

**Allegany Affordable Government Group  
(formerly)  
CONSOLIDATION & EFFICIENCIES AD HOC COMMITTEE  
MARCH 18, 2015**

**\*\* NOT APPROVED \*\***

**Committee Members Present:** K. LaForge, J. Adams, M. Alger, K. Dirlam, Darwin Fanton, J. Herman, C. Jessup, B. Riehle, T. Ross (Absent: C. Clark, D. Edwards, R. Heineman, R. Oakerson).

**Others Present:** C. Crandall, R. Budinger, P. Curran, Dwight Fanton, K. Graves, M. Healy, T. Hopkins

**Media Present:** No media present.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 4:45p.m. by the Allegany Affordable Government Group Chairman, Legislator Kevin LaForge.

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Legislator Jessup, seconded by County Planner Kier Dirlam, and carried to approve the Consolidation & Efficiencies Ad Hoc Committee minutes of August 27, 2014.

**Introduction of Policy/Implementation Core Committee**

**Mission Information**

Legislator LaForge stated the purpose of the committee is to further develop and implement efficiencies and consolidation projects identified by the ad hoc committee from 2014 in order to meet and exceed the Governor's annual zero percent tax freeze initiative such as:

1. Town and village water and sewer initiatives
2. Justice court efficiencies
3. Potential land banks
4. Purchasing, volume purchasing
5. Municipal service delivery efficiencies
6. Assessment, code enforcement.

These topics will be discussed with municipalities at the scheduled meeting at Crossroads on March 31.

Brenda Rigby Riehle, Clerk of the Board of Legislators, reported reservations for meeting attendance from municipalities are coming in.

**Tangible Goals including Towns & Villages 2015-2020**

Legislator LaForge discussed a questionnaire to assist in gathering information from towns and villages, then compiling this information to formulate a report that states the tangible goals for the next five years. This will provide the required demonstration to the state of the cost-savings efforts that have already been made and will continue to be made at the County level. The bottom line is the need to avoid a tax cap override in the future.

**Water/Sewer Consolidation**

Kier Dirlam, County Planner, informed the group of a report put together by a student intern from Houghton College. The intern conducted interviews and wrote a detailed report of the water and sewer treatment facilities and systems in Allegany County. Plans include having the student intern present a summary of the report to the Committee at a future meeting. There are 18 water and sewer treatment systems currently operating in Allegany County.

Legislator LaForge touched upon some of the concerns mentioned from previous research by Jamie Herman and Dave Edwards including the likelihood of facing a staff shortage when existing staff retire. Some of the contributing factors include education and experience requirements for system operators, the demands of the job duties, and the lack of adequate compensation for work performed.

**Code Enforcement**

Legislator LaForge mentioned code enforcement officers tend to not be very popular with the public. Discussion ensued about whether it would be more efficient to operate services centrally. This is a topic for discussion with towns and villages at the meeting on March 31.

**Assessment**

Committee member Darwin Fanton stated by using a shared municipality services agreement, Wellsville is currently combining assessors with Alma and Scio. Ideally, he is looking to partner with two additional towns and/or villages to save costs. The assessor job requires considerable resources including time, training, and expense.

**Land Bank**

Legislator LaForge discussed the Chautauqua County Land Bank Program presentation in the fall of 2014 and touched upon some of the successful outcomes of land bank programs. There are currently 10 programs in New York State. Positive outcomes include reducing blight in communities, property rehabilitation, and returning properties to the County's tax roll.

Chairman Crandall mentioned the popularity of regional efforts with funding sources and stated this type of program might be more successful with a regional approach. Steuben, Livingston, and Wyoming Counties were mentioned for future consideration. Chairman Crandall agreed that further discussion regarding a land bank program in the Allegany County is worthwhile.

**Justice Court**

Legislator LaForge reported that Dr. Robert Heineman had researched justice court models and shared information. Legislator Graves mentioned at a NYSAC meeting Skype technology was being utilized to assist courts with arraignments. Mr. Herman mentioned the expense of transportation for arraignments is substantial to towns and villages. He explained during the jail complex construction phase, the concept of central holding and intakes for arraignments when town and village magistrates aren't available was promoted as a viable option. The use of District Courts in Pennsylvania was also mentioned. Members agreed that central intake and the possibility of using Skype technology have potential to save costs and maximize resources and should be explored further. Legislator Crandall mentioned that indigent defense funding could be explored also.

**Group Purchasing**

Legislator LaForge noted group purchasing is an area we can gain efficiencies and support towns and villages. At past NYSAC trainings, other counties' group purchasing efforts

have produced online catalogues and centralized purchasing in collaboration with towns and villages.

**Good of the Order/Next Meeting Date Details**

Mr. Dirlam asked for clarification concerning meeting facilitation for March 31 at Crossroads.

Legislator LaForge responded that Chairman Crandall will provide the welcome and introductions followed by Mitch Alger, County Administrator; Terri Ross, County Treasurer; and Kier Dirlam, County Planner, providing an overview of the meeting purpose and intent in order to educate municipal leaders on the state mandates, offer partnership, discuss options, distribute a questionnaire, and give direction for the future. He sees the County's role as providing assistance to municipalities through this partnership and together formulating a plan to submit to the state.

Mitch Alger, County Administrator, discussed the NYSAC efficiency toolkit with Committee members. A copy is attached for reference. County Treasurer Terri Ross, confirmed that the cost-savings report represents savings of one percent of the tax levy amount, and the report is due to state June 2015.

Legislator Graves inquired as to why Public Works wasn't a topic on the agenda. He mentioned equipment expense alone is substantial to towns and villages. Ms. Ross stated that Public Works has already implemented and accomplished cost savings practices and shares resources using shared services agreements with several municipalities.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6 p.m. following a motion by Legislator Jessup, seconded by County Administrator Mitch Alger, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Adams  
Assistant to the County Administrator