



**SPECIAL LEGISLATURE MEETING MINUTES
CAYUGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE
Tuesday, September 3, 2019 at 6:00PM in Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER: Hon. Tucker Whitman, Chair at 6:00 PM

ROLL CALL: Sheila Smith, Clerk of the Legislature

EXCUSED: Keith Batman

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

MOMENT OF PRAYER:

TOPIC OF DISCUSSION: Department of Public Works

Discussion:

Whitman says I have called this meeting so we could have some discussion on the direction of DPW. He says I do not have a lot prepared as far as the direction of this or have an agenda as far as where things should go, obviously I have a personal opinion. He says we got here on a path a lot of us were not too happy about, it was a hurried path and myself was also uncomfortable on how we got here. Whitman says I think we have given it a shot now we need to discuss if we like where we are at or not.

Daly says in anticipation of this meeting tonight I did go over back and traced on how we got to this point. She says in June of 2018, we received a memo from the then County Administrator Justin Woods outlining the 2018 priorities. One of the recommendations was to hire a Highway superintendent and create the Department of Public Works. At the time of this memo he said he was working on a Local Law that would expand \$71,000 Highway Superintendent position into a Director of Public Works and he estimated that salary to be between \$90,000 and \$110,000. She says the new DPW Director would oversee four divisions, Highway, Building and Grounds, Parks and Weights and Measures. This new organization was supposedly to increase coordination among Public Works and Capital projects for better planning and budgeting. She says in addition I believe very important to Justin it would decrease the number of individuals that would be directly reporting to him. Daly says the CGR report also included similar recommendations and also the potential to share support staff among those department. She says fast forward six months later to December of 2018 when just prior to the consultant that was brought in under contract was about to be out the door, Justin asked we consider a last minute plan to fill his two jobs, a Director of Public Works at a salary of \$103,000 and a Deputy Director at \$97,000. He justified the two hires with the DPW Director having the administrative background that would expedite the merging of the various departments and the Deputy having the experience needed to run the day to day at the Highway. He justified this new plan as affordable and reducing the overall budget by \$13,000. She says though the Legislature has taken recent criticism for pushing against the administrator recommendations and refusing to relinquish power the fact is we approved this last minute plan and moved it forward based on his recommendations, well the majority of us did anyway. She says now we are left with our current situation and we need to reexamine the decision we made basically bring us back to square one back in the leadership vacuum we faced a year ago. There is a recent resignation of our DPW Director after the removal of the Deputy, the rehire of the interterm Deputy DPW Director to oversee the day to day operations of Highway. Daly says there has been no significant change in responsibilities in the Superintendent of Building and Grounds other than him not being requested to attend all the meetings. There has been no talk or movement in combining or cross training staff and there has been a realization there may not be enough support staff within those departments to share. So the question tonight is where do we go from here, what makes sense for the various departments and what is affordable for the tax payers. She says this may be the time to assemble a group to help frame and add to the conversation. Just because we were asked to make a snap decision last December doesn't mean we have to repeat history now.

Dennison says Gary is still doing what Gary has always done around here. He says I personally do not feel we need a DPW Director, we do need a Highway Superintendent obviously but I don't feel like we need an actual DPW department. I think Gary and Dough can continue to get along just like they always did before this all happened. We need to go back to doing what gets the job done.

Lattimore says I do not know how many of us believe in the CGR report now that we have seen parts of it and I think there was some input in the end of it that may have been from our previous hire. He says this County has to do some many roads a year are we meeting the target. My question to the Chair is do we sit down with private sector and see whether or not we can do more roads with the combination of government and some of the contractors that have been doing our highway work for many years to see whether or not we can improve quality. Whitman says I agree, something that would help with that is to have somebody in place longer than six months to come up with a plan. He says I don't know if anyone is strongly in favor of the DPW and has an explanation of what saving or gaining for us, I struggle with that.

Mahunik says in my opinion we are putting the cart in front of the horse again, we should be having a discussion about the County Administrator and what direction we want to go with that and they should be coming to us with a recommendation of what this would or would not save us. He says I fell we continue to over step our rolls and try to run day to day operations where we shouldn't be running day to day operations. He says the majority voted for this and I would just like information from someone who is sitting in the County Administrator's seat and our department heads that are impacted by this.

Whitman says on that, I would just like to clarify if this body walks out of here tonight with a decision on what direction we want to go that is great, but if not we have started the conversation and I hope the ball keeps rolling.

Pinckney says I would like to piggy back on what Andy and Pat both said. I think lack of communication has hurt us and we can't make decisions if we cannot communicate. He says going forward I think communication has to be between departments, Administrator and the Legislature.

Ripley says I would have to go with Andy, I had high hopes on the DPW and it was a total failure. He says we now have to step back and take a look at the bigger picture and have the right people in there. He says I think moving forward with Carl would be the right decision at this point. Far as the CGR I know that J. Justin Woods had input on that thing from the get go, he was already playing a part in that, he had his fingers in everything.

Dennison says maybe we should we get input from the people who have to work with the DPW, get opinions from the people. We need to put the right people in the right positions in the Highway department. He says was what we doing before broke other than maybe the person wasn't in the right position. Whitman says Highway year after year has been underfunded and understaffed so I struggled with the solution being more management, I am not sure how that maintains more roads. He says we are still not giving them the employees that they need.

Whitman asks, does anyone have a direction we would like to go. He says we can task this to Public Works, we can get some feedback from towns, we can go ahead and get rid of the DPW, is there a flavor of the body at this time.

Dennison says I would like to get input from people that work with them before we make any major decisions.

DeForest says we talk about things not being broken before but having been here four years and being on Public Works for four years all I would hear is about highway and how things weren't work there. He says this is not new and I know we have to come up with a solution and I am all in for that but I don't know if we are any worse off than two years ago.

Daly says is there potential to consolidate the staff and the resources that's what we talked about, if that is not possible that's the first question we must ask. She says the thing that bothers me the most is this was a quite expensive proposal and they way to make it affordable was to eliminate workers except the ones that are absolutely necessary to get the work done. Daly says this is what we bought into and it doesn't seem likely at all.

RESOLUTIONS:

9-19-LEG-1 Creating a Capital Reserve for Buildings and creating Repair Reserves for Buildings and Highways

9-19-LEG-2 Fixing Day and Notice of Public Hearing on pursuant to NY Gen. Mun. Law § 6-D to make appropriations from the Buildings Repair Reserve