicles Committee to order at 10:19 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the November 6, 2008 meeting of the County Clerk-Motor Vehicles Committee, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Pamela Vogel, County Clerk, who distributed copies of the Agenda to Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Beginning the Agenda review with Item 1a, Mrs. Vogel requested to amend the 2009 County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$15,311 to appropriate unexpended funds from the 2008 Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grant project.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously authorizing the request to amend the 2009 County budget in the amount of \$15,311 as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mrs. Vogel noted that although the County had been successful in securing the LGRMIF in prior years, due to the inclement state of the economy, it would be more difficult to be awarded the funding for the 2009-2010 Budget year.

Mrs. Vogel apprised that Agenda Item 1b was a request for a transfer of funds as follows:

<u>From Code:</u>	<u>From Title:</u>	<u>To Code:</u>	<u>To Title:</u>	<u>Amount:</u>
A.1410.410	Supplies	A.1410.220	Office Equipment	\$700
A.1665.410	Supplies	A.1665.220	Office Equipment	\$700

Mrs. Vogel advised that the funds would be used to purchase a digital passport camera system, as

the polaroid camera was five years old and further malfunctions could not be repaired. She advised that if the polaroid did malfunction, it would be necessary to send people to area retailers to obtain the photo required for passports, as no back-up system was available. Mr. Kenny stated that he believed that it was a relatively small investment that provided an influx of revenue. Mr. Pitkin questioned if Mrs. Vogel was aware of the life span of the digital passport camera and Mrs. Vogel estimated it to be five years.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to approve the request for transfer of funds as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mrs. Vogel apprised that Agenda Item 2a pertained to the vehicle use fee. She explained that this fee was based on the County of the residence of the person to whom the vehicle was registered for both passenger and commercial vehicles. She said that she had researched counties with similar populations to Warren County and noted that Washington County had received \$378,592.72 in vehicle use fees for 2008 and Madison County had received \$402,075 as of November 30, 2008.

Mrs. Vogel indicated that if Warren County were to adopt the vehicle use fee, the County would generate an estimated \$300,000 in revenue that the State paid directly to the Treasurer's Office; however, she noted that she was opposed to charging the fee.

Mrs. Simmes questioned what the cost per person would be and Mrs. Vogel responded that the passenger vehicle registration fee was \$10 bi-annually and \$20 bi-annually for commercial vehicle registrations. Mrs. Vogel added that if a Warren County resident were to register their vehicle in another county, Warren County would still receive the vehicle use fee.

Mr. Belden questioned whether the funds received from the fee would remain in Warren County and Mrs. Vogel responded in the affirmative. Mr. Kenny voiced his opposition to adopting the fee due to the inclement state of the economy. Mr. Pitkin stated that he would prefer that a sliding fee be charged based on the value of the vehicles, as he felt that the fee would have a negative impact on individuals with low income. Mr. Kenny questioned whether the County could offer a sliding fee and Mrs. Vogel responded in the negative.

It was the consensus of the Committee not to adopt the vehicle use fee at this time.

Agenda Item 2b, Mrs. Vogel stated, referred to the Budget Performance Report. She advised that the revenue received in Clerk Fees and Mortgage Tax in 2008 was substantially lower than what was budgeted. Mr. Geraghty questioned what the budgeted amount had been for mortgage tax in 2008 and she replied that \$2,150,000 was the budgeted amount.

Mr. Strainer expressed his dismay with the fact that of the \$4.00 transfer tax fee collected, the County only retains \$1.00 per deed that was recorded. Mr. Strainer asked whether Mrs. Vogel was aware of how much money the County forwarded to the State for transfer tax in 2008 and Mrs. Vogel

responded that \$1,682,801 was forwarded to the State. Chairman Monroe questioned whether the County retained a quarter of this amount and Mrs. Vogel responded that Warren County had retained \$1,682 in revenue.

Mrs. Vogel advised that although the real estate market was slow, in January \$130,748 was received in mortgage tax. She pointed out that the reason for the increase was due to an infusion of \$20,000 for a very large mortgage from 2008. Mr. Kenny pointed out that unless there was a change in the real estate market, the County would be under budget for mortgage tax received in 2009.

Chairman Monroe suggested considering an increase in transfer tax due to the increase in property values and to dedicate the funds to assist with the affordable housing issue. He questioned whether Mrs. Vogel was aware of what other counties were charging for the transfer tax and she replied that Broome County was charging \$5.00 per \$1,000 and Columbia County received an additional \$2.00 per \$1,000. She advised that Warren County could increase the transfer tax if they wished to generate more revenue.

Chairman Monroe pointed out that the increase in market values of properties has had a significant impact on affordable housing by the increasing values of homes, which caused sellers to make large profits. Mr. Strainer asked if the transfer tax was increased, would the additional money remain in the County and Mrs. Vogel responded in the affirmative. Mr. Pitkin suggested putting a cap on the transfer tax so that lower income individuals were not affected.

Discussion ensued.

Pursuant to discussion, motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried by majority vote to charge an additional \$2.00 in transfer tax for a total of \$6.00 per \$1,000 for sales in excess of \$150,000 with Mr. Strainer voting in opposition and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 20, 2009 Board meeting.

Chairman Monroe advised that he would request that the County Attorney's Office research whether the transfer tax funds could be allocated directly to affordable housing or if they had to be deposited into the General Fund.

Agenda Item 2c, Mrs. Vogel stated, referred to the goals she had made for her Department to achieve in 2009, the first of which was to implement remote access to the Real Property Tax Records in the County Clerk's Office. She explained that it was being implemented by the existing document management company and access would be granted to individuals that were willing to commit to a payment structure.

The next goal, Mrs. Vogel advised, was to set up a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) kiosk. She said that a small workstation had been placed in the DMV that contained the forms used most often, and she added that the forms were replenished on a regular basis.

Concluding the Agenda review, Mrs. Vogel apprised that she had attended a National Guard Program at the Sagamore Resort to answer questions that the returning soldiers may have in reference to any forms pertaining to the DMV, as well as their DD Form 214, which could be recorded in the County Clerk's Office at no charge to the Veteran.

Mrs. Vogel noted that although the Department was understaffed, they were able to complete the work required of them. Mr. Geraghty questioned whether the Department was understaffed due to employees leaving or on sick leave and Mrs. Vogel responded that she had two vacancies, one which occurred in November and the other which occurred in February.

Mrs. Vogel advised that there was not currently an active Civil Service list of qualified candidates, so she had been unable to fill the vacancies. Mr. Geraghty cautioned Mrs. Vogel that if the Office had been able to function since November with the vacancy, he would be hesitant to authorize her to fill the position. Mr. Pitkin noted that he had recently visited the DMV and although they were short staffed, the staff was courteous and he was able to complete his transaction in a timely manner. Mrs. Vogel commented that the lack of staffing was not critical currently because it was a slow period; however, she noted, she was concerned that this would become an issue during the spring and summer seasons when the flow of business increased once again. She stated that she was working with the Civil Service Office to schedule a test and that it could take up to six months before the position could be filled.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Pitkin, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan
Legislative Office Specialist