

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: OCTOBER 29, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Belden
Gabriels
Monroe
Tessier
Mason

Committee Members Absent:

Supervisors Stec
Champagne

Others Present:

Representing Planning & Community Development Department:

Patricia Tatich, Director
Wayne LaMothe, Assistant Director
Martin Fitzgerald, Construction Cost Coordinator

Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services

Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Trish Nenninger, Second Assistant County Atty.
Deanne Rehm, Member, Board of Directors, Adirondack Community Housing Trust
Supervisor Geraghty
Supervisor F. Thomas
Leonard Fosbrook, President, Economic Development Corporation, Warren County, New York
Peter Wohl, Vice President, Economic Development Corporation, Warren County, New York
Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk

In the absence of Mr. Stec, Committee Chairman, Mr. Belden, Committee Vice chairman, called the meeting of the Planning & Community Development Committee to order at 11:15 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Patricia Tatich, Director of the Planning & Community Development Department, who distributed copies of her Agenda and an attachment for the meeting, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Tatich commenced with review of the Agenda, and she spoke first on the Pending Items (No. 2 a - g). Relative to the status of the Abbreviated Consolidated Plan, Ms. Tatich explained if the Committee members wished, their idea was that perhaps some parts of a Plan could be carried out by transferring them into an application to the (State) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for a Community Smart Growth Program grant. In addition, Ms. Tatich stated, they felt parts of a Plan could be completed under the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). She stated she would like to discuss the Plan later on in the meeting.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Wayne LaMothe, Assistant Director of the Planning & Community Development Department, who spoke on Pending Item No. 2 b, which concerned the outcome of the meeting between Sheri Norton, County GIS Coordinator, and the Warren County Bar Association relative to her demonstration of the Image Mate Online system to the Association. Mr. LaMothe reported the Bar Association had informed him that they did not have the funds for a system and they would not be interested in the demonstration. Therefore, he stated, the item could be removed from the Pending Items List.

Mr. Belden noted that Pending Item No. 2 c, was that Mr. Stec and Mr. O'Connor were to schedule a meeting with the Planning & Community Development Group and the Warren/Washington County Community Action Agency to determine the issues between the two groups and to resolve any potential conflict. Ms. Tatich advised she had briefly discussed the matter with Mr. Stec and she did not believe the meeting had taken place yet. Mr. F. Thomas advised the matter had not been discussed at the last Community Action Agency Board of Directors meeting. Therefore, Ms. Tatich concluded the item would remain on the Pending Items List.

Pursuant to Pending Item No. 2 d, Mr. LaMothe spoke on the status of the aerial photography of the County for the GIS. He reported that to-date they had only been officially notified by letters from the Town of Bolton that they would participate in the upgrade project and by the Town of Stony Creek that they would not participate. Mr. Belden, Supervisor of the Town of Hague, stated the Town had budgeted funds in its 2008 budget for the upgrades, and Mr. LaMothe acknowledged the information. Mr. Tessier, Supervisor of the Town of Lake George, advised the Town would participate; and Mr. LaMothe acknowledged the information. However, he said, they had not yet received a letter from the Town to that effect.

Mr. LaMothe confirmed for Mr. Belden that the County had budgeted \$25,000 as up-front funds for the aerial photography upgrades. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, concurred. Mr. Monroe apprised that would not be enough money because a lot of the Towns would not be participating. Mr. LaMothe explained the upgrades would only be made for those Towns who chose to participate. He stated in view of the number of responses so far, the costs would be about \$7,000 or \$8,000 out of the \$25,000. Mr. LaMothe stated they would finalize the costs and set up a final date for the Towns to make their decisions.

Pursuant to discussion between Mr. LaMothe and Mr. Tessier on the project costs for the Town of Lake George, Mr. LaMothe apprised the Town's costs would be \$884. Mr. Geraghty, Supervisor of the Town of Warrensburg, asked what the costs for his Town would be, and Mr. LaMothe replied it would be \$1,215.50. Mr. Geraghty stated the Town would send a notification letter to Mr. LaMothe.

