

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

March 7, 2018

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Curtis W. Crandall

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman C. Crandall, G. Barnes, D. Decker, W. Dibble (9:10 a.m.), S. Havey, D. Healy (9:30 a.m.), J. Ricci, P. Stockin, (Absent: J. Burdick, P. Curran, D. Fanton, K. Graves, B. Harris, J. Hopkins, D. Root)

OTHERS PRESENT: S. Decker, J. Kelley (Treas. Tour), J. Luckey (Emergency Services Presentation), T. Ross (Treas. Tour), R. Starks (Probation tour)

DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATION AND TOURS:

Probation

Probation Director Bob Starks began his tour at the front of the office where they have installed a rolling file system. Mr. Starks indicated that they keep records for fifteen years. He pointed out some of the improvements made to their space when the Courthouse building project was done. Mr. Starks remarked that the remodeling, along with the addition of a small kitchenette, have helped with morale for the staff. Including himself, there are eighteen staff members for Probation. He introduced many of his staff during the tour. The group is comprised of Probation Supervisors, Senior Probation Officers, Probation Officers, a Senior Probation Assistant, and support staff.

Mr. Starks mentioned the types of cases they handle. They provide supervision for PINS (People in Need of Supervision) youth who are often referred from school or the police. The group discussed a new law, to go into effect by October 2019, that will raise the age of criminal responsibility to eighteen years of age and how that might impact Probation. It was mentioned that they may see more sixteen and seventeen year-olds. They are also charged with supervising adult offenders. Electronic home monitoring is a responsibility of their office. Sometimes it's the judge who makes the decision on whether someone qualifies for home monitoring, but Probation sometimes makes recommendations as well. Legislator Dibble asked if they had enough devices available. Mr. Starks indicated that they have an ample supply of home monitoring devices. They also have SCRAM bracelets that monitor alcohol consumption. In addition to supervising and monitoring clients, they also facilitate many treatment/support groups. They facilitate an adult Sex Offender Treatment Program, 3-R Domestic Violence Treatment Group, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Substance Abusers (CBI-SA) Group, as well as other groups aimed at improving clients' opportunities for gaining employment or improving their situation and reducing the necessity for incarceration. Additionally, they prepare pre-dispositional, pre-plea, and pre-sentence investigations. They also collect fees, fines, and restitution monies for the courts.

Legislator Barnes asked how many individuals are served by the Probation Office. Mr. Starks stated they are currently serving approximately 387 adults and 40 juveniles. That amounts to about 45-50 clients per Probation Officer. Mr. Starks stated that although all

intakes are done here at the County Office, they do have staff working in other areas of the County various days of the week. He remarked that his staff is very good and well-motivated.

Legislator Barnes asked for clarification on how the probation process works. Mr. Starks said that his office generally works with people before they are sentenced to prison. Their hope is to avoid prison. Occasionally someone will get a split sentence where they are required to spend some time at our County jail as well as probation. Sometimes we get parolees who are requiring probation at the same time.

Treasurer

County Treasurer Terri Ross stated that today marks the seventh anniversary her department moved to its current location. The front area of the department is where people come to pay their property taxes and where County departments pick up payroll. She introduced the legislators to some of the front-end staff. They currently have one full-time, one 25-hour, and one 17-hour staff member for this area. Legislator Healy asked if the part-time employees are eligible for benefits. Ms. Ross stated that it depends on the hiring date of the individual. Newly hired part-time employees are no longer eligible for benefits. The group discussed the tax collection process. Most taxes are collected by the towns. In April the town tax collector settles with the County. From April up until the time of foreclosure, taxes are then paid here at the Treasurer's office. Ms. Ross showed the group the area in her office where tax warrants are kept. She noted that tax warrants are a permanent record.

She introduced the group to other members of her staff. Some titles have been changed as people have retired from positions in the office. The Abstractor position has been changed to Tax Specialist. The Senior Account Clerk Typist position that handles Accounts Payable is now a Junior Accountant.

Ms. Ross showed the legislators a room that is used for filing documents. They have a rolling filing system that allows for much better usage of space. Prior to this system they were using regular four-drawer filing cabinets.

She mentioned that the tax sale seminar they held the previous night was well attended. Ms. Ross stated there were approximately 65-70 people in attendance and most of them were new people she had not seen at previous tax sale auctions. They generally get 175-200 registered bidders at the auction. This is a far greater turnout than they had prior to fifteen or so years ago. She attributes the success to finding an auctioneer who does a great job with advertising and with operating the auction itself. Municipalities are notified prior to the auction if there are any properties in their municipality that will be available for bid, and are given the opportunity to purchase that property ahead of the auction. The Land Bank Corporation is now going to be allowed to purchase five properties ahead of the auction as well.

