WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: JUNE 10, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	**OTHERS PRESENT:**
SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BELDEN	PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY
O'CONNOR	HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
CHAMPAGNE	
KENNY	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
SHEEHAN	
MERLINO	RICK MURPHY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF FISCAL SERVICES
TAYLOR	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
STEC	SUPERVISORS BENTLEY
	GIRARD
	GOODSPEED
	PITKIN
	TESSIER
	THOMAS
	VANNESS
	SIMMES
	SOKOL
	STRAINER
	ALYSON MARTIN, *THE POST STAR*
	THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
	JONATHAN ALEXANDER, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
	DAVID CEDERSTROM, *THE CHRONICLE*
	AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST
	SEE THE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL 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. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the May 6, 2009 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

The meeting agenda was distributed to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Geraghty announced that the agenda included several referrals from other Committees with respect to budget reductions, the first of which was included under Agenda Item 3 in the of form a referral from the Extension Services Committee recommending a 25% reduction in the funding allocated to Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and he asked Mr. Girard, Chairman of the Extension Services Committee, to speak on the matter.

Mr. Girard apprised that during the June 3rd meeting of the Extension Services Committee a power point presentation was given respective to the CCE budget and the impact that the 50% funding reduction proposed by the Budget Committee would have on the programs offered. He said that during their presentation, CCE representatives had advised that a 50% funding reduction would lead to the elimination of 10 of the 14 staff members they currently employed, as well as a loss of Federal funding which would occur in light of the resulting reduction of programs offered. Mr. Girard apprised that subsequent to the presentation, the Extension Services Committee had voted in favor of recommending a 25% budget reduction which would constitute a $116,250 savings to the County. He added that a 25% reduction would mean the elimination of only four positions as opposed to the ten that would be abolished if a 50% funding reduction was approved.

Mr. Girard stated that the proposed 50% decrease in CCE funding was not proportionate to other budget reductions being reviewed by the Budget Committee as it would cut their funding in half and would reduce the CCE budget by a total of $235,000. He pointed out that over 17,000 residents per year were educated by the programs offered by CCE at a cost of approximately $7.50 per person and he compared these programs to those offered by Adirondack Community College (ACC) which received much more funding each year from the County. He added that the people who partook of the CCE programs were generally year-round County residents, while ACC attendees might not be; he added that ACC graduates were likely to move on to four-year colleges or employment opportunities in other parts of the State or Country in light of their education. Mr. Girard stated that in his opinion, CCE offered many educational opportunities to those residents not able to attend ACC, thereby improving their quality of life. He said he believed a 50% reduction in funding to CCE portrayed a feeling that their past education efforts were insignificant, which was not the case. Mr. Girard asked the Budget Committee to reconsider their initial decision to reduce CCE funding by 50% and to vote in favor of the 25% reduction recommended by the Extension Services Committee as this was a fair compromise in light of other budget and program reductions.

Mr. Geraghty advised that he had spoken with James Seeley, Executive Director of CCE, and had suggested that Mr. Seeley lobby the State to request that they refrain from cutting State funding to CCE, regardless of the decisions made with respect to the amount of County funding appropriated. He noted that one of the main reasons the County faced such a large deficit for 2010 was due to reductions in State funding.

Mr. Girard said that CCE worked closely with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and there might be some opportunities for State funding through these ventures which would assist the budgetary position of both the County and CCE. He added that CCE and the DSS would be working collaboratively to determine whether the funds were available and if they could be accessed.

When Mr. Geraghty questioned the Committee as to their feelings on the revised reduction amount proposed, Mr. Champagne questioned if the reduction approved would be the amount included in the final budget or if the amount would be revisited once again prior to the approval of the final budget. Mr. Geraghty responded that the amount approved by the Committee for contracted funding, such as for CCE, would be the amount included in the final budget; he added that the early approval of these amounts would allow the organizations to prepare themselves for 2010 funding reductions.

