



Tioga County Worksession Minutes August 5, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.

Legislators Present:

Legislator Balliet
Legislator Hollenbeck
Legislator Monell (*arrived at 1:02 p.m.*)
Legislator Mullen
Legislator Roberts
Chair/Legislator Sauerbrey
Legislator Standinger
Legislator Sullivan

Legislators Absent:

Legislator Weston

Guests:

None

Staff Present:

Peter DeWind, County Attorney
Cathy Haskell, Clerk of Legislature
Amy Eiklor, Deputy Clerk of Legislature
Lisa McCafferty, Public Health Director
Bethany O'Rourke, Personnel Officer

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Sauerbrey opened the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

Public Hearing: Community Development Block Grant Project Tioga Mobile

Dental Services: Chair Sauerbrey called the Public Hearing to order at 1:01 p.m. for public comment on the New York State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Project Tioga Mobile Dental Services. There was no public comment.

Public hearing adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Budget Report – Budget Officer: Budget report discussion was tabled until the August 19, 2021 Legislative Worksession.

American Recovery Funds Update: Chair Sauerbrey reported the First Interim Report on the American Recovery Funds is due to the Treasury Department by August 31, 2021. Tioga County received the first half of funds and hired Bonadio for professional consulting services

related to the funds. A more detailed Quarterly Project and Expenditure Report is due October 31, 2021. After speaking with various departments, Chair Sauerbrey compiled a list of potential projects that fit the eligible-use criteria. The list will be sent to the Treasury with the First Interim Report.

Legislator Sullivan reported she added some projects to the list, including security at 56 Main Street and accounting of keys in County buildings. Chair Sauerbrey reported those items were discussed at this morning's Public Works & Capital Projects Committee meeting. Legislator Roberts reported the Committee suggested taking inventory of the current keys and are looking at alternatives, including swipe cards. Legislator Roberts reported the Committee is considering opening the doors of 56 Main Street later, perhaps 8:00 a.m. as opposed to 7:00 a.m.

Chair Sauerbrey reported the tentative project list includes large and small projects that may be eligible under infrastructure. Just a few of the projects on the list are:

- Emergency Communication Towers
- Veterans Suicide Prevention
- Non-Profit organizations, such as A New Hope Center, that help individuals in crisis.
- Mental Health Programs and Support

Chair Sauerbrey anticipates presenting a more refined list to the Legislature in September.

Legislator Sullivan inquired if Tioga County was locked into the projects that are included in the First Interim Report. Chair Sauerbrey replied no, the project list may change between now and October.

Chair Sauerbrey will continue to work on the project list and keep the Legislature apprised of the status.

Approval of Worksession Minutes: On motion of Legislator Sullivan, seconded by Legislator Mullen and unanimously carried, the July 22, 2021 Legislative Worksession minutes were approved.

Action Items: Currently, there are no action items.

Legislative Support: Legislative Clerk Haskell asked for approval of the July 8, 2021 Legislative Support committee minutes. On motion of Legislator Sullivan, seconded by Legislator Mullen and unanimously carried, the minutes were approved.

Ms. Haskell went over the Legislative Support Agenda and reported the following:

- There is a Board of Ethics vacancy as of March 31, 2021.
- Ms. Haskell attended Munis trainings, which are scheduled to commence again in September with Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Payroll, and Tyler Content Manager. Ms. Haskell attended a Finance meeting with the Treasurer's Office, Mental Hygiene, Social Services, Public Health, Public Works, and the Sheriff's Office. The

Departments are working together to update the Tioga County Financial Guidelines. The last update to the Financial Guidelines was in 2018.

- Ms. Haskell's 2022 Budget was sent to Budget Officer, Jackson Bailey, on July 23. He had no issues.
- In discussing the 2022 Budget, Ms. Haskell reported the Information Security Officer (ISO) is currently working below minimum wage as a result of a previously adopted resolution for a 50% salary reduction, per the employee's request. Ms. Haskell recently spoke with the ISO to inform her of the below minimum wage status and the desire to bring her salary to minimum wage standard. The ISO was agreeable and expressed she was fine with this occurring in 2022. Personnel Officer O'Rourke is aware and stated Tioga County is not required to abide by minimum wage laws. It is typically Tioga County's preference to pay at least minimum wage. Legislator Sullivan inquired why the increase cannot occur now. Ms. Haskell replied the ISO and Personnel are fine with waiting until January 2022 for the salary increase.
- Ms. Haskell intends on cashing in five of her vacation days.
- The Legislative Office received a shred bin from Rogers Service Group this afternoon. The previously used shredder was in need of replacement. After research and discussion, it was determined the most cost effective solution is to use Rogers Service Group on an on-call basis. The Legislative Office has minimal shredding and Ms. Haskell will transfer \$100 from her copier budget to offset the cost.

Resolutions: Ms. Haskell reviewed the agenda and resolutions for the August 10, 2021 Legislature meeting. There was no discussion.

Other:

- **COVID-19 Update:** Chair Sauerbrey reported COVID-19 cases are increasing and she has had numerous discussions with Public Health Director, Lisa McCafferty, regarding guidance in schools. Chair Sauerbrey asked Ms. McCafferty to give the Legislature an update.

Ms. McCafferty stated her message has always been encouraging individuals to take personal responsibility for their health. Tioga County still holds vaccination clinics and has a large supply of vaccines available. Public Health is currently focusing on vaccinating the home-bound population. There will be a Johnson & Johnson vaccination clinic at the upcoming Tioga County Fair.

During the pandemic last year, New York State released COVID-19 guidance and emergency orders on re-opening schools. New York State was expected to release new guidance for school districts. However, New York State informed schools that guidance would not come from the State, but will be left to local districts and health officials. Ms. Cafferty stated, as a Public Health Director, she encourages consistent guidance throughout Tioga County school districts. Ms. McCafferty reported she has a call with

local Superintendents tomorrow and her suggestion for schools is to follow CDC guidelines.

Ms. McCafferty reported most of the United States is in a “red or orange zone”, indicating a substantial to high level of community transmission. A majority of New York is in the “orange zone.” Tioga County is currently in a “yellow zone”, indicating a moderate level of community transmission. Tompkins County is already in the “orange zone”, with Broome County likely to follow by the end of the week. Legislator Monell and Legislator Hollenbeck agreed that the decision to require masks in schools should be left to parents. Legislator Sullivan inquired about the current CDC guidelines in schools. Ms. McCafferty stated the CDC recommends all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask indoors.

Legislator Sullivan asked if local school districts received any funding for physical modifications in schools. Ms. McCafferty replied that Tioga County Public Health received \$1.4 million in funds to assist schools. She expects input from local Superintendents regarding what kind of assistance they may need. Legislator Sullivan asked if the 6 feet physical distancing remains in place in schools. Ms. McCafferty responded that the latest CDC recommended physical distance is 3 feet. She stated a big issue becomes distancing on school buses.

Legislator Sullivan inquired if schools are prepared to make adjustments to adhere to the recommended 3 foot physical distance. Ms. McCafferty responded that some local districts are prepared. Parent pushback is expected to become a big issue this fall when kids return to school.

Legislator Sullivan asked Ms. Cafferty specifically what her recommendations for schools are. Ms. McCafferty replied that she refers individuals to the CDC guidelines. She pointed out that throughout the pandemic, with the exception of one business, Public Health had not enforced the mask mandate. Public Health was obligated to issue fines or penalties for non-compliance, but did not. Ms. McCafferty stated COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon.

Legislator Mullen stated there will be a lot of opposition in Tioga County if a mask mandate is in place. Legislator Mullen said residents living near the border notice the differences between Bradford County, Pennsylvania and Tioga County, New York. Legislator Mullen stated masks were off in Pennsylvania schools in March of this year. He believes mask wearing should be an individual choice. Legislator Mullen recommended using the CDC guidelines as a reference only, for school districts. Should a school have a COVID-19 outbreak, Tioga County Public Health would then step in and implement guidelines.

Ms. McCafferty expressed concern for COVID-19 testing in schools. She believes it should be up to individuals, their parental figure, and primary care providers. She stated each school district is different. Ms. McCafferty stated COVID-19 screenings are not effective as individuals that passed the screening process have tested positive. There are many factors to consider. For example, someone may be an asymptomatic carrier and not know it.

Legislator Monell stated COVID is not going away and setting mandates will give people license to police the choices of others. Legislator Mullen agreed and stated Tioga County's numbers do not support the need for guidance or mandates. He also emphasized that the vaccine is a personal choice. Legislator Mullen does not want to be part of the erosion of personal rights or liberties in this country.

Legislator Roberts asked Ms. McCafferty if she thought FDA approval of the vaccine would change people's minds. Ms. McCafferty responded no, because there is a high possibility that more strains will emerge. She compared the COVID-19 vaccine to the influenza vaccine as they are both less than 40% effective.

Legislator Sullivan asked Ms. McCafferty if she had any comments about more virulent strains. Ms. McCafferty responded that she believes there should be less media coverage as it causes people to panic. Ms. McCafferty reported the fatality rate from COVID-19 is 0.002%.

Chair Sauerbrey stated Public Health strongly recommends wearing masks, but will not mandate it. In the end, school districts will make their own decision. Chair Sauerbrey trusts Ms. McCafferty's judgment and will stand by her decision. Chair Sauerbrey thanked Ms. McCafferty and her staff for their hard work over the last 18 months.

Executive Session: With no confidential matters to discuss, an Executive Session was not necessary.

Meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Thursday, August 19, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Eiklor

Deputy Legislative Clerk