

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: MUNICIPAL SHARED SERVICES

DATE: FEBRUARY 1, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS O'CONNOR
SHEEHAN
BELDEN
MERLINO

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS MASON
VANNESS
TESSIER

OTHERS PRESENT:

MAYOR LEROY AKINS, CITY OF GLENS FALLS
SUZANNA BERND, GLENS FALLS CIVIC CENTER
LEN FOSBROOK, PRESIDENT - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
PETER WOHL, DIRECTOR - ADIRONDACK REGIONAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR
PATRICIA TATICH, DIRECTOR - PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JAMIE WHITE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS: CHAMPAGNE
GERAGHTY
GIRARD
KENNY
STEC
F. THOMAS
JOANN MCKINSTRY, CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL SERVICES
HAL PAYNE, ADMINISTRATOR - WESTMOUNT HEALTH FACILITY
MAURY THOMPSON, *THE POST STAR*
DAVID CEDERSTROM, *THE CHRONICLE*
AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting of the Municipal Shared Services Committee to order at 11:08 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2006 meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. O'Connor noted that neither Mr. W. Thomas, nor Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Service, were present and that only a brief agenda was intended for the meeting. He noted that although the Civic Center and the City of Glens Falls were very valuable to the County, the Committee was not intended to deal solely with Civic Center issues. The purpose of the Municipal Shared Services Committee was to listen to and discuss issues from any Department of the City of Glens Falls, Mr. O'Connor advised. In addition, he noted, although the Supervisors representing the various wards of the City of Glens Falls were sensitive to the City's issues, their

primary duty was to Warren County. Mr. O'Connor said that it was not the duty of the Glens Falls Supervisors to make suggestions to the City for improvement or change, rather it was the duty of the City's representatives, such as the Mayor and Common Council, to bring their suggestions and requests for additional support to the Committee for discussion. That being said, Mr. O'Connor apprised that issues such as East Field and City commerce were welcomed for discussion in addition to the Civic Center. He wanted no misunderstanding that the Committee was in existence to advise the City of Glens Falls, or any other community for that matter, on the direction they should proceed, the Committee was intended for discussion purposes only, Mr. O'Connor stated.

Mr. O'Connor reminded the Committee that the last meeting had been devoted primarily to discussion of the Civic Center and what could be done to improve business therein, specifically in the form of developing a business plan. He added that as per the Committee's suggestion, Jamie White, Business Development Coordinator, had agreed to assist the City in developing the business plan for the Civic Center and Mr. O'Connor asked Ms. White if she'd had the opportunity to begin research with respect to the matter. Ms. White replied that the only information she had received had been in the form of the minutes of prior Committee meetings. She noted that from the minutes she had learned that Len Fosbrook, President of the EDC (Economic Development Corporation), had several positive ideas for development of a business plan. She noted that she was available to help in any way possible; however, she felt that the process would be best served by her assistance in collecting the information needed to develop a plan rather than developing the plan herself. Ms. White asked Mr. Fosbrook to update the Committee on what he felt would be the best process for the City of Glens Falls and the development of a business plan for the Civic Center.

Mr. Fosbrook apprised that he and Peter Wohl, Director of the Adirondack Regional Business Incubator, had attended the December Committee meeting and had left with a feeling that there was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and support for developing a business plan for the future of the Glens Falls Civic Center. Mr. Fosbrook noted that a meeting had been held with LeRoy Akins, Mayor of the City of Glens Falls wherein Mayor Akins, Mr. Wohl and himself had discussed ideas for an alternative study for the Civic Center. As a result of the meeting, Mr. Wohl had been designated as the project manager for the study and it was determined that the consultant from the National Development Council would be incorporated as a third party consultant for development of the project proposal by reviewing the subject with a very broad overview.

Mr. Fosbrook stated that the proposal developed by Mr. Wohl, in collaboration with the National Development Council consultant, included a description of the background of the project, the scope of work suggested, a work plan and a table identifying the anticipated time frame associated with each project task. Mr. Fosbrook advised that this proposal was by no means the final phase of the project as they certainly expected interjection from all parties involved to make additional determinations as to the data to be collected and work needed to complete the process.

Mr. Wohl distributed copies of his Civic Center Project Proposal to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. He stated that he would provide a brief overview of the proposal,

which had been developed based on the outcome and direction of the prior Committee meeting. Mr. Wohl noted that the proposal was in draft form, and marked as such, because he anticipated corrections and additions from the Committee.