Mr. Kenny said he encouraged the Budget Committee to prioritize the optional services offered and then to determine what programs could be reduced or eliminated in order to reach a consensus on those that would be made for 2010. He said that this would take an extensive amount of time to evaluate each service, program and Department as each had a value to the County. Mr. Kenny stated that there should be an order of priority for what programs were reduced and to what extent; having said this, he added that if funding was reinstated to the original cuts there would be no place to make cuts for the future. He noted that the current program cuts, which were now being renegotiated, were not sufficient to meet the 0% budget increase goal and if they reinstated funding the deficit would only grow bigger, increasing the need to reduce funding in other areas and continuing the negotiating process in other areas. Mr. Champagne responded that he did not know what measure could be used to appropriately evaluate and prioritize the programs and services offered by various County Departments as all held a different worth which was subjective depending on the varying views of the individual discussing the matter.

Mr. Sheehan said that he did not think it was fair to finalize budget reductions for contracted funding so early in the year as it was possible that other budget reduction efforts which had not yet been fully considered might lead to budget savings consequently allowing for increased funding later in the year. Mr. Geraghty countered that even with all of the budget reductions proposed, a considerable deficit remained and it was unlikely that there would be any reinstatement in funding for reduced programs. He then restated his feeling that it was unfair to wait until November to make final budget decisions and expect the Departments and other funded entities to prepare themselves to operate with considerably reduced funding in such a short period of time.

Mr. Merlino commented that it seemed like every reduction proposed was met with resistance by some group lobbying for the restoration of funding which made the budget reduction process very difficult. He said that he felt they were proceeding with the reduction process in the wrong order as there were many Department Heads and employees who were willing to reduce programs and even accept salary reductions in order to retain the continuity of their Departments; however, he said, these measures were not being considered prior to making program reductions. Mr. Merlino said that he felt if everyone worked together they could find a way to overcome the budget crisis and the best way to do so would be to determine all of the reduction possibilities available and consider them prior to making any final decisions.

Mr. Taylor stated that it had become apparent that the County was facing a budget crisis for 2010 and the time had come for the Committee to review the programs offered to determine which were essential to County operations, as opposed to those that were simply nice things to offer, and which could be reduced or eliminated.

Chairman Monroe said he agreed with the prospective that they should review all of the budget reduction possibilities available before making any firm decisions. He noted that in speaking with Rick Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of Fiscal Services, it had been confirmed that if the sales tax income were to be reduced by 5% for 2009 it would lead to a $1.2 million decrease in the 2010 Unappropriated Surplus Fund balance, which would be a factor because the General Fund surplus was already dangerously low.

Mr. Champagne suggested that two budgets be prepared, one reflecting the budget reductions proposed by the Budget Committee and another reflecting the recommendations for the lesser reductions suggested in response. He said that the Board of Supervisors could then make a decision as to which budget they preferred, based on the reductions they were willing to approve.

Mr. Geraghty announced that a vote on the recommended budget reductions did not have to be taken at the current meeting; however, he said, he wanted to allow the Chairman of the respective Committees the opportunity to present their suggestions for lesser budget reductions for the Budget Committee's consideration. He added that in fairness to the organizations concerned, he felt that it was appropriate to provide firm funding reduction figures sooner, rather than later.

Mr. Girard stated that he was very displeased with the direction taken by the Budget Committee in drastically reducing the CCE budget in a manner disproportionate to other budget reductions. He added that he was also concerned that the reductions had been made with no notification to the Committee Chairmen who then had to address the matter with the Committees. He added that similar reductions were being made within the Youth Bureau, which he would address later in the meeting. He said that he felt it was imperative that decisions be made at the present meeting with respect to the proposed reductions as the people presently filling the positions at risk for elimination were very concerned about their future employment.

Mr. VanNess stated that he agreed with Mr. Merlino's assessment that the budget reduction process was proceeding in the wrong manner and that in his opinion they should have started the process with a review of the proposed retirement incentive program to determine how many positions could be abolished through retirement. He added that once this process was complete, they could determine how much the County would save and then proceed with a review of programs and funding to be reduced.

