

Minutes

Administrative Services Committee

**April 19, 2021, 5:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Scudder, Davis, Starks, Vanstrom, Muldowney

Others: Tampio, Ames, Dennison, Crow, Chagnon, Abdella, K. Meleen

Chairman Scudder called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (03/15/2021)

MOVED by Legislator Davis, SECONDED by Legislator Starks.

*Unanimously Carried*

Privilege of the Floor

Clerk Tampio: We have no communications.

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Proposed Resolution - Confirm Appointment - Chautauqua County Ethics Board

Chairman Scudder: We have Diane Hannum from Dunkirk, New York. Anybody have any questions, comments that they would like to make about this resolution?

*Unanimously Carried*

Proposed Resolution – Quit Claim Deeds

Ms. Meleen: I can speak on this one. This one was a vacant parcel. It was foreclosed along with a house parcel. The owner reacquired his house but left the landlocked vacant lot behind it to be foreclosed on. It went to auction, there was no bid. Now the owner is selling the house so attorney Shane Uber called and asked about it. He's representing the buyer. The individual would like to pay back all the back taxes and recording fees which is that \$361.89. We'd like to see it to those individuals and get it back on the tax roll and then when they purchase it, it will be merged into their house lot so they will only get the one tax bill.

Chairman Scudder: Thanks for saving me asking that question.

Chairman Chagnon: Mr. Chairman that was a very good description of the next resolution.

Legislator Davis: I was going to say, that's the quit claim deed.

Ms. Meleen: Oh, sorry about that.

Proposed Resolution – Cleanup and Sale of Tax Foreclosure Property

Ms. Meleen: This was sold at the auction in 2018. They put in a bid for \$14,500. Found out that there was some environmental issue. Those issues have since been resolved but the buyer now wants to only purchase it from the \$2,700. All their money was refunded when they found out about the environmental issues. We recommend accepting the offer so that it gets back on the tax roll. I don't know if Steve has anything else to add to this one.

Mr. Abdella: I think that it is reflected in the resolution. It was thought that the clean-up by the New York Environmental Protection and Spill Compensation fund would essentially give it a clean slate but it turned out that their efforts, which were significant and needed, have not completely resolved the environmental issues with the property. They were not able to remove all of the contaminated soil. So because of that, the potential buyer, they are still willing to purchase it but for a reduced price of \$2,750 and it was the recommendation that we go forward and accept that offer given the environmental cleanup was not complete.

Chairman Scudder: So what does that do for us, Steve, let's say three years from now if these folks don't pay the taxes, do we end up with a contaminated piece of property that we have to cleanup on our dollar?

Mr. Abdella: I don't think that the DEC is necessarily requiring further cleanup. It's just for purpose of future development that may be an issue for somebody. If it goes back into a delinquent status, we would have to decide like we do with some other property whether we move forward with the foreclosure. I think we would in this case because it isn't an imminent danger situation but that's a bridge I guess we'll cross if we come to it and hopefully we won't.

Legislator Starks: May I ask a question?

Chairman Scudder: You may.

Legislator Starks: Thank you. I'm wondering if the property is able to be cleaned up some day in the future or if it's just wasn't able to be completed with the cleanup now? Does that make sense?

Mr. Abdella: I don't know. I'll confess that this, before Kim came on, Todd Button dealt more directly with this matter and issued the recommendation. I have not personally reviewed the DEC report so I really don't know the answer as to whether through you know more costly efforts, well, I'm sure you can almost do anything for a cost but they must have decided that it

just wasn't - but they must have decided the cost benefit was just not there to try and remove all the contaminated soils.

Legislator Starks: Thank you, it just came into my mind after Bob asked his question.

Legislator Davis: Mr. Chairman, I have a question as well. I certainly understand the recommendation and don't have a problem with accepting it but I would wonder just kind of in the back of my mind, if we set a precedent when a parcel is sold at auction and somebody later finds out, hey, it wasn't quite what I expected to be so now I'm going to change my offer to a lower amount, if we set a precedent that we're going to go ahead and accept those sorts of things, just something I'm thinking about.

