

*Second Special Meeting*  
July 7, 2016

The Second Special Meeting of 2016 was called to order by the Chair at 1:00 P.M. All Legislative members were present.

Chair Sauerbrey asked Legislator Monell for a moment of prayer. "Lord, we thank you for this day that you have given us. We thank you for the time that we have to be here and meet regarding the issues that deal with our County and our Village. We pray Lord that you would bless this meeting as we conduct the business at hand and give us wisdom to make the decisions that will be right for the people of this County."

Legislator Monell led all Legislators and those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were 37 people in attendance.

Chair Sauerbrey spoke. "Before we get started with this special meeting, I would like to lay out a couple of ground rules. There will be no privilege of the floor today, which means there will be no comments from the public allowed during this meeting. The Legislature will be voting today to authorize the Chair of the Tioga County Legislature to sign on behalf of the full Tioga County Legislature a letter of support for the Village of Owego to apply for a grant from the New York State Department of State Municipal Restructuring Fund for the purposes of consolidation of the Village of Owego Police Department and the Tioga County Sheriff's Department.

"I also want to make note that the Legislature is not bound by any numbers or details in the grant application as they are all subject to negotiation and vote by the Tioga County Legislature and the Village of Owego Board. I also want to make note that the abolition of the Village of Owego Police Department is subject to permissive referendum by the voters of the Village of Owego and this grant is due by July 12, 2016."

Legislative Sullivan made a motion to bring the following resolution to the floor, seconded by Legislator Monell and carried.

Legislator Sullivan moved for the adoption of the following resolution, seconded by Legislator Hollenbeck.

REFERRED TO: LEGISLATIVE WORKSESSION

RESOLUTION NO. 130-16                      *AUTHORIZE LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR  
GRANT APPLICATION BY  
VILLAGE OF OWEGO*

WHEREAS: The Village of Owego is seeking to apply for a grant from the New York State Department of State Municipal Restructuring Fund for the purposes of consolidation of the Village of Owego Police Department and the Tioga County Sheriff's Office; and

WHEREAS: The Tioga County Legislature would like to acknowledge support of the Village of Owego's submission of a grant application; and

WHEREAS: The Tioga County Legislature is not bound by any numbers or details in the grant application as they are all subject to negotiation and vote of the Tioga County Legislature and the Village of Owego Board; and

WHEREAS: The purpose of the grant is to study the viability of the consolidation of the Village of Owego Police Department and the Tioga County Sheriff's Department; and

WHEREAS: The abolition of the Village of Owego Police Department is subject to permissive referendum by the voters of the Village of Owego; and

WHEREAS: Said grant application is due no later than July 12, 2016; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Chair of the Tioga County Legislature is hereby authorized to sign, on behalf of the Tioga County Legislature, a Letter of Support, to indicate the support of the Tioga County Legislature of the said grant application by the Village of Owego.

Legislator Mullen spoke. "After much consternation and discussion with many people on this subject, it has boiled down to one thing for me, the Village of Owego residents. The grant application requires that the Village residents vote for it or against it. They are the people that are represented by the Village of Owego Board and the County Legislature. Therefore and for that reason only will I support that we vote for this grant application because if we do not that is not a guarantee to the Village of Owego residents where they will have a say in

this matter. I believe that they should have a say in this matter. It is their Village, their Police Department.

"The only other thing that I would add, in this process this will not cost the County residents one red cent or my vote will be no. The Village of Owego is not going to get a stipend. They have a Police Department or Police services from the County. If they can afford it and pay for it, and it is agreed upon by all parties, then the answer is yes. This is not a vote to get rid of the Police Department. This is a vote to do this properly and put this to bed finally. Yes or no, the people get to say yes or no. You are the ones who pay the taxes in the Village of Owego. The only guaranteed way that the Village residents get a say is to vote yes for this grant application."

Legislator Sullivan spoke. "I have some questions and comments. Do I address either the Village Board or their Attorney, I have a question on a technical matter? It is in regards to the grant itself and it appears that there are two tracks that this grant can take, either a fast track or a venture track. Can someone tell me whether you are going down that venture track or the fast track?"

