

Minutes

Planning & Economic Development Committee

Wednesday, March 15, 2017, 6:00 pm, Room 331

Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Borrello, Chagnon, Odell, Niebel

Member Absent: Starks

Others: Tampio, Himelein, McCoy, McCord, Gooch, T. Dawes, T. Erlandson, Dennison, Dr. Sherri Mason, J. Jablonski, J. Conroe

Chairman Borrello called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (2/15/17)

MOVED by Legislator Niebel, SECONDED by Legislator Odell

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Dr. Mason: Thank you for allowing me to be here. I think that I know all of you but I'm Dr. Sherri Mason. I'm a research professor at SUNY Fredonia and I'm here on behalf of a consortium of Chautauqua County residents respectfully asking to move an item forward to the Chautauqua County Legislature to pass two resolutions. This is related to the political climate currently happening in DC in which there has been a proposal both through HR861 to eliminate the DEPA but also through the current Trump administration budget to eliminate funding to the EPA and dramatically cut funding to the Great Lakes initiative by 97%. As a part of this proposal, all SEQRA agencies would go away and this is particularly – I mean, there are a lot of reasons that this is an issue but I'm going to start with my personal kind of connection with this and then talk about the larger picture. You guys know me through the work that I have done on plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. I've been in front of you before because of the microbeads that we found but it is an ongoing issue. We talked at the time about the fact that microbeads represented only a piece of the pie. It was a significant piece but it's only one piece of the pie and my research on plastic pollution in the Great Lakes continues to go on. My funding is coming from two sources currently. One is a grant with the collaboration with the USGF and that money is coming through our Great Lakes research and restoration initiative funding and the second project we have going is being funded through the New York State grant. So, basically both this proposal would eliminate all funding coming to my research group and allowing our work on understanding the present and the impact of plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. That is one direct aspect but this is a part of the bigger picture, right. We all, I think, at least if we don't remember, we're aware of the fact that before the EPA (*inaudible*) Clean Water Act and these

kinds of environmental protections, the rivers to the Great Lakes use to regularly catch on fire. There is a lot of issues (*inaudible*) with the Great Lakes, they were considered dead and because of things like EPA and the Clean Water Act, we've come a long way since then and restoring them. Everything that is happening on the lake front, especially like up in Buffalo and adjoining communities, is because of the fact that they are coming back and it's because of the funding through these kind of environmental protections that has allowed our Great Lakes to return to its great status. So we are really concerned about this kind of funding and what that means for the resource that is the Great Lakes. Especially impacts on fishing and tourism. So it's why I think this is really appropriate for this committee to be thinking about. We are respectfully asking for two resolutions to be passed. One is simply a statement that we in Chautauqua County support the Great Lakes initiative and we oppose any funding cuts to the Great Lakes initiative including HR861 or any other future attempts to cut this essential funding and the second is to urge our Congressional representative, Representative Tom Reed to publically support the Great Lakes initiative funding level and to pledge to vote against any bill put before Congress that would eliminate funding for this important environmental issue.

Chairman Borrello: Thank you. I can tell you actually that this important to me as well and we've already started to draft something to support the Great Lakes restoration initiative that's extremely important. I also think that it coincides with the infrastructure initiative in Washington which is supported by both parties and the President. At the end of the day, water is an important infrastructure and millions of Americans take their drinking water from the Great Lakes. One fifth of all the fresh water in the world is in the Great Lakes so incredibly important that we continue to maintain the important infrastructure and as you brought up, whether it's recreation or is commercial traffic, any kind of commerce that is in and around the Great Lakes is economically important. So, to frame it in that mind, I think is in line with the initiative to maintain and grow and improve our infrastructure and we only need to look at Toledo and see what can happen when you don't properly maintain your water. So, totally in support of that and we had that chance to talk about it in a committee, but I will be hopeful that everybody will be in support of a motion like that and certainly we'll do some outreach directly to our Federal representatives to support that. We appreciate you coming here.

Legislator Chagnon: I have a couple of questions. Dr. Mason, could you explain what the Great Lake initiative is?

Dr. Mason: The Great Lake Restoration initiative was created in 2010 and it's basically funding that's specifically targeted on the Great Lakes to work on research and understanding the impact in order to revitalize them. It's targeted on specific areas of concern and trying to make changes in order to basically take them off the areas of concern list although that's only happened with one area (*inaudible*).

Legislator Chagnon: And that funding is the funding that comes from the EPA?

Dr. Mason: Yes.

Legislator Chagnon: That is the only funding that's involved is the EPA funding?

Dr. Mason: Yes.

Chairman Borrello: In fact, I think that you can go to glri.us which is their website and it actually specifically lists the projects, the dollar amounts –

Legislator Chagnon: I'm going to do that. I just learned a little bit more tonight.

Legislator Niebel: Sherri, real quick, can you tell us some of the areas of concern for the Great Lakes?

Dr. Mason: One of them is Presque Isle Bay up in Erie. There is quite a few of them across the Great Lakes. I don't remember the entire list. I apologize.

Legislator Niebel: You gave a presentation before the Legislature, was it last year or two years ago –

Dr. Mason: Like a year and a half ago.

Legislator Niebel: And it was on microbeads. Power point presentation. It was very good. As a matter of fact, the Legislature passed that resolution and I think that it had a lot to do with your presentation. Not so much of the fact that it was sponsored by George Borrello but no, it was a nice presentation. Thank you.

Chairman Borrello: Thank you for your good work.

Dr. Mason: My pleasure. So, we were planning on coming next week to the -

Mr. Jablonski: Yes, we would like to appear before the entire Legislature as well just -

Legislator Niebel: For a presentation?

Mr. Jablonski: Well, we don't need to do a presentation. I think that we want to take it – pass it up to the Legislature (*cross talk*)

Chairman Borrello: Well, I've asked that we draft something in hopefully in time for this meeting because time is kind of important because we could be looking at this in April, so it would be too late for the April meeting so hopefully we can get something drafted up with Kathy's assistance. It would actually be something at the meeting that will be presented to be voted on next week.

Dr. Mason: We'll plan to be there. We also have created a list of other communities and the plan is to kind of share this information with other communities. Not just in New York State but every state that is connected. All 8 states that are connected and share it with them with the anticipating of creating basically a united front. So I just wanted to let you guys know that it was part of the bigger picture.

Chairman Borrello: Hopefully there will be other legislative bodies as well that will step in, I think. It's very important. Thank you. Anybody else to speak to the privilege of the floor?

Jane Conroe and I just want to say that I am in total agreement. I try to attending meeting but we agree. Thank you.

Chairman Borrello: Anyone else?

John Jablonski, 213 Spruce Street, Lakewood. I'm a resident of Lakewood and a Chautauqua Lake and Erie property owner and we have a serious harmful algae bloom problem on Chautauqua Lake and in Lake Erie, as you know, in Toledo. Chautauqua County is making a huge investment in another Chautauqua County water district along with other State and Federal money hopefully for that as well. What's happening in western Lake Erie comes to us so it's very important that we maintain these efforts to clean up Lake Erie which still has serious pollution problems from various sources. And, we have serious nutrient problems on Chautauqua Lake, pollution problems. Under the current regulatory scheme we have with EPA have not been addressed to the degree that our lake is always swimmable and fishable and when I'm sitting on the Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance meeting we have a realtor there in the summertime saying, I can't move properties, my colleagues can't move properties because the lake as green and stinky, that is a real serious issue and had to threaten funding for, for instance, the New York State C-SLAP program which Jane has been involved with for years that threaten the monitoring of water quality on Chautauqua Lake and across New York State and threaten various other programs for research on this problems and funding for these problems, is a serious threat to the economy, the heart of Chautauqua County economy. So, I think that is a really serious issue that needs to be dealt with. Air quality is another important thing. We live in an area that gets westerly and southwesterly breezes. What industry does in the Ohio Valley all the way through the Great Lakes kind of funnels over Chautauqua County because of our topography here. We have what is called water graphic lifting precipitation, moisture in the air comes along and it hits our hillside here, we have lake effect snow, lake effect rain. There are pollutants that drop off in that precipitation that they drop out, as dry (*inaudible*) as well. That air pollution is a serious threat to the residents of our region for asthma, cancer and other illness. I would encourage this body of the Legislature to support having a strong EPA, making sure there is funding for important air quality and water quality programs and (*inaudible*) protection programs. I also would like to note that the problems with our lakes and how alga algae blooms seems to be tied and exacerbated by climate change. By lakes getting warmer, you probably paid attention and seen Chautauqua Lake this winter. This is a very unusual winter. When water warms faster, algae grows faster. In the summertime with dry period and dispersed with more violent rain storms, we still have conditions in our lakes where it releases phosphorus from the sediments and then that gets redistributed which enhances the harmful algae blooms. So, climate change is a factor in all of this as well and I would encourage this Legislature to talk to our Federal officials and State officials about maintaining strong climate controls and working toward the development in replacement of fossil fuels by renewable energy. Thank you.

Chairman Borrello: I think this is the most that we ever had for privilege of the floor in this committee. This is great. Anybody else? No. We'll move on.

Proposed Resolution – Confirm Appointment – Conewango Watershed Commission

Chairman Borrello: Any discussion or questions?

Legislator Niebel: I serve on the Conewango Watershed Commission. I know James Dye and he's replacing Bob Stewart. Bob Stewart was from Chautauqua County and has now moved to Cattaraugus County. He'll be a good replacement.

Chairman Borrello: Good to hear. Anyone else?

Unanimously Carried

Mr. McCord: I just have a question for Kathy about the other resolution entitled, "Authorizing Public Hearing for New York State Office of Community Renewal Community Development Block Grant Applications".

Chairman Borrello: Can we bring it off the table?

Clerk Tampio: It was tabled at the Legislature. You can discuss it. It was not specifically referred back to committee. If you wish Mr. Chairman, you can discuss it here.

Chairman Borrello: Sure, if you want to come up and discuss that specifically?

Mr. McCord: Sure. The reason for the tabling request was just a timing issue with the grant funding source. So, we worked through those things with OCR and it's ready to be brought back this month on behalf of the company to establish a public hearing for the CDBG funds. As part of the expansion at Castelli Cheese who is in the process of purchasing a company in New Jersey and moving the operation here to a new facility in Ashville.

Chairman Borrello: Since it was tabled at the Legislature, can we move it off the floor here (*inaudible*)?

Clerk Tampio: It has to be moved off the floor in the Legislature.

Chairman Borrello: O.k., can we have that added so we can move it off?

Clerk Tampio: It will be on the agenda.

Chairman Borrello: O.k., we'll move it off the floor next week. To the presentation.

Discussion – Dave McCoy & Don McCord – Re: Macrophyte Management Strategy for Chautauqua Lake & Economic Development Metrics

Discussion – Waterway Trails – Tom Erlandson, Tom Dawes

Discussion – Legislator Odell – Pace (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Overview

Update - Dave McCoy – Economic Development Measurements

Other

MOVED by Legislator Chagnon, SECONDED by Legislator Odell to adjourned and duly carried. (8:46 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Kathy K. Tampio, Clerk/Lori J. Foster, Deputy Clerk/Secretary to the Legislature