Chairman Monroe countered with his opinion that the budget process was moving in the right direction and that arguments amongst the members of the Board of Supervisors did not assist the process. He advised that a proposal had been developed which suggested possible means to further reduce the budget in an effort to reach the goal set by the Committee which was a 0% budget increase. Chairman Monroe noted that Paul Dusek, County Attorney; Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, and Mr. Murphy had been instrumental in developing the proposal along with the rest of the Management Committee and he asked Mr. Dusek to outline the proposal for the Committee's benefit; *a copy of the proposal was included in the agenda which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Dusek advised that at the last Personnel Committee meeting it had been determined that the County faced a budgetary crisis which would require assistance from many different sources, including contract reductions and Union negotiations, to resolve it. At that time, he said, one of his recommendations had been to determine where the County stood financially before approaching the Unions. Mr. Dusek stated that he felt the proposal developed by the Management Team addressed these issues and would put the County on the right path to resolve them. He stressed that the proposal was meant to serve as a starting point which would provide some direction in discussions amongst the Supervisors as to how they should proceed in reducing the 2010 Budget. He added that all of the figures reflected in the proposal were estimates which could fluctuate in either direction.

Commencing with his review, Mr. Dusek advised that the proposal had been developed with the assumption that they were trying to meet a $6.3 million deficit in order to facilitate a 0% property tax increase for 2010, understanding, of course, that there were factors which could potentially arise in the future that could change the deficit figure. He said that the first section entitled "Reduction/Savings Not Requiring Any Further Board Action", consisted of measures already approved by the Board of Supervisors for budget reduction which totaled a savings of $1,352,205. Mr. Dusek pointed out that one of the most difficult decisions made by the Board of Supervisors had been the abolishment of 24 positions, which had led to a savings of an estimated $750,000 based on salaries and benefits, as well as the loss of any revenues received by virtue of the positions. He added that he was happy to report that a number of these positions had been vacant positions and had not required the termination of active employees. One-person plowing during winter months had been successfully negotiated with the Unions through the Department of Public Works, Mr. Dusek stated, and would lead to a savings of $30,000; however, he noted, this figure would vary based on the intensity of winter weather. He apprised that other measures, such as a printer costs reduction program proposed by the Information Technology Department; meal allowance reductions in the Department of Public Health and reductions in the amount of overtime used by the DSS, contributed to the $1.35 million total that would be saved through measures already being taken to reduce the County Budget.

Mr. Dusek explained that the second portion of the proposal, entitled "Possible Reduction/Savings Requiring Board Action", was broken down into two sections, the first of which was classified as "Other than Personnel". During his outline of this section, Mr. Dusek apprised that through measures such as contract reductions or eliminations, as well as reductions in the mileage allowance, purchasing expenses, Workers' Compensation rates and capital purchases made by the Westmount Health Facility, the budget could be reduced by $2,564,952. He noted that the $2 million listed under Social Services FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentage) Medicaid Savings were funds received from the State which were typically added to the Unappropriated Surplus Fund, which was why it would require Board action to appropriate the funds differently. Mr. Dusek advised that an additional $230,900 could be saved through changes to the retiree health insurance plan, reassignment of per diem nurses, elimination of supervisory training through the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the institution of voluntary furloughs, as outlined under the "Possible Personnel Cost Reductions" portion of the proposal. Mr. Dusek apprised that the County was not legally able to enforce mandatory furloughs due to many problems with the law in this regard. He said that the County was fortunate in some ways because they were able to learn from the past experiences of Monroe County when they had attempted to implement mandatory furloughs during the 1970's when they had faced a similar budget crisis. Mr. Dusek explained that Monroe County had been sued in connection with the implementation of mandatory furloughs in a case that had reached the Supreme Court. He noted that the figure represented as savings derived in connection with voluntary furloughs was $15,600 and this amount was based on one Department's estimate of what could be saved if voluntary furloughs were offered to their staff. Mr. Dusek added that although the actual savings could be much higher than the figure listed, it was difficult to present an accurate estimation because the furloughs were voluntary; therefore, he said, there was no way to determine the savings that would be realized. In light of this fact, he said that the low figure had been listed because undoubtably there would be other expenses incurred which had not been considered and it would be a good thing to have at least one item with the potential to generate more savings than had been anticipated. Mr. Dusek stated that the grand total for the reductions and savings included in the proposal totaled $4,148,057, leaving only $2,151,943 to be raised through other sources which could include assistance from the Unions, abolishment of positions or tax increases.