The Village Attorney spoke. "I will respond to that, the Mayor was unable to be here today, so I am going to speak in his absence. You are right, we had those discussions with State officials. There are two different tracks. At this point we have been advised by the State that our project would qualify more for the venture track than the fast track. Whether or not that can change in the future, I do not know, but that will be an ongoing discussion with the State. At this point in time they have advised that we take the so-called venture track."

Legislator Sullivan spoke. "To me that was important because in reading the guidelines it specifies and that track as you know has four phases, and before moving into phase 3 or phase 4 requires resolution of both Legislative bodies. Is that correct as you know it?"

The Village Attorney spoke. "Yes, that is correct and the comments made by Dennis are correct that none of this will be finalized and approved unless it comes back to the County for approval and any kind of municipal agreement. This is an application for grant funding, not approval of a contract."

Legislator Sullivan spoke. "At some point if the project continues to be viable, it could or could not come back to the Legislature for final approval or it could fade away and die if it ends up not being viable, but either way it comes back to both Legislative bodies to do a final approval. Thank you."

Legislator Standinger spoke. "I understand fully that there are a lot of political situations currently ongoing in the Village involving the Police Department and I am not going to go into these details, but relying on my education, which include a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice and also 25 years with the New York State Police and working locally here with the Police Departments, the Country is going towards community policing in Villages and concentrated metropolitan areas. The Village of Owego is a metropolitan area for Tioga County, which requires a different level of policing than is provided by the State Police or the Sheriff's Department, and in light of that it is pretty critical to maintain that level of service for the residents and I think that any study is going to demonstrate that. I think I have basically given you my opinion of this whole situation in regards to that. I am fully aware of all the things that are going on behind the scenes here. Thank you."

Legislator Weston spoke. "I feel that the resolution is for information gathering only. At this point as far as the County is concerned, I firmly believe that it is a home rule decision and the people, the residents, the voting residents of the Village of Owego should be the ones making the decision. Therefore I will vote yes on the resolution to use the outside funds in order to make a determination and then from there the ball court is all empty and vacant and then the teams will come out to do whatever they want them to do or however they want to work or whatever the propositions might be."

Legislator Huttleston spoke. "I was originally going to vote no for this the other day when I found out about it, but since then we had the meeting today, we got the resolution and I made it clear to Dennis, Marte and everybody the purpose of the resolution. It is basically just to apply for a grant and there were some things added to the resolution regarding whether you have a Police Department in the Village or not is up to the residents, and that is what I want to make sure that the residents have that say. It is their Village, it is not my Village. It is your Village and you have the right to have an addendum and vote yes or no.

"All this is doing is applying for a grant and I understand if the grant is approved then there will be a lot of things that will have to be drawn up regarding. First, the residents have got to vote for it and once it is approved then we have to have a relationship between the Tioga County Legislature, the Sheriff's Department, the Mayor and the Village of Owego, but up to this point I think some of the contacts I have, they were not aware and I want to make sure that this is nothing more than applying for a grant, which we do all the time in the County and sometimes you get approval of grants, sometimes you do not. Every Department is constantly applying for grants and I think sometimes if there is a grant out there, if you do not take advantage of it, if it is a helpful grant, then it is good for all parties in the final decision. Thank you."

Chair Sauerbrey spoke. "Before I close discussion I would like to make a comment or two. I do represent the Village of Owego and I am concerned about the safety and well-being of our citizens. I have heard from many of you this week. I have called a Trustee, I have had some conversations with people, and it is very emotional for all of us, but let me share something with you. The last few years this issue has been brought to us on several occasions. It takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of investigation, and there is always a lot of controversy. I am ready for that to be over. This option gives us an opportunity to investigate and discern if a consolidation plan would work or be effective, or it would be affordable by the Village or the County. This is the time to make the decision. The fact finding will come together. Then the citizens get to say yes or no, and then it is done and then we do not have to deal with it anymore."

#### ROLL CALL VOTE

Yes – Legislators Monell, Mullen, Sauerbrey, Roberts, Sullivan, Weston, Hollenbeck, and Huttleston.

No – Legislator Standinger.

Absent – None.

#### RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 P.M.