Mr. Wohl explained that in preparing the proposal it was determined that work needed to be done to identify the options and alternatives available to achieve reduction of the fiscal burden on the City of Glens Falls while increasing the economic impact of the Civic Center on the City and surrounding areas. The proposal identified that alternatives would be developed for future discussion by the Committee by reviewing all aspects of the Civic Center from management and operations to investments and ownership, Mr. Wohl stated. He added that the study would also review whether an authority, placed in an ownership capacity, would be appropriate for the Civic Center as well as analyze all factors by documentation review, interviews with involved parties and the solicitation of feedback from professional management organizations which operate similar facilities throughout the Country. The study would take about four to six months to complete, Mr. Wohl apprised.

With respect to the development of an authority for ownership of the Civic Center, Mr. O'Connor stated that it was his understanding from prior Committee meetings that the City of Glens Falls would prefer to develop verbiage for their own authority rather than continuing with the one already in place, and he asked Mayor Akins if that was correct. Mayor Akins replied that Paul Dusek, County Attorney, had advised that the authority in place would expire within the next couple of years and he recommended that the verbiage of the authority would be better written by today's standards and based on a regional scope.

Mr. Wohl noted that this was an interesting topic as the notion of an authority had been suggested in other instances and the study would provide a clearer picture of what establishing an authority meant, how it related to ownership and operation, as well as the positives and negatives of such establishment. The study would be more to inform than to decide or provide the ultimate end goal, Mr. Wohl stated; working closely with the City, County and outside influences, the report would identify alternate options available to viably achieve the goals desired and could be debated by the Committee and other interested parties, he added.

Mr. O'Connor acknowledged that Patricia Tatich, Director of Planning and Community Development for Warren County, was in attendance; he thanked her for her presence and asked if she had any thoughts to add on the subject. Ms. Tatich thanked the Committee for inviting her to the meeting and for including her Department in the process. She noted that she and her Department had discussed the areas in which they might be best suited to offer assistance and had decided that the Committee would be best served by the Departments assistance with activities such as gathering information and data, mapping and GIS (Geographical Information Services) services. Ms. Tatich added that the Planning and Community Development Department would be ready and able to provide assistance wherever the Committee deemed necessary.

Mr. Fosbrook stated that it was gratifying to see that in the New York State Governor's proposed

budget, Shared Services would be fully funded. He added that this was an initiative of Senator Little and it was good for the Municipal Shared Services to be in existence in her home territory and taking advantage of this benefit. Mr. Fosbrook advised that, as in other instances, his Department continued to work with Ms. Tatch and the Planning and Community Development Department to research the availability of grant funding to assist with current and future projects. He noted that the current study, by using the resources of the Planning and Community Development Department and the EDC, would not require any Warren County funding. Mr. Fosbrook added that he felt the primary goal for the Committee was to continue in its current capacity, creating no additional costs to the County, and seeking grant funding where needed.

Another area where the County might assist the City could be in the area of code enforcement, Mr. Fosbrook suggested. He explained that in areas attempting to rejuvenate their downtowns, the government utilized code enforcement to prompt building owners to maintain their property and make improvements where necessary. Mr. Fosbrook apprised that he had a preliminary discussion with Marvin Lemery, Administrator of Fire Prevention & Building Code Enforcement, with respect to the possibility of instituting such procedure in connection with the County's Code Enforcement Office, and the City might be interested in discussing this possibility further.

Mr. O'Connor thanked Mr. Fosbrook for his suggestion, but noted that the purpose of the Committee was simply to discuss possibilities and ideas for the future and not to dictate to the governing bodies.

Discussion ensued.

Mayor Akins noted that he was in favor of the plan to begin a study researching all opportunities for the Glens Falls Civic Center and he noted that if the study included the development of a template to determine the factors contributing to the Civic Center's current status it should be produced in connection with the other arenas in the area. For example, Mayor Akins explained, the Glens Falls Civic Center was owned by a City of 14,000 while the Binghamton Arena was owned by Broome County, which was comprised of a much larger population. He suggested that the statistical information concerning all of the surrounding arenas be included in the report to give a more detailed comparison of the status of the Civic Center.

Referring to Mr. Fosbrook's suggestion with respect to code enforcement, Mayor Akins apprised that the City maintained a Building and Code Enforcement Office which was comprised of one Director and one Code Enforcement Officer, which the Common Council had reduced to a half-time position for 2007 (*meaning that the position was only funded through June of 2007*), despite the public demand for Building and Code Enforcement services. Mayor Akins advised that the Common Council would be responsible for finding a source of funding for the position for the balance of the year or developing an alternate solution.

Mayor Akins advised that he and the City were always considering what services might be consolidated with Warren County's, as the Common Council had become very concerned with growing expenses. He stated that although the Civic Center had become paramount to many people,

there were several other areas of the City in need of assistance and reform such as East Field. Mayor Akins noted that East Field had always been looked upon more favorably by Warren County than the Civic Center because it encompassed a vast number of programs available to all Warren County residents and the facility could easily fit into the County's current Parks and Recreation programs.