The County had been fortunate in the past several years as they had established a very good working relationship with the Unions, Mr. Dusek stated. He added that despite tough negotiating sessions in the past, the County had always been fair to the Unions and had developed a respectful relationship wherein the County and the Unions tried to understand each other's views and requests. Mr. Dusek stated that he was hopeful that the same positive working relationship would apply for any upcoming negotiations in an effort to ease the budget crisis and attain additional savings. He noted that because all Union negotiations were handled in closed sessions, they had not listed any anticipated savings that could be attained through these actions; in addition, he advised that a firm figure could not be provided because they would have to be prepared for the figure to fluctuate based on the results of Union negotiations. Mr. Dusek stated that he would propose that further discussion with respect to negotiating strategies be held in an executive session during the following Personnel Committee meeting.

Respective to the abolishment of additional positions, Mr. Dusek apprised that Mr. Payne had established a listing of new positions that could potentially be eliminated as a means for further budget reduction, if necessary. He said that while this issue was not a pleasant one, and he was sure Mr. Payne had not enjoyed the task of developing the list, the position eliminations had the potential to provide a savings of approximately $2 million. Mr. Dusek added that although the savings would be subject to some adjustment due to any grant funding lost in connection with position eliminations, the anticipated savings would come very close to offsetting the $2.15 million remaining deficit reflected in the proposal. He stated that workforce reduction was certainly not the goal of the Board of Supervisors and he was certain that they would prefer to gain the necessary $2.15 million through attrition or through a retirement incentive program and this was what the Union negotiations would center upon.

Mr. Dusek stated that the proposal offered the Committee a two pronged approach to addressing the budget crisis as it lent the ability to approach the Unions and advise that the issues had been researched and determinations had been made as to where budget reductions could be made to close the bulk of the shortfall. Secondly, he said, it gave them the opportunity to return to the Department Heads once again and present the listing of positions to be potentially abolished and offer them the opportunity to reduce their budgets in other areas in an effort to retain the positions identified for elimination. Mr. Dusek said that the next phase of the process would be to further discuss the Union negotiation process during the upcoming Personnel Committee meeting, following which the actual Union negotiations could begin and Mr. Payne could simultaneously meet with the Department Heads to advise of the positions targeted for elimination. He added that this process needed to be completed within the following 30 to 60 days so that the parties depending on County funding would have appropriate notice with respect to reduced funding and also to develop a firm plan for the 2010 Budget.

The current budget crisis and discussions regarding reductions and position eliminations had caused an anxious atmosphere amongst County employees, Mr. Dusek noted. He said that if the County were able to operate as a private business would, all of the abolishment decisions would be made in private meetings and the employees would be none the wiser until the time layoff notices were distributed. He added that because the County was not able to operate in this manner and all discussions with respect to budget reduction measures had to be discussed in open session, there was a considerable amount of unrest amongst County employees who were concerned about their future employment with the County. Mr. Dusek stated that although he was sympathetic to the plight of the employees, the Board of Supervisors had no choice but to proceed in discussing options publicly, which many times lead to false assumptions as to the intent of their suggestions. While it was certainly not the intent of the Board of Supervisors to cause any angst amongst the employees, Mr. Dusek said that the positive side of the budget negotiations was that it gave the public the opportunity to see the difficult and extensive process undertaken by the Supervisors in developing the budget.

Mr. Stec re-emphasized that the proposal presented by Mr. Dusek identified over $4 million in reductions that could be made without any further position eliminations, considerably closing the gap on the $6.3 million deficit initially identified. He said that although they could not be sure that the $6.3 million figure would not increase based on a decrease in the anticipated sales tax revenues or reductions in State funding, he felt the remaining $2.1 million deficit was attainable through the remaining reduction measures identified during the presentation. Mr. Stec noted that another positive aspect was that the Budget Committee had begun the process to develop a plan to reduce the deficit early in the year which would allow Departments and other funded organizations plenty of time to determine how they would operate with reduced funding in 2010. He then agreed with Mr. Dusek's assessment that although it was unfortunate that discussions with respect to budget reductions and position eliminations had caused County employees to become very anxious about their employment future, the situation could not have been avoided due to the necessity to discuss these matters in a public setting.