Next, Mr. LaMothe spoke on the status of the issue of parcels identified as "tourism accommodations related" and the discrepancies that were discovered (in the Warren County Travel Guide) (Item No. 2 e). He reported the Tourism Office staff had been reviewing the parcels

individually and at this time there were only 34 to 37 parcels left to be reviewed to determine if their status would significantly affect the seasonal population studies and if the owners should be approached to list the properties in the Travel Guide.

Ms. Tatich spoke on Pending Item No. 2 f, which concerned a Shared Municipal Services Incentive Training Workshop. She stated that Laura Moore, the Department's Planning Associate, had attended the Workshop in September because it pertained to issues relative to the Warren-Washington Counties Emergency Services Training Center Project. Ms. Tatich advised when the information from the Workshop was needed it could be provided to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors' Office. She stated Trish Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney, had been in contact with them about the information and how it would play into the potential project.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Nenninger, and she confirmed that a contract for the project had been discussed in the Fire Prevention & Control (including Office of Emergency Services) Committee meeting. She advised the grant application process for the project was underway.

Mr. Belden introduced Deanne Rehm, who, he said was present to address the Committee members relative to the Adirondack Community Housing Trust (Pending Item No. 2 g).

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Rehm, who stated she was present today on behalf of the Adirondack Community Housing Trust (ACHT) and that she was a member of the Board of Directors of the ACHT. She distributed copies of a handout entitled, "An Introduction to Adirondack Community Housing Trust" to the Committee members. A copy of the handout is on file with the minutes. Ms. Rehm noted Mr. Monroe had attended meetings of the ACHT.

Ms. Rehm commented the question might be asked as to what the ACHT was and why people would care about it. She stated the Trust was created about two and a-half years ago at about the same time property values in the up-County communities were booming and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages began to look into the situation that local residents and local families could not afford to continue to live in those communities. Ms. Rehm stated that communities needed residents and families in order to support schools, provide volunteers for fire and emergency services, and especially to work in the communities.

Ms. Rehm cited as an example housing costs in Lake Placid were so high that people who worked in the community could not afford to live there and they were now being brought in by bus to their workplaces. She noted she thought that could be true about the Town of Bolton, as many people who worked in the Town lived in other places where there might still be affordable housing. Ms. Rehm apprised in the last year the median selling price of a home in Bolton was \$325,000 and between the Towns of Chester and Horicon the median price was \$276,000. However, she apprised, the price of affordable housing for a family with an income level of \$40,000 to \$50,000 was \$125,000 to perhaps \$150,000 and there were very few homes left at that price.

Ms. Rehm stated the issue was what could be done about the situation and was there a place for an institution that was not government as such, but a non-official body that could help to provide housing. She noted in cases where grants were made to help buyers purchase houses, the houses might eventually be sold at high prices and then they were no longer affordable for that level of buyer. Ms. Rehm advised the goal of the ACHT was to make homes perpetually affordable and it was based on the concept of a housing trust that operated in Burlington, Vermont. Ms. Rehm stated when Senator Elizabeth Little became aware of the housing situation and how the housing trust in Burlington worked, she had obtained \$1 million through the State budget to be used by the not-for-profit ACHT. She stated the Board of Directors was then formed and the structure was now in place for the Trust to move ahead.

Ms. Rehm noted she wanted the Committee members to know how the Trust worked and how Warren County could possibly help with the project. She explained that the ACHT would own the land forever and only the house on the property would be owned by the homeowner and they would pay the taxes on the home and the land. In some cases, she said, the Trust would finance a portion of the mortgage. Ms. Rehm stated the homeowner could live in the house for as long as they wished and they had to sign an agreement with the Trust which limited the amount the home could be sold for. She advised under the agreement the seller would receive 25 percent of the amount the house had appreciated while they had owned it. Ms. Rehm explained the Trust would then take back the house for resale to buyers in the \$35,000 to \$45,000 income bracket.

Ms. Rehm spoke on how the County might be able to help with the project. She stated if through the real property tax process the ACHT could be listed as a preferred buyer, like the Towns were now, they might be able to purchase land at low prices. Ms. Rehm noted she had spoken briefly to Ms. Nenner about that possibility, although Paul Dusek, the County Attorney, would have to look at how that process would actually work. She commented that the \$1 million allocation would be used up quickly if they had to purchase land that cost \$35,000 or \$40,000 per parcel which would limit the number of future homeowners they could assist.