Mr. O'Connor stated that prior Chairmen of the Board had often mentioned that although East Field was not as financially draining to the City as the Civic Center, it might be a great help to them if Warren County took ownership of the facility and absorbed it into its Parks & Recreation Department. He added that East Field required several upgrades which could be made by the County in a much more timely fashion. Mr. O'Connor stated that he was in favor of Warren County's acquisition of East Field and he suggested that a meeting of all interested parties, such as the full Board of Supervisors and Common Council, be assembled to discuss the possibility of such acquisition. He noted that although the meeting would be difficult to schedule, because many of the Common Council members and Town Supervisors worked regular jobs during the day, something could be worked out.

Mr. Girard apprised that in speaking with Mr. Tessier he learned that the Board had discussed acquisition of East Field in the past with no resolution. He said that as the process began again, he understood that final decisions on the acquisition had to be made with the approval of the entire Board of Supervisors, along with the Mayor and the Common Council. Mr. Girard noted that he had met with Michael Bush, Councilman of the 1st Ward of the City of Glens Falls, Jack Diamond, President of the Common Council, as well as the Committee of neighbors in support of East Field. During that meeting, Mr. Girard apprised, the County's interest in acquiring the property had been expressed and the group had extended their agreement that the County was certainly better suited to make the necessary improvements to East Field than the City. He added that the group cared very much about the facility and wanted to see the site restored to its former stature and beauty. Mr. Girard stated that Mr. Diamond had apprised the rest of the Common Council of the County's intent and the idea was well received.

Discussion ensued.

It was the consensus of the Committee that Warren County should begin to research the costs and implications of their assuming responsibility for the East Field facility.

Mr. Sheehan suggested that in addition to the East Field site, the County should consider adopting other City parks which are also used by Warren County residents, but falling into disrepair.

Mr. Kenny stated that the first step in the process should be to meet with the Common Council to determine what sites, in addition to East Field, should be acquired and proceed from there, and Mr. O'Connor concurred.

Mr. Merlino apprised that he was very happy to hear of the County's interest in East Field and other City parks and he noted that the Town of Lake Luzerne also employed a Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Merlino suggested that each town send an employee once a month to maintain

facilities such as East Field, and in doing so, encompassing all of the various towns under one project. He pointed out that by doing this they would avoid incurring the costs of additional staff and benefits by utilizing employees already salaried by the each town.

Mr. Stec agreed with Mr. Merlino's suggestion and noted that the County had used this principal in the past, specifically with the snowmobile trails where County employees maintained City property. He noted that it might be pertinent to have Mr. Dusek review the implications of the process and possibly prepare a resolution for insurance protection purposes. He added that if some sort of framework could be set up to allow one towns employees to work within another it could set the foundation for municipal shared services.

Mr. O'Connor stated that Mr. Merlino's suggestion was a wonderful analysis of shared services and he commended the suggestion. He noted that if the legal hurdles could be crossed the process could be implemented in this and many other instances.

Discussion ensued.

Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, noted that there might be something of this nature already in place as Warren County has extended assistance and equipment to other towns in the past. She noted that she would check on the existence of such a resolution and refer back to the Committee.

Ms. Tatich apprised that several years ago the Planning and Community Development Committee had applied for funding in connection with the communities along the Hudson River and the rail line from Lake Luzerne to North Creek; a project which became known as the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor. She added that this had been the platform for a project to unify the communities along the Corridor. Ms. Tatich said that all of these projects were in the spirit of unification and she stated that she felt the City of Glens Falls and Warren County could work together in developing a strong relationship to move these new projects forward. She noted that because Warren County had received such strong support in the past for projects like the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor, the parties might consider applying for grant funding jointly for future projects such as East Field.

Mr. Champagne noted that during prior negotiations for a facility to house the Community Action Agency, it was determined that Warren County could not share grant funding with the City of Glens Falls because the City was considered a stand-alone community. He stated that although he was in favor of Ms. Tatich's suggestion he did not know how they would be able to work around the City's "stand alone" status to obtain joint funding. Ms. Tatich replied that one of the largest funding sources available was the Small Cities Block Grant Program, which she noted the City had received grant funding from on an entitlement basis under the status of an urban renewal community; she added that other communities received funding from the same grant program on a discretionary basis. Ms. Tatich stated that the Committee might consider reaching out to Senator Little to address this issue and request permission to mesh the two separate funding sources together to gain one large sum available to both groups working towards a similar goal.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Champagne apprised that in prior years the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls had coordinated services by sharing positions such as a Dog Warden, Assessor and Street Light Repair between the two communities. He suggested that a list positions that might possibly be shared between the County and the City be assembled for the Committee's consideration to consolidate services between the two groups. Mr. Champagne added that it was wonderful to see the Committee putting into action some thoughts that had been tossed around by prior Supervisors after so many years, such as the possible acquisition of the East Field facility.