Mr. Pitkin noted that ACC had recently requested an additional $90,000 in funding in light of the fact that more Warren County residents were attending the College than Washington County residents. He stated that due to these requests for increased funding and decreases in estimated revenues, he was unable to feel optimistic about the budget situation because he felt the $6.3 million deficit estimated was far less than the amount that would be realized and he suggested that the Committee continue to seriously consider ways to reduce the budget.

Chairman Monroe thanked the Management Team for the proposal they had developed and Mr. Dusek for his presentation. He then pointed out that hard decisions would have to be made in connection with the proposal, one of which would be with respect to the use of the FMAP Medicaid savings which constituted $2 million of the $4.14 million total identified in potential savings. Chairman Monroe apprised that use of the FMAP Medicaid savings to assist in balancing the 2010 Budget was a short-term fix to a long-term problem and could not be relied upon when developing a multi-year budget as the funding would not be received in future years, thereby making it appear as if there were a $2 million deficit for the years following 2010. He said that although it was likely that they would ultimately decide to use the FMAP funding to reduce the 2010 Budget, it was more appropriate to apply the funding to increase the Unappropriated Surplus Fund; therefore, he noted, this would be a hard decision for the Committee to determine which alternative was best for the County. Chairman Monroe stated that decreases in the amount of anticipated sales tax revenue would lead to an increase in the projected budget deficit and these matters also had to be considered.

When questioned with respect to the estimated savings that could be attained through the implementation of the proposed early retirement incentive program, Mr. Dusek apprised that although a review of the number of potential retirements had been performed, it was difficult to estimate savings until the retirement incentive amount was negotiated with the Unions. He noted that in addition to the retirement incentive, other costs had to be paid to County employees upon retirement such as a portion of the sick leave incurred, and they also needed to consider the costs for the positions vacated by retirement which had to be filled to continue County operations. Mr. Dusek stated that in consideration of all these factors it would be very difficult to estimate the savings that could be incurred through the retirement incentive program; however, he said, they could further discuss some of the strategies anticipated in connection with Union negotiations during the executive session to be held in the upcoming Personnel Committee meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Resuming the agenda review, Mr. Girard addressed Item 4 which consisted of a referral from the Human

Services Committee respective to the Budget Committee's proposed reduction in Youth Bureau staff. He advised that during the presentation made by Youth Bureau staff at the recent Human Services Committee meeting, it had been announced that the reduction of one of the two Youth Bureau staff members proposed to occur in July of 2009 would lead to a savings of $21,000; however, he noted, revenues in the amount of $17,000 would also be lost, leading to a net savings of $4,000. Mr. Girard pointed out that the unemployment costs incurred in connection with the position abolishment would total nearly $10,000, leaving the County with a $6,000 loss. He stated that the Youth Bureau had proposed a reduction in the hourly work week for both of the existing positions from 40 hours per week to 35 hours per week which would net a $6,000 savings to the County for 2009. Mr. Girard added that a retirement was planned for one of the positions in January of 2010, which would enact the reduction in staff as proposed by the Budget Committee. He said that this was a well thought out proposal and he hoped that the Budget Committee would agree to implement it. In connection with this proposal, Mr. Girard suggested that the Committee consider a reduction of one to two hours per work week for all County employees. He said that although he understood that this might mean that County buildings would be required to close early one day a week, it would lead to a considerable salary savings for the County.

Mr. Dusek replied that he believed the County would face the same issues in attempting to reduce the hourly work week as they would in enforcing mandatory furloughs as the County was bound by Civil Service Law which did not allow for such alterations. He added that there were some positions within the County that, by law, could not have their hourly work week reduced and all other areas would be subject to Union negotiation. Mr. Dusek stated that a reduction in hours worked would affect employee pay rates, positions and possibly protocols in filling positions. He advised that County Law made reference to Civil Service Law, thereby mandating that the County follow its rules and regulations; he added that in his research he had found that neither Civil Service Law nor County Law could be amended by Local Law and he said that he would not advocate a reduction in the hourly workweek as a potential solution to the budget crisis at this time.