Ms. Rehm stated she had wanted to introduce the basic concept of the ACHT to the Committee members and she would be glad to answer any questions they might have about it. She stressed that the Board of Directors represented all of the north country. Ms. Rehm stated they had received a lot of assistance from the Director of Essex County's Housing Assistance Program and he was now a member of ACHT's Board of Directors. Ultimately, she added, the Trust would have a budget and paid staff. Ms. Rehm noted she thought a press release about the Trust would be issued next month and they hoped to have some homes ready to sell and buyers for them by the first of the year.

Dialogue ensued between Mr. Belden and Ms. Rehm, wherein Ms. Rehm suggested that perhaps now that the Supervisors were aware that the Trust existed they could find some properties in their Towns that the Trust could purchase at a reasonable cost. Ms. Rehm responded to questions from the Committee members on various aspects of the ACHT. She advised the first communities they would work in were the Towns of Keene, Wilmington and Long Lake. She

noted in the Town of Long Lake the Town would purchase land directly and then the Trust would take it over. Ms. Rehm confirmed at this time the Trust's funds were only available for communities within the Adirondack Park. She advised there were income limits which were up to 120 percent of the median income which she thought was for the particular County involved. However, Ms. Rehm stated, they would like to keep the income eligibility level to around the 80 percent range.

Mr. Monroe suggested it seemed that tax sales might provide the Trust with the opportunity to also obtain houses of owners who were facing loss of the home due to taxes and that would enable the Trust to obtain the land and then allow the distressed homeowner to remain in the home. Ms. Rehm acknowledged the suggestion. She added the Trust provided education on the responsibilities of owning a home. The applicants also had to be bankable and the Trust would assist them in that regard, she said. Ms. Rehm stated the number of banks that would finance the Trust's applicants was increasing.

Mr. Gabriels noted the point that the Trust hoped to be able to have the houses assessed for the restricted resale value; and, he questioned if that would require legislative action. Ms. Rehm responded they hoped that would not be necessary. She advised one of the other board members was also from the assessment community and at the end of the week they were going to the (State) Office of Real Property Services to discuss that issue. Ms. Rehm stated they wanted to make sure that the assessments could be restricted and that taxes would be paid on the houses and properties that the Trust would own in proportion to the resale prices. Mr. Gabriels queried if it would help to have the County support the concept for the discussion with the Office of Real Property Services. Ms. Rehm responded they had spoken with Senator Little about the idea and they thought there would not be a problem with the State. However, she said, if any problems did arise she would come back to the Committee for assistance.

Mr. Monroe queried if the Committee should consider approving a resolution to support the concept of the Adirondack Community Housing Trust and to encourage the County to work with the Trust in any way possible including the possibility that the County would notify the Trust of any potential tax sale properties it could purchase. Mr. Belden agreed that a resolution should be considered.

Mr. Monroe moved that the aforementioned recommendation be approved. Mr. Gabriels seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. The necessary resolution was authorized for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Rehm advised she had spoken briefly with Ms. Tatich about the possibility of the Trust and the Planning & Community Development Department collaborating to do a multi-County survey of housing needs. She noted there might be some grant funds available that could be used for a survey. Ms. Rehm stated she had also briefly discussed the idea with the Director of Essex County's Housing Assistance Program. Mr. Monroe stated he had also discussed the survey idea with Ms. Tatich and Mr. LaMothe and he felt all the Adirondack communities should be surveyed.

Ms. Rehm advised the Trust's Board of Directors would be meeting on November 7th and she asked if there was anything available in advance that she could take to the Board that it be sent to her. Mr. Monroe commented it would be too much for one County to conduct a survey of all of the Adirondack communities, and he asked if there was a way either the Trust or the Housing Director could do the work through a contract with the communities. Ms. Rehm replied the Director would have to be asked that question. She added she thought that would be a good idea.

Mr. Belden thanked Ms. Rehm for her presentation; and Ms. Rehm thanked the Committee members for their attention to her presentation.

Review of the Agenda items resumed and under Agenda Item No. 3 a and b, Mr. LaMothe stated the first request was to increase Capital Project No. H249.9550 280 First Wilderness Corridor 2005 to allocate matching funds. He advised this allocation was made annually.

Motion was made by Mr. Monroe, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned increase in Capital Project, as presented, and to refer it to the Finance Committee. A copy of a resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Pursuant to Agenda Item No. 3 b, Ms. Tatich discussed the question of whether or not the Committee members would want to consider the approval of a submission of an application for an Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program grant.

Ms. Tatich stated Mr. Monroe, Mr. LaMothe and she had discussed that one possible project for the grant application would be a technological assessment of broadband (wireless internet) and related technologies to look for opportunities in communities to reach places that were not currently covered by those services. Ms. Tatich noted the assessment would look for buildings that could be used for the broadband connections. She advised as a result of the discussion, Mr. LaMothe and she had researched some of the new broadband technology and found that it would eventually be possible to extend the services further through the use of antennas and satellite-type dishes. She advised Mr. Monroe had found a company from Syracuse that would conduct such an assessment for a cost of \$40,000. Ms. Tatich apprised the grant could provide a \$50,000 maximum allowance for a singular entity to do an assessment and the County could be the entity.

Ms. Tatich advised the second potential project they had discussed was a housing assessment to look at what the needs and the market would be. She stated this project would also include more than Warren County and it related to Ms. Rehm's information on what Essex County had done and what the ACHT wished to do about housing. Ms. Tatich stated they thought perhaps Hamilton County could also be involved in a housing assessment for all three Counties. She noted perhaps a technology project could also involve other Counties, although she had not discussed that aspect of the project.

Ms. Tatich queried if they should apply for a technology project and if they should find out if other Counties would be interested in either a technology project and/or a housing project for the Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program grant.

Discussion ensued on the question of whether or not a resolution to authorize submission of the grant application had been approved at the last Committee meeting. Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, concurred with Mr. LaMothe that because the deadline for the grant application was extended, a resolution had not been prepared for the October 16th Board of Supervisors' meeting.

Ms. Tatich stated relative to the grant application they had also looked at another potential project which would involve the GIS. Mr. LaMothe advised they had also discussed the possibility of obtaining services to digitize the County's tax maps which would entail the hiring of either a temporary employee or employees for up to a year. He explained that quite a few years ago maps of the footprints of all the buildings within the County had been digitized from aerial images and he thought those maps were current up to around 1994. Mr. LaMothe stated since new and better quality images than those in the current digitized maps would be made soon, a person could be hired and funded by this program to add the footprints of all the new buildings that had been built in the County since 1994. He stated the information would be related to the building permits and it would show when the buildings were constructed and what the growth patterns had been from year to year. Mr. LaMothe explained the information would be a tool that would enable the communities to see where their growth patterns were and how to adjust any land use controls or what areas would need to be addressed relative to the impact on natural resources.

Ms. Tatich asked for the Committee members' input on which of the project or projects they should apply for. Mr. Monroe stated he thought the biggest problem was affordable housing. However, he noted, broadband would enable people to work from their homes and perhaps that would generate home ownership. Mr. Monroe stated he had discussed the affordable housing issue with some people from Hamilton County and they would like to possibly pursue an Adirondack-wide affordable housing project. However, he said, he did not know if they would have the ability to handle such a project. Mr. Monroe noted if there was going to be an Adirondack-wide affordable housing project, it would probably make sense to involve Essex County because they had the aforementioned Housing Director who was also directly involved with the ACHT. He acknowledged the identification of the building footprints was also a good idea. However, Mr. Monroe stated, he would support a broadband project because it had the greatest potential to help the economy and possibly Hamilton and Essex Counties could pursue the affordable housing aspect.

Mr. Gabriels questioned if a broadband project was pursued could the three technologies of broadband, Wi Fi computer technology and cellular phone service be bundled into one project. Mr. Monroe responded with regard to cellular service there was a company named Steeples.com which claimed to represent 29,000 churches and that could locate cell phone antennas in existing church steeples. He apprised the costs to do that would be around \$15,000 compared to \$50,000

for cell towers and because existing buildings would be used, the project would be permitted easily by the Adirondack Park Agency. However, Mr. Monroe explained, cell service from steeples would only extend for about a couple of miles from the existing hamlets. He noted he understood if fiber optics technology was available small antennas could be placed on utility poles. Mr. Monroe concluded if broadband and something like the steeples sites were combined there would be the potential to provide cellular service. He advised the Steeples.com firm had contacted the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) relative to a grant application, although, he did not know whether or not they would be applying for an ANCA grant.

Mr. Geraghty left the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Mr. Gabriels stated he had raised the question because in connection with cellular service he had asked the Economic Development Corporation for a map of T-1 lines in the County and the response was that would be a hard project to do. He noted he was aware that Senator Little was looking for suitable mountain sites for cell tower locations, although he did not know the status of that project. Mr. Gabriels queried if the grant application had to have a definitive project; and Mr. LaMothe confirmed that was correct. Mr. Monroe noted although multiple projects could be applied for if they were awarded all the grants there would not be enough time to carry out all the projects.

Motion was made by Mr. Monroe and seconded by Mr. Gabriels to approve the submission of a grant application for an Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program grant.

Discussion ensued on which project should be selected for the grant application. Mr. Monroe questioned if the theory for a broadband project was that it would not create a lot of additional work for the Planning Department because the work would be contracted out. Ms. Tatich concurred. She suggested if they applied for a broadband project as a County application she would contact Essex County's Housing Director to see if they would sponsor an application for an affordable housing project. Ms. Tatich stated if Essex County would do that, perhaps the Department on behalf of Warren County could partner with them on the application. She suggested Hamilton County might also be involved in the housing application. Ms. Tatich acknowledged she did not know whether or not the other Counties would want to go in that direction. She noted she did not want to lose the opportunity to do a housing project if Essex County did not want to apply for it. If that were the case, Ms. Tatich stated, perhaps the Department could do that application if Essex County would agree to work with them and to get Hamilton County involved. Then, she suggested they could also apply for a broadband project for Warren County. Ms. Tatich advised she would recommend that was the direction they should take.

Mr. Monroe amended his motion to approve that Ms. Tatich should proceed as recommended for the Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Program grant. Mr. Gabriels seconded the motion, as amended, and the amended motion was carried unanimously. The necessary resolution was authorized for the next board meeting. A copy of a resolution request form is on

file with the minutes.

Ms. Tatich commenced with review of the Planning General Agenda Items listed under Agenda Item No. 4 a and b. First, she spoke on some projects that would be done through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). She stated Mr. Geraghty, Supervisor of the Town of Warrensburg, had requested some assistance from the Planning Department staff with the Town's LWRP project and they would provide that assistance.

Next, Mr. LaMothe spoke on projects relative to the First Wilderness Corridor Initiative. He advised that previously an application had been submitted to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for restoration work on two of the three buildings which were located on the Kellogg property in North Creek. Mr. LaMothe stated the middle building was not included in the application pending review of the project by the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. He reported the State had completed the review and the APA had also looked at the building and they would like to again partner with the Town of Johnsbury on an application for funds to rehabilitate the middle building. Mr. LaMothe explained the Town would sponsor the application because the County was not an eligible applicant for the grant. He stated they would look at the costs per square foot for the work and they would also look at tying the grant into the EPF funds to rehabilitate the three buildings and to provide water and sewer infrastructure for all of them.

Mr. LaMothe stated also under the Initiative they would be supporting separate applications from Warrensburg and the Town of Lake Luzerne for projects they had underway. Mr. Belden queried if the Committee needed to take any action on the applications; and Mr. LaMothe replied not at this time. He stated at a later time a resolution would be necessary to amend the current Intermunicipal agreement to include a revised Work Plan for the projects.

Concluding the Agenda, Ms. Tatich spoke on the Shared Services grant. She stated the issue of opportunities for the County to work with the City of Glens Falls on this grant application had been discussed by the Board of Supervisors. She advised she had reviewed the application and the project and she had some questions about it that would need to be answered. Ms. Tatich noted she understood a meeting between the City and County had been scheduled to discuss the grant application and if it should be acted on. Mrs. Sady confirmed a meeting of the Municipal Shared Services Committee was scheduled for November 7th after the Finance Committee meeting. Ms. Tatich stated they would be working with that Committee on the grant application.

There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Mason and seconded by Mr. Monroe, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Goodman, Secretary to the Clerk