Mr. Abdella: I mean, it's pretty rare that we have an instance where something that goes through the auction ends up having some unknown issue with the property emerge between let's say, the auction date and the actual finalization of the deal. So, I guess it's possible. I think this one was unusual, I mean, it was a very much control situation, we all knew what was happening. We were fortunate to get the cleanup essentially what they were able to do paid for by the State. So, it's unusual to have any circumstance change. We would just have to react to it when it happens.

Chairman Scudder: Anybody else? It's good to get the property bought by somebody and back on the tax rolls so even though we're kind of taking a hit, it's the right thing to do. All those in favor?

*Unanimously Carried*

*Proposed Resolution – Quit Claim Deeds*

Chairman Scudder: That brings us to the next one. We can just vote on it, we don't have to talk about it.

Legislator Starks: Her explanation did seem like it was a win-win for everyone and it was very complete.

Chairman Scudder: And thank you Pierre for being on board with us here. O.k., Kim what you can tell us about this resolution?

Ms. Meleen: This one was the vacant parcel that was landlocked and the owner repurchased his house but not his vacant lot. Now he's selling the house and the attorney called and asked about the landlocked parcel. The people buying the house would like to purchase the landlocked parcel. They are willing to pay all the back taxes and recording fees which is in the amount of \$361.89. When they purchase it if they are allowed to do that, it will be merged into one parcel and they will have one tax bill and that (*inaudible*) not sold and be landlocked where nobody will be interested in it.

Chairman Scudder: Excellent and you saved me from asking that question again, so good job. This sounds like a good deal. Any questions or comments?

*Unanimously Carried*

Other

Proposed Local Law – Local Law Intro 1-21 – A Local Law Amending the Chautauqua County Code of Ethics

Mr. Abdella: I did send out late last week an email where we had it accompanied with a version of the local law that tracked the changes. So really the main item happening was, you will recall, we had the State Comptroller's review of our ethics procedures and they had made recommendations and we adopted a so called corrective action plan. Amongst the things we needed to do was refining the local law to have more explicit procedures to ensure the timely filing of the annual disclosure form so we added a paragraph that address that matter and has the department heads more involved in ensuring that their managers under their supervision, file the disclosure form. Then there were some other housekeeping changes to the Code suggested by the Ethics Board and those have been included too to clarify some of the language regarding reporting training. So that's it, it's not (*inaudible*) of big magnitude.

Legislator Vanstrom: I submitted two forms because I couldn't remember because I'm on so many boards. Every board wants me to do ethics training, sexual harassment training, I'm a pro at both now. The point is, again, I submitted two forms, one got kicked back. They are like which one do you want. I'm like, whatever one. I had to write my name on the top of every page and it got kicked out for that. I got this, I got this, I got this, I'm like are you kidding me. Every committee I sit on, I have to submit these things. I think if you are a County person of a presence, we shouldn't have to submit for Soil & Water board, for Traffic Safety board, we shouldn't have to submit the same documentation for every freaking board we are obligated to sit on. I'm tired. I have to do it for the Senate, that's fine, that's my day job. I have to do it for the County, that's fine, that's another job, but, why do I have to submit the same documentation for every single board I sit on when it's the same thing. I'm sorry, but I'm a little bit like, I can't even keep it on the calendar. You know, did I submit it for this, did I submit it for that, did I submit it for this? It's overkill. The Ethics Commission should be able to concentrate on our name and our persona and did we file the sexual harassments training, ethics training, financial disclosure training, there should be something that is a conglomerate. It shouldn't be put on me and everybody else like me that's doing the same thing. I'm tired. I'm submitting paperwork every year, four, eight, twelve documents of the same situation. Where is your husband's office located? What on earth does that have to do with it because I didn't put John's address down for his office? I'm like, are you kidding me. He's been there, google him, look him up in the phone book, he's there. He's in the same place every day. I got kicked back for submitting two and then your name has to be on the top of every page, kicked back with stickers. Stickers on everything and I'm like, wow, fun, fun for everybody. No, we shouldn't have to submit the same documentation multiple times when it's one County, one situation, our name should come up, they should list our obligations for, you know, Ms. Starks positions and Mr. Scudder's positions. They should list all of our positions and here's our same documentation. This is ridiculous and

believe me, I'm over it. I'm like why do I have to submit – I know what I have to do for the State, I work for the State Senate, that's my day job. I understand what they want. They want to know this and this and this. I get it, I do it every year. But every year, I can't remember what address I'm supposed to use when I have to fill out the financial disclosure forms, so I put my home address or I put the County address. They don't like it, they kick it back every year so every year I remember, oh, it's going to get kicked back because I don't have an office in Mayville, but they don't want my home address. What do they want? They kick it back and I'm like, no, no more. If they kick my documentation back one more time, I'm not going to submit them. I'm going to be like no more because I know how to read English, I can speak English, I can write documentations, I'm not doing it. There is no way on God's green earth my documents should be kicked back without a phone call ahead of time or question mark. Because I didn't have my name on the top every single page and I submitted it twice and they are like which one do you want me to keep? Which one looks better? Shred one, keep one, I don't care. I submitted everything honestly and I'm like really, you are going to abuse me over paperwork. I'm like, I don't think so, no and I shouldn't have to submit it multiple times. For Soil & Water board, for Traffic Safety committee, for the County Legislature. One time should be enough, it's the same information being submitted to every board you guys put me on. So, I think it's wrong. And if you guys don't think it's wrong and you don't feel the same pain I am, sorry, but no, something has to change. If you are documenting my information, it should be information one time only, not multiple times. So, whatever that takes Bob Scudder, whatever it's supposed to be, you're the boss on this Committee, fix it. Fix it because I'm sick of it and if they kick my information back again and I have to spend 91 cents to mail it back, I'm not doing it. What are they going to do if I don't turn in the same information that I turn it every single year? Old news. So, I'm tired of it. I have to do it for the Senate, I get it. They want to know where my husband works, how many kids do you have, are you embezzling money? No I'm not. I don't have anybody's check book but my own.

Chairman Scudder: Always say no on that one.

Legislator Vanstrom: Yea, I know and my husband is the most upstanding freaking person in the universe. You want to hire an honest lawyer, God help me, John Vanstrom. The most honest lawyer in the universe so if you are going to do anything.

Chairman Scudder: That commercial was paid for by –

Legislator Vanstrom: No, it's not really but I'm serious. I don't know why I'm having to submit multiple – the Senate, that's my day job, that's not your problem but this other situation is way too much. It's like, -

Chairman Chagnon: Lisa, this is Pierre. Please take a breath, allow Steve Abdella to respond to your concerns.

Chairman Scudder: Then you can tell us what you really trying to say.

Legislator Vanstrom: I already said it all Bob Scudder, already said it all. You're the best.

Mr. Abdella: Well, what I can say is, and I certainly I'm sure there would be apologies for confusion but as far as the disclosure form, only file one. Just one. It doesn't matter how many boards you are on, just file one disclosure. As far as the record of training being completed, I mean, you're correct in your victim of too much volunteerism. The people in charge of each of those little boards are told they need to get certification from you that you have taken the training and they unfortunately don't have access to all the other – the fact that you have taken training for other boards. I mean, a system could be set up as you describe but that's the problem going on there is that the leaders of those individual boards are being asked to have you certify that you've trained so that does mean that you are on five boards, that you're sending an email five times saying, I did take the training. I would bring up that concern with the Ethics Board people.

Legislator Vanstrom: Thank you.

Chairman Scudder: Thanks for sharing Lisa, we appreciate that.

Legislator Vanstrom: Scudder, it's been going on a long time. It was building up, I'm sorry.

Chairman Scudder: No, I'm with you. I've always just emailed and said, I took care of that with the Legislature and that's been the end of it. But, you are much more active than I am. So thank you for that also.

Legislator Vanstrom: Thank you for listening.

Chairman Scudder: We don't vote on this or anything on this do we, we just move on?

Mr. Abdella: Not necessary.

Chairman Scudder: Then we won't do it. I don't want to get Lisa upset.

Legislator Vanstrom: I'm fine. I spoke my peace. It's been building up a long time. Everybody thank you. We are reporting, we're all reporting the same information.

Chairman Scudder: O.k., don't get started again. Just calm down.

Legislator Vanstrom: Christine, thank you for smiling for me.

Proposed Resolution – Amend Budget for County Clerk to Accommodate Digitizing of  
Microfilm

Mr. Barmore: First I want to thank you for taking this late. It just came up last week and it's kind of a thing that we don't really want to put it off another month. Anyways, the bottom line is many years ago when microfilm was the latest technology, this office had all of the civil court records placed on microfilm and several years ago we received a grant to have these microfilms digitized. We ran out of money and still had 24 rolls that were left undone so we

continued to view them on the microfilm reader. Each roll has approximately 2,500 images so there is about 60,000 images total. They are mostly court records from the 70's and 80's. I don't know if you are familiar with using microfilm, but you always know what's on the roll you are looking at but you have to scan the roll to find what you are looking for. It's not an instant look up like when things are digitized on your computer. Our microfilm reader is 40 years old. It's broken down now for the fourth time since I've gotten here and they don't any longer have parts to fix them. I looked into buying a new microfilm reader, you can get one for about \$8,000 that connects to a computer and printer. We do this 20 years from now, the Clerk at that time will be in the same position I'm in trying to figure out whether they want to fix that microfilm reader or if they want to buy another one and also, we don't get rid of the slow time it takes to look at microfilms. By law, we have to have all these records available for the public. They are also used by title searchers whenever a search is made for real estate transaction and my staff also uses these records from time to time. I discovered we can send all these films to IQS which is a company that currently digitizes all of our records and places them at our fingertip on our computers and they will even categorize the records so we don't have to waste time looking for them by scanning the rolls. The cost to do this is 20 cents per image for approximately \$12,000. This will speed up everyone's work and get rid of the need to have to repair or buy a microfilm reader in the future. I had a Clerk on leave who never returned this year, that left a position open for 6 weeks at the beginning of the year. This employee had family three insurance. I replaced this Clerk with one that has single insurance and lower salary. I had Kathleen Dennison run the numbers for me and she says that I will conservatively have savings of \$19,000 because of this. I also have a 30 year employee that's retiring soon so I'll be seeing more savings in payroll later this year. What I'm asking for is to transfer \$12,000 of these savings into an account that will allow me to get these remaining microfilms digitized. There is no cost to the budget or the taxpayers. We're just moving money from one place to another where we need it.

Legislator Starks: As someone who got through college before the World Wide Web and used microfilm, microfiche, etc., I definitely understand your pain and see the value of the project.

Mr. Barmore: Thank you. I remember in the 80's going to the college and going through microfilms to do genealogical research and I'd sit there for 5 hours in the dark and never find what I'm looking for and today, you just put the name in your computer and push enter and there it is.

Chairman Scudder: Thanks Larry and I'm going to ask this question just so I get a definite because I know what the answer is, but I like to hear it. So this would be the end of the microfilm?

Mr. Barmore: The public microfilm, yes. We have other stuff on microfilm but it's not something that the public is allowed to see so we don't have to have it available. And Michelle Henry does have microfilm reader in her office but she's not in her office all day long, every day. She has a day job which is called Records Coordinator, so she's most of the time in the subbasement with records or off someplace else so she's not always available to let us use her reader either.

Chairman Scudder: I would encourage you not to put Lisa's stuff on microfilm because it would be tough to access it later on. Sorry Lisa, had to say that.

Legislator Vanstrom: It's o.k., my Mom is a genius with genealogy so her and Larry are pretty tight so she'll probably like what he needs to do with that \$12,000.

Chairman Scudder: This sounds good. Thanks to Kathleen for getting that all together and sounds like the right move to make. Any questions, comments, or concerns? All in favor?

*Unanimously Carried*

Discussion - Update on Tax Auction – Kim Meleen, Acting Real Property Tax Director

MOVED by Legislator Starks, SECONDED by Legislator Davis to adjourn.

*Unanimously Carried (5:47 p.m.)*

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,  
Kathy Tampio, Clerk/Olivia Ames, Deputy Clerk/Lori J. Foster, Sr. Stenographer