That being said, Mr. Fosbrook requested a resolution to proceed with the Civic Center study.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to authorize the EDC to proceed with study related to the management and operation of the Glens Falls Civic Center, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 16th Board meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously in support of the investigation of the County assuming operations of East Field, as well as other possible City recreation facilities, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 16th Board meeting.

Mr. Girard noted that in prior searches for grant funding, it had been expressed that more could be done for East Field, in the way of funding, if Warren County owned the facility, and he asked the other Committee members to keep this in mind when considering the project.

Mr. O'Connor asked Mayor Akins if he felt the Civic Center study would be a worthwhile venture and Mayor Akins replied affirmatively. He added that the study was one of the projects he had discussed with the EDC to develop the research and data needed to compare the Civic Center to other such facilities throughout the state on an apples to apples basis. Mayor Akins asked Mr. O'Connor what the next step in the resolution process was and Mr. O'Connor replied that the resolutions pertaining to the Civic Center study and the acquisition of East Field would be presented to the full Board of Supervisors at their next meeting on February 16th for approval. Upon the Board's approval, Mr. O'Connor apprised, Mayor Akins would be responsible for contacting the Common Council to apprise them of the situation.

Mayor Akins stated that he would present the information to the Common Council at their next meeting on February 13th at which time resolutions similar to those authorized by the Committee would be developed.

Discussion ensued.

Suzanna Bernd, of the Glens Falls Civic Center, requested that the Civic Center Project Proposal be revised prior to its presentation to the Board of Supervisors as she had found several incorrect figures therein. For instance, she noted, the annual operating deficit was actually \$434,000 rather than the \$800,000 listed in the proposal. Mr. Wohl reiterated that the proposal was in draft form and could certainly be revised with Ms. Bernd's assistance prior to its presentation at the February 16th Board meeting.

Mr. O'Connor noted that in preparing for the Committee meeting he had thought there would be only a very short agenda; however, with the Committee members' interjection and suggestions it had become a very productive and informative meeting and thanked everyone present for their attendance. He advised that the Municipal Shared Services Committee had been named a Standing Committee, meaning that it was intended for the Committee to meet regularly each month. Mr. O'Connor asked the Committee members if they felt the Committee should remain on the Standing Committee list or be moved to the list of Special Committee which would only meet when necessary. Mr. Belden stated that he thought the Committee should remain on the Standing Committee listing to be sure that the processes put in motion, with respect to both the Civic Center and East Field, were maintained.

Mrs. Sady suggested that Pat Beland, Director of the Parks, Recreation and Railroad Department, be invited to the next Committee meeting to determine what could feasibly be done to facilitate the repairs to East Field and possibly to other City parks in need of restoration and Mr. O'Connor agreed.

Ms. Bernd advised that it was very common for situations surrounding the Civic Center to be misrepresented by the local newspapers. She asked the reporters present to note that the study was simply to explore all options available for the future of the Civic Center and was in no way intended to imply that any of the staff currently employed by the Civic Center were in jeopardy of losing their positions.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Belden apprised that recently he had viewed a television advertisement with respect to upcoming basketball events to be held at the Civic Center and he commented that the advertisement was very well done. Ms. Bernd thanked Mr. Belden for his compliment and advised that the advertisement had been produced with the use of Warren County Occupancy Tax funding.

Mr. Fosbrook asked Mayor Akins if the EDC should continue to research the use of code enforcement within the City and Mayor Akins replied in the negative. He added that prior to making any decisions with respect to the matter the Common Council would have to be consulted.

Mr. O'Connor thanked Mayor Akins for his presence at both the Municipal Shared Services Committee meetings and the Board of Supervisors meetings held each month. He added that he felt all of the Warren County Supervisors appreciated his attendance as well. Mayor Akins replied that his attendance allowed him to remain apprised of situations within the County and also to see how these issues related to the City.

Mr. O'Connor apprised the Committee of a recent conversation with an acquaintance considering campaigning for a position as a Town Supervisor. Upon Mr. O'Connor's description of the rewarding, yet sometimes thankless, position and the minimal salary received for such services, the acquaintance immediately changed his mind about becoming a Supervisor. He advised that the comical conversation only reinforced the fact that becoming a Town Supervisor was something done out of a love of the community and for the position, but had nothing to do with the monetary return.

As there was no further business to come before the Municipal Shared Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 12:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist