

ALLEGANY AFFORDABLE GOVERNMENT GROUP

April 27, 2016
NOT APPROVED

Committee Members Present: K. LaForge, J. Adams, C. Jessup, J. Margeson, K. Dirlam, D. Fanton, B. Riehle, T. Ross (Absent: C. Crandall, R. Oakerson)

Others Present: S. Perkins, L. Ballengee, B. Gamache, J. Hopkins, D. Edwards, J. Hermann

Media Present: No media present.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Allegany Affordable Government Committee Chairman Kevin LaForge

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Legislator Jessup, seconded by Darwin Fanton, and carried to approve the Allegany Affordable Government Committee minutes of March 23, 2016.

Water and Sewer Systems Efficiency Update

Legislator LaForge introduced Steve Perkins, Director of Environmental Health and Administrator for the Wyoming County Water Resource Agency. Mr. Perkins stated the process to begin the Water Agency began in 2009 due to aging operators and a lack of replacement operators. Additionally, sampling was becoming troublesome with a lack of affordable price options.

In 2010, they received an efficiency grant from NYDOS to complete a study and develop a plan to improve municipal water systems. This greatly assisted with the formation of the Water Agency. In 2011, a team of four including a grant writer, engineer, and two members from the County's Department of Health completed the study. They canvassed every municipal water system in the County. There were sixteen municipal systems at that time. All sixteen systems agreed to be part of the study and signed intermunicipal agreements. The implementation grant funding award was \$235K. It was awarded in 2011 and lasted through 2015.

The agency formed in 2013 and is currently administered by a seven member Board of Directors. The duties and responsibilities for the Water Agency were identified. Please see attached Wyoming County Resolution No. 13-95 and By Laws of the Wyoming County Water Resource Agency. This information was distributed by Mr. Perkins at the meeting. Tasks that the agency was charged with included developing a water sampling program as a first priority. The agency implemented a program for chloroform sampling at a cost of \$10 per sample. The agency decided to open this service up to non-transient community systems including the Village of Alexander in Genesee County. Currently, there are 26 participants and roughly 1,200 samples taken yearly.

The agency offers equipment for leak detection and surveying. This service has been offered to neighboring Counties. On average, the agency handles 13 emergency detections of leaks annually. The agency's GIS Mapping Systems and asset planning services have successfully worked with the IDA and other agencies. Each agency equally benefits from the data system. Mr. Perkins reported that Wyoming County has a lot of smaller operating systems or aging systems having little or no back up mechanisms in place. The Water Agency assists

them by developing plans to meet the unique needs of each system. This can include both short and long- term needs.

The agency's joint purchasing for mass quantities is a service they continue to expand on while working toward uniform equipment replacement for supply convenience and cost savings.

There is a focus on improving the infrastructure for economic development in partnership with other agencies and the IDA. This began by identifying key areas for capacity. For example, in Perry, Silver Lake could be used as a source to draw more water from. There are two or three similar projects including increasing waste water capacities.

Currently, the Water Agency is under a \$19K tax levy and was given 5 years to get to a \$0 tax levy operational structure. It was mentioned that water rates for this area are much lower comparatively and increasing rates marginally could assist with building reserves. There are other ways to generate income using a fee for service structure including sampling and leak detection services. It is recommended that surveys be completed every three years for water systems. Due diligence must be demonstrated for unaccounted water loss. Ideally, no more than 10 percent of water should be unaccounted for. Jamie Herman stated the rates that Mr. Perkins spoke of are about half the cost of any rates he is aware of in Allegany County. Darwin Fanton mentioned that municipalities would likely participate with a demonstrated cost saving plan. He noted it would be an easier sell if they municipalities can itemize costs and services and see savings. Jamie Herman stated that surveys generally cost \$1,200 per day and generally take 3 - 5 days to complete. Mr. Perkins reported that surveying and leak detection service fees are based on an hourly rate plus mileage.

Neighboring towns and communities participate in Wyoming County Water Agency services including Genesee County. It was mentioned perhaps services should be marketed to municipalities in Allegany County. This could potentially be an option for future consideration. Sampling services includes bid rates and central distribution sites. Overall, Mr. Perkins reports the feedback he has received from participating municipalities has been positive and municipalities are happy with the services they receive.

Legislator LaForge noted the focus hasn't been on economic development but thought we could be missing out on opportunities if we didn't consider the potential benefit to the County.

Mr. Perkins noted the Water Agency has certified operators to fill in to meet the needs of partnering water systems. They are part-time positions and are paid for by the County and have included retired staff using intermunicipal agreements.

Darwin Fanton expressed concern regarding the lack of young people entering this occupation and stated there is a definite need for schools to educate youth of the job demands and to promote job opportunities at job fairs. Jamie Herman and Mr. Perkins noted the level of individual responsibility involved and referenced the Flint Michigan case. This occupation involves on-call work for emergency situations. Kier Dirlam asked what skills are required for the work. It was discussed that chemistry, math, science, and plumbing knowledge and skill sets are required. The ability to perform calculations, read blueprints, and complete construction

work is required. Jamie Herman noted plumbing skills are more necessary for the distributor side.

The Water Agency's boundaries are defined by permit with NYSDEC. It was noted the agency structure permits eligibility for USDA grant funds. The agency structure is defined by the County's Local Law.

Mr. Perkins shared some insight from lessons they learned throughout the process including the importance of dispelling myths that the agency is a "takeover" attempt by the County. Also, since Health Department staff serve in a regulatory role when working with municipalities, it was important to define the purpose of the agency in order to overcome fears and allow for open and honest communication.

Darwin Fanton and Legislator LaForge mentioned next steps will include completing the current study, determining potential shared services capacity with the Wyoming County Water Agency, meeting with municipal water systems in Allegany County, and seeking grant applications for project implementation.

Public Health Director Lori Ballengee asked Mr. Perkins to clarify how he records his time while working for the DOH and for the Water Agency. He stated he keeps a time log and generally spends 35 hours per week working for DOH and 10-15 hours per week working for the Water Agency. He noted this system of accountability has not been problematic.

Legislator LaForge and those in attendance thanked Mr. Perkins for sharing information about the Wyoming County Water Resource Agency.

Land Bank Project Update

Brian Gamache reported that the Land Bank Project has received \$10K from the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Group (CPIG). He noted that Legislator Jessup was instrumental in securing the funding.

Good of the Order

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 25, 2016, at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m. following a motion by Kier Dirlam, seconded by Darwin Fanton, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jodi Adams
Assistant to the County Administrator