Legislator Ricci asked about the Three+One program the County has recently begun using. Ms. Ross stated that it analyzes all of our data from banks and looks at our cash flow to determine what are optimal investments for us. The County is somewhat limited on what type of investments can be made. CDs are currently a great investment.

Ms. Ross distributed a summary and organizational chart for her office. The group discussed the auditing process. Ms. Ross stated that EFPR is the outside auditor the County uses for its annual audit. We've used them since 2004, but there are different auditors conducting the audit from year to year so we always have fresh eyes looking at things. Legislator Barnes asked if the State also performs an audit. Ms. Ross stated that it's not the same as was done in the past as far as the amount of time they spend here. There is, however, a lot of reporting they do to the State. Legislator Dibble asked about Community College expense for the County and how NYS "free" tuition has impacted that. Ms. Ross said that they won't know for sure until we get through this year. Legislator Stockin remarked that he's heard some not so positive things about this "free" tuition. Legislator Healy asked about the towns potentially paying for this. Ms. Ross stated that the County pays a portion of the tuition for any community college that is attended in NYS. Ms. Ross explained the process that students must go through to be eligible for a discount in tuition. That discount is what the County is responsible for paying.

The group then discussed the distribution of sales tax. There are many ways in which it can be distributed. Most counties don't share all of their sales tax. Many times, approximately one percent is shared. Sales tax is never distributed based on where it is collected. Chairman Crandall remarked that although sales tax revenue is fairly steady, community college expense fluctuates greatly, especially from town to town.

Ms. Ross noted that County payroll is processed in-house. They have checked into using a payroll company but there are no savings in using an outside vendor.

She explained to the legislators the audit process that is used for paying invoices. Each invoice is viewed by several sets of eyes before a payment is ever made. She had two plastic totes which contained the most recent audit for the legislators to peruse. With a couple of exceptions, every invoice that is processed for payment must go through the audit process, with the Board of Legislators making the final approval for payment. A few invoices, such as utility bills, are paid before the audit so they aren't being paid late. The payment of these invoices is approved by Tim Boyde, who serves as our County Auditor. ACH (Automated Clearing House) payments are set up to be released when the audit is approved.

Emergency Services

Director of Emergency Services Jeff Luckey gave a presentation regarding his department in the Legislative Chambers. Mr. Luckey serves as both the Allegany County Fire Coordinator and the Director of Emergency Services. He provided an organizational chart for Fire Services which listed the Deputy Coordinators for the County. The Deputy Coordinators are volunteers who are appointed by the Fire Coordinator. They are paid mileage for their duties. In addition to himself, the Emergency Services Office is staffed by his Assistant Director Mike Barney, and Account Clerk Typist Bonnie VanHousen, as well as EMS Instructors.

Mr. Luckey discussed the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan that the County has in place. He mentioned the recent winter storm that had taken place March 1-2. Many County residents were without power. The Red Cross opened three shelters to assist residents who were without necessities. Other warming shelters were opened at various fire stations throughout the County.

Mr. Luckey provided a map showing the dollar thresholds of damage required to qualify for FEMA funding. Legislator Decker expressed his aggravation with flooding that took place last June that did not meet the threshold. Excessive flood damage occurred in both Allegany and Cattaraugus counties. Mr. Luckey explained that in addition to the threshold Allegany County has to meet, the State, as a whole, must meet a certain threshold as well. Both thresholds must be met to receive assistance. Chairman Crandall remarked that this is why it's so important that proper assessments are made.

Mr. Luckey distributed a diagram of electric service providers in the County. With the exception of municipal providers in Angelica, Wellsville, and Andover, most of the electric is supplied by three major carriers, National Grid, NYSEG, and RG&E. The group discussed some of the reasons why it took so long for power to be restored in areas. Legislator Dibble remarked on the resiliency of residents in our County. Mr. Luckey agreed, saying that most people want to stay in their own home. Legislator Barnes said he was surprised that all of the radio stations in Wellsville were down. It seems there ought to be a County-wide station that could stay on-air to keep people updated in these situations.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Legislator Decker, seconded by Legislator Dibble, and carried at 11:03 a.m. so that the regular standing committee meetings could be held.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah M. Decker, Journal Clerk/Deputy Clerk of the Board
Allegany County Board of Legislators