Mr. Girard then questioned whether the proposed reduction in hours worked for Youth Bureau staff was a valid suggestion and Mr. Dusek replied that he had the same concerns with the legality of reducing the workweek of the Youth Bureau employees. He said that he had discussed the issue with Margaret Sing Smith, Youth Bureau Director, and had expressed his concern that when coupled with the hour paid lunch break currently given, the five hour reduction would reduce the employees hours to 30 per week, which did not allow them to collect health benefits. Mr. Dusek apprised that Ms. Smith's responding proposal had been to take an unpaid lunch hour which would alleviate the issue; however, he said, this would require an hour unpaid lunch break to be implemented universally for all County employees and this would have to be negotiated with the Unions.

Ms. Smith addressed the Committee, pointing out that because of the Youth Bureau's structure which consisted of two staff members as approved by the State, staffing had to be maintained in order to maximize the amount of State funding received. She said that the County stood to lose $18,952 in State funding and would pay out roughly $10,000 in unemployment costs, ultimately leading to a $28,952 loss by reducing the Youth Bureau by one position. Ms. Smith announced that she had prepared documentation which reflected the revenues that would be lost through staff reduction within her Department, as well as the benefits provided to the Community through their efforts, copies of which were distributed to the Committee members; *a copy of the documentation is also on file with the minutes.*

Upon a request presented by Mr. Sokol, Mr. Dusek once again confirmed that in accordance with Civil Service Law, the County was not permitted to reduce the hourly work week of its employees. Mr. Sokol responded that this was unfortunate as a slight reduction in the number of hours worked by each employee could lead to great savings to the County, thereby avoiding any further position reductions or loss of health benefits during these troubled times. Mr. Champagne stated that although he understood that Civil Service Law could not be altered currently, he felt that the matter should be addressed with State Legislators for possible amendment in the future.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Goodspeed questioned if the reduction in the mileage allowance cited in the proposal presented by Mr. Dusek constituted a reduction from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) rate of $.55 to $.40 per mile and Mr. Geraghty replied affirmatively. Mr. Goodspeed noted that during the prior week he had spent approximately 10 hours traveling to and from Committee meetings and he felt that travel times and cost could be reduced by introducing telecommunication abilities for Committee meetings. He said that he saw no reason why they could not consider eliminating the entire mileage allowance structure by revising the Committee structure to permit Committee members to participate by phone. At the same time, Mr. Goodspeed said that building on a prior suggestion made by Mrs. Simmes, he felt the budget reductions needed to begin with the Board of Supervisors and he suggested a 10% reduction in all Supervisor salaries to show that they were aware of the budget crisis and were willing to start with reductions to their own budget line to address it.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. Stec in support of a 10% reduction to all Supervisor salaries for the 2010 Budget.

Mr. Kenny questioned if the Supervisor salaries were set by Local Law and Mr. Dusek replied in the negative, noting that they were determined as part of the budget process and were then published in the local newspapers. Mr. Dusek stated that although the salaries could be changed for 2010, he was unsure whether they could be altered for the remainder of 2009 as they had already been publicized.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the salary paid to a Supervisor was currently very minimal in consideration of the job they performed and in light of the amount of public inquiries and complaints they received, many of which came after reasonable working hours. He said that he was concerned that if the salary was reduced, it would be difficult to find people willing to run for the Supervisor positions as the salary was not enough to compensate for the amount of frustration the position involved. Mr. Kenny agreed, stating that a 10% reduction would equate to a savings of $1,700 per Supervisor, which was simply a symbolic measure. He added that he felt that he did more than enough work to earn his salary and was not in favor of a 10% reduction. Mr. Kenny stated that there were some Supervisors who were not opposed to the idea of a salary reduction and he felt that the measure should be implemented on a voluntary basis. Mr. Taylor stated that although he was impartial as to whether or not the 10% salary reduction was enforced, he agreed with Mr. O'Connor's feeling that the reduced salary would make it harder to find worthy people willing to serve as Supervisor in the future and he added his opinion that salary reductions would cause Supervisors who had not previously charged the County for mileage would begin to do so.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion was carried by majority vote to decrease all Supervisor salaries by 10%, with Messrs. Kenny, O'Connor, Stec and Taylor voting in opposition, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 19th Board meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Stec to reduce the mileage allowance paid from $.55 to $.40 per mile on a County-wide basis.

Referring to the telecommunication issue raised by Mr. Goodspeed, Mr. Stec apprised that the Town of Queensbury had researched this issue in the past and had found that although the physically absent person could participate in dialogue via telephone, State Law prohibited any official vote or action unless the person was physically present at the meeting and he assumed the requirement would be the same for the County Committee structure. That being said, he suggested that there were other things that could be done to reorganize the Committee structure to reduce travel for Committee members commuting from the northern portions of Warren County, thereby lowering mileage costs.

Mr. O'Connor questioned whether the County continued to offer paid hour lunches to employees and Mr. Dusek replied affirmatively. He explained that this was part of the Union contract, but clarified that not all County employees received an hour paid lunch and some received only a half-hour paid lunch which was partially driven by Union contracts.

Returning to the issue of travel in connection with Committee meetings, Mr. Goodspeed apprised that he had recently traveled 40 minutes from his office in the Town of Johnsburg to the Municipal Center to attend a 35 minute meeting before traveling back to his Town office, causing 80 minutes of travel for a 35 minute Committee meeting. He asked that Mr. Dusek explore whether there were any telecommunications abilities available to increase productivity and decrease costs and if these measures could not be implemented, he agreed with Mr. Stec's suggestion that the Committee structure be revised to reduce the amount of travel required.

Chairman Monroe stated that in 2008 the number of Committees had been reduced by half and he thought that they were doing a much better job of trying to schedule meetings together to alleviate the need for extensive travel. He said that although there might be additional measures that could be taken to further reduce travel costs, it was important to note that the matter had been previously addressed.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to reduce the mileage allowance paid from $.55 to $.40 per mile and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 19th Board meeting.

Resuming the agenda review with Item 5, Mr. Sheehan, as Chairman of the Support Services Committee, announced that the Self-Insurance Department had suggested a reduction in the contributions provided by the County and the participating Towns to the Self-Insurance Plan Reserve Fund for 2010. He added that this reduction would lead to a $177,000 savings to the County through reduced Workers' Compensation rates and he said that he supported this action.

Mr. Taylor, Chairman of the Planning & Community Development Committee, addressed Agenda Item 6 which consisted of a recommendation that the funding to the EDC be reduced by $70,000, rather than $90,000 as initially proposed by the Budget Committee. He explained that the EDC had a vacant position, which they did not intend to fill in an effort to offset a portion of the funding reduction. Mr. Taylor noted that the return of $20,000 in funding as requested would allow the EDC to continue to develop marketing programs as necessary.

Mr. Geraghty advised that Agenda Item 7 referred to discussion on Resolution No. 385 of 2009 which determined the amount of funding for certain non-mandated programs and outside agencies. He said that based on the information presented during the meeting, it appeared that the Committee was not prepared to consider the matter currently and he suggested that the issue be tabled until the next Committee meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to table discussion on Resolution No. 385 of 2009 until the next Committee meeting.

Returning to the proposal presented by Mr. Dusek, Mr. Kenny noted that under the section entitled "Possible Reduction/Savings Requiring Board Action", a $50,000 reduction in funding had been identified for the City of Glens Falls for recreation facilities and the Civic Center. He stated that he opposed this reduction and suggested that a $25,000 reduction be implemented instead; he added that this would be the same reduction amount used for the 2009 Budget and would appropriately reduce funding without crippling operations. Mr. Kenny said that he had heard opinions from other Supervisors stating that it was unfair to fund recreational facilities in the City of Glens Falls when they were not funded in other areas of the County; however, he said, he did not agree with this view because those Town facilities were not used as frequently or by as many citizens of varying areas of the County as the City's facilities were. Mr. Kenny noted that facilities such as the Civic Center, East Field and Crandall Park were widely used by County residents and served as a place of venue for more than 80 different softball, lacrosse and basketball leagues with participating members residing throughout the County. In addition, he advised that the City of Glens Falls served as the downtown area for the County and was a center of services, with approximately 30% of its properties being tax exempt. Mr. Kenny stated that if funding to the City continued to decrease, they would be left with few options and he did not feel that discontinued use of the recreation facilities was a viable suggestion. He said that although charging non-residents of the City of Glens Falls for use of recreation facilities was an option, it had been attempted in the past through the Civic Center but had ended in outrage because County funding was appropriated to that venue. Mr. Kenny stated that the only other option would be to pass these costs on to the taxpayers of the City of Glens Falls, which was not entirely fair because the recreational facilities were used by more than just City residents. He concluded that he agreed that the funding to the City should be reduced along with all other supported organizations; however, he said, he did not feel that a $50,000 reduction was justified.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Sheehan to reduce funding to the City of Glens Falls for the recreational facilities and the Civic Center by $25,000 rather than $50,000, as included in the proposal developed by the Management Committee.

Mr. Champagne noted that issues had been raised in the past with respect to the procedures used by the City of Glens Falls with respect to the expenditure of County funds and he asked if this matter had been addressed. Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, replied affirmatively, noting that the City of Glens Falls had been providing very accurate reports of expenditures in a timely manner.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion was carried by majority vote to reduce funding to the City of Glens Falls for recreational facilities and the Civic Center by $25,000, rather than $50,000 as included in the proposal developed by the Management Committee, with Messrs. Champagne and Stec voting in opposition.

Referring to the same section of the Management Committee's proposal, Mr. Belden noted that a reduction in the amount of $32,000 had been listed for the Soil & Water Conservation District which he did not feel would reasonably allow for continued operations and he suggested that the reduction amount be lowered to $17,000. Mr. Thomas agreed with Mr. Belden's statement and added that due to a lack of grant reimbursement from the State, the Soil & Water Conservation District faced serious financial issues which would be exacerbated by a $32,000 reduction in funding.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried by majority vote to reduce funding to the Soil & Water Conservation District by $17,000, rather than $32,000 as included in the proposal developed by the Management Committee, with Messrs. Champagne, Kenny and Stec voting in opposition.

Mr. Girard pointed out that although the Budget Committee had initially discussed the possibility of eliminating funding for the Warren County Fish Hatchery, he did not recall that the matter had been voted on subsequent to considerable public opposition. Mr. Geraghty advised that a vote on the issue had not been held as they were awaiting a determination from the State as to the availability of Pittman-Rodman Act funding. Mr. Girard then reminded the Committee that they had yet to vote on the proposed funding reductions for CCE and he said that he felt it was imperative that the Committee take action to give CCE some indication as to how they should proceed.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan and seconded by Mr. Belden to accept the recommendation of the Extension Services Committee to reduce funding to Cornell Cooperative Extension by 25%, rather than 50% as previously indicated by the Budget Committee.

Mr. Thomas commended Mr. Girard for advocating the efforts of CCE and he stated that he did not feel the services offered by CCE were a luxury. He added that if the County were able to give CCE an amount equivalent to 5% of the DSS budget for educational programs, he did not think there would be such a great demand for DSS services. Mr. Thomas stated that if CCE were able to provide more educational programs to County residents, the County and society in general, would be better off.

Mr. Pitkin said that to expect CCE to survive with a 50% funding reduction was unrealistic and the 25% reduction proposed was much more reasonable. Both Mrs. Simmes and Mr. Tessier agreed with Mr. Pitkin's statement and Mr. Strainer added that residents would be seeking out CCE services now more than ever due to the financial climate and a 50% reduction was far too much.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion was carried by majority vote to accept the recommendation of the Extension Services Committee to reduce funding to Cornell Cooperative Extension by 25%, rather than 50% as previously indicated by the Budget Committee, with Messrs. Kenny and Taylor voting in opposition.

Referring to the last page of the agenda which included a document entitled "Summary of Agencies and Proposed 2010 Budget", Mr. Belden questioned whether the $7,000 paid to the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board for employee salaries paid through Warren County payroll was a necessary expense. Mr. Tessier replied affirmatively, noting that the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board had appropriated $11 million in loans and grants over the past 10 years to small businesses operating in the participating Counties and the $7,000 expenditure was far outweighed by the benefits they provided to Warren County residents. Mr. Champagne questioned if the $7,000 cost was supported by Local County dollars and Mrs. Sady replied affirmatively.

As there was no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist