

AUDIT & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Held In Room 318 of the
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512

Members: Chairwoman Conklin, Legislators Birmingham & LoBue

Monday **March 26, 2012** **6:30 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 P.M. by Chairwoman Conklin who requested Legislator Birmingham lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Birmingham, LoBue and Chairwoman Conklin were present.

Item #3 - Correspondence/County Auditor

- a) **Sales Tax Report** was duly noted.
- b) **Board In Revenue Report** was duly noted.
- c) **Vacancy Control Report**

Legislator Birmingham had a few minor questions for Commissioner of Finance, William Carlin with respect to items on the report. He stated that the offsets for positions in DSS at the bottom of the chart were very helpful. He questioned if Commissioner Carlin could delineate any future offsets for positions in other departments as well in order to get a better picture.

- d) **Transfer/Revenue Report** was duly noted.
- e) **Contingency/Sub-Contingency Report** was duly noted.
- f) **OTB Report** was duly noted.

Item #4 - Correspondence/Commissioner of Finance

a) Overtime/Temporary Report

Legislator Birmingham questioned why we have exhausted almost 1/3 of the overtime budget for "County Snow" when we have had a rather mild winter. He also questioned why we have exhausted 56% of "Highway-Administration" overtime budget. He asked if Legislator LoBue, as Chairwoman of the Physical Services Committee, would inquire through the County Executive to Commissioner Pena.

**b) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (12A016)/Finance/Provide for
Vacancy Control Factor for February 2012**

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Item #5 - Proposed Changes to County Budget Process/Discussion

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional material submitted to the meeting; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Commissioner Carlin stated that this was his proposal to change the dates to allow the budget process to take place later in the year. He explained that the new tax cap legislation creates a critical tax cap number that is generated in September. With the

current budget process, the County Executive would not have those numbers available when they present their budget. In addition, the pension number which is astronomical is also not released by the State Comptroller until November. When we asked if this information could be received earlier, they have told us that we are the only County that does their budget so early. They pointed out that their own State Comptroller recommendation is that a budget be submitted no earlier than October 1st. He felt that in this tax cap era, it was more critical than ever to receive this necessary information and extend the budget process in order to receive more accurate information. He stated that during the Charter Review, he discussed pushing the budget process later in the year, such as December. The only complaint he has heard was that the budget process should take place before Election Day to avoid any political aspect. This proposal is a compromise of the two. The adoption of the budget would take place on November 1st. He felt that if we were going to amend the budget process, it would need to be approved by the May Full Legislative Meeting.

Legislator Birmingham stated that if we were going to override the tax cap we needed to have a local law. He stated that there is a certain statutory period for tax cap legislation filing, such as a 45 day referendum. Out of all these other Counties mentioned, we are the only County that could possibly meet this requirement because our current budget process is structured earlier in the year. Some municipalities adopt the override of the tax cap at their reorganization meeting. He believed that was a lesser form of transparency for our government. He stated that our current budget process was very good and it requires everyone involved in the process, from the Legislature to the Executive, to lay their cards on the table before Election Day. He stated that Connecticut adopts a bi-annual budget which goes for two years. They have to deal with a lot more indices and trends than we do.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he was comfortable with Commissioner Carlin's proposal. The adoption of the budget would come before Election Day. He felt that it was a good compromise.

Legislator Birmingham stated that the vetoes would not come before Election Day.

The Committee discussed the time frame of the veto process and how a later date gives the departments' time to submit a more accurate budget.

Legislator LoBue stated that she was leaning towards Legislator Birmingham's philosophy; "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Our County is in good financial shape compared to many others.

County Executive Odell stated that her position on this proposal is based on former County Executive Eldridge's opinion. He was very fearful last year of what could happen with the new tax cap constraint.

The Committee discussed when certain figures from the State are made available to Commissioner Carlin.

Legislator Albano believed that the more information we have, the better decision we can make.

The Committee had further discussions regarding the time table of the budget process.

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to table this item; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Chairwoman Conklin asked if Commissioner Carlin could come back next month with the adjusted dates so that the budget process would end on November 15th.

Item #6 - Proposed Resolution From State of the County/Promoting A Sales Tax Free Holiday Through a Request for the Required Home Rule Legislation/Discussion

Chairwoman Conklin questioned what type of product would be included in the Sales Tax Free Holiday.

County Executive Odell stated that they were waiting for some additional information from the State. She stated that they found information regarding a State Sales Tax Exemption for clothing and footwear costing less than \$110.00 restored effective April 1, 2012. We would have to adopt whether or not we wanted to do this. She stated that it was for the entire year. However, it was very confusing because there was a long list of items which were included and items not included. She believed that it did not speak to what we were trying to achieve. She stated that her vision was to help the local businesses during certain times during the year, such as back to school items. She suggested drafting legislation to submit to our State representatives explaining our limited resources and the importance of sales tax revenue. She suggested asking for a one year pilot program promoting a sales tax exemption holiday for one week or one weekend in that year.

Chairwoman Conklin stated that some vendors reached out to her stating that it was a lot of work in order to change their programs. She questioned whether or not we have reached out to the vendors.

County Executive Odell stated that it was mentioned to the Chambers and the forum before the State of the County. We would still need to reach out to the vendors.

Legislator LoBue stated that she wanted to introduce this last year as Chairwoman of the Economic Development Committee. However, the business community informed her of the costs associated with the implementation of this. We are not in an area that has a high saturation of retail. Gasoline and Automobile purchases are our biggest generator of sales tax.

County Executive Odell suggested not including gasoline and automobile purchases as part of the sales tax exemption.

Legislator LoBue stated that she would rather see our sales tax lowered in the future.

County Executive Odell stated that if the EDC list of proposed projects comes to fruition, there very well may be the day where we can wean ourselves off of sales tax.

Legislator LoBue questioned the timeframe of the proposed sales tax free holiday.

County Executive Odell stated that the Assembly and Senate session will adjourn approximately in mid-June. She stated that time is of the essence. She needed to see if everyone was on board with this proposal and then work out the details.

Legislator Oliverio suggested holding the sales tax exempt period before the start of children returning to school in September.

The Committee further discussed the details of when to hold the sales tax exemption period and for how long. They also discussed the Home Rule process. They decided to draft a resolution with the following: It would be a Home Rule Request. Gasoline & Automobile purchases would not be included. It would be held August 10th through August 19, 2012.

County Executive Odell stated that she would have the Law Department draft the resolution.

Chairwoman Conklin made a motion to approve in concept; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Item #7 - 2011 Unaudited Annual Update Document/Finance/FYI

Commissioner Carlin stated that the Auditors will be here in two weeks. This is the document which every County in the State must file. This is how the Comptroller keeps his data comparable.

Chairwoman Conklin questioned how the County's fund balance was.

Commissioner Carlin stated that we are in good shape compared to other Counties. It is approximately \$16 million. It will probably be approximately \$16 - \$17 million when the Auditors come in and make their adjustments. There are some figures that we do not have which they do.

Legislator Birmingham questioned the fund balance amount at the end of 2010.

Commissioner Carlin stated that it was between \$18 and \$19 million.

Chairwoman Conklin questioned the revenues.

Commissioner Carlin stated that some of the expenses were down, so we did not have revenues to offset those expenses. However, our main revenue source is sales tax and that figure was up.

Item #8 - Other Business

a) Approval/Fund Transfer (12T052)/Finance/Humane Society/April Payment

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Chairwoman Conklin stated that there would be an update at the Physical Services Committee on the Humane Society property.

Legislator LoBue stated that she spoke with Town of Southeast Supervisor, Tony Hay. They are moving forward with the Zoning change which effected the construction of the Humane Society's new facility.

b) Approval/Discontinue Eviction Proceedings/34 Gleneida Avenue

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional material submitted to the meeting; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Chairwoman Conklin read a proposed resolution which would discontinue eviction proceedings with respect to 34 Gleneida Avenue.

Chairwoman Conklin made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; seconded by Legislator Birmingham. All in favor.

There being no further business, at 7:45 P.M., Legislator Birmingham made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Deputy Clerk.