

FINANCE & RULES COMMITTEE
July 23, 2024

Present: Tom Osborne, Chair; Herb Frost; Vincent Nortz; and Barry Lyndaker. Legislator Nellenback was excused.

Legislator Osborne called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Legislator Osborne moved to approve the June 18, 2024 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Nortz, and carried.

At 1:01 p.m. Legislator Osborne moved to enter executive session on matters leading to the appointment of a particular person, seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

At 1:29 p.m. Legislator Nortz moved to regular session, seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

Community Engagement Specialist – Kaylee Rhodes

Kaylee Rhodes began by explaining that she met with a few legislators in the beginning to get ideas and create plans on what this position should be. It was then that she began working on plans to create a Communications and PR policy, design and implement an email marketing tool, assist with events, assist with internal communications, social media deep dive with discussion from the departments on social media, create an internal communications request form, create a County Facebook page, assist with emergency communications, and create future goals.

In brainstorming the necessary outcomes of this position was better communication with towns and villages; knowledge of upcoming events; talking points for legislators at Town and Village monthly meetings; monthly updates of funding opportunities to get out to the public; making a connection between county and county residents; and having a better social media presence. She referred to a template that was created by Legislator Kalamas as an example of what she would like to have for each of the legislators to take to their Town and Village meetings.

The new email marketing tool is now on the county website, and anyone can go and subscribe. This will allow them to get email alerts to get important information from Lewis County. It only requires a first and last name and email address. Kaylee showed several events that she had already attended and/or planned. She partnered with Spectrum and the Outdoor Channel for Hunt Fish Feed Initiative at the Lowville VFW; planned the ribbon cutting at the Outdoor Services building and the new DMV & Board of Election building; attended the Office for the Aging Senior Picnic; Mental Health Walk; Mental Health Appreciation breakfast; and Safety Days.

The creation of an internal quarterly newsletter allows employees to get information on upcoming events, wellness advice, and many other items. The Communications and PR policy, which was handed out to all legislators, was developed after attending two sessions with NYSAC to learn more about the importance of an established policy as well as first amendment rights in social media. The policy was drafted with input from other counties on what works and what doesn't and is currently in draft form under review.

The social media deep dive took seven of the fourteen department Facebook pages and created on County page. There is also one Instagram account for Lewis County. Some of the Facebook pages that will remain separate are from elected officials, Board of Elections, private Facebook groups, and the Lewis County ATV Trail System which already has 13,000 followers which are likely a combination of residents and people from outside this area.

A communications request form has been created for any department to use to get information to Kaylee to put out on our website or Facebook page. Emergency Communications is something that just happened due to the flooding. On July 10th around 8:00 p.m. a Facebook post was created and within an hour or two had 200 followers and 118 shares. A post with the listing of closed roads was posted on Thursday, July 11th at 3:23 p.m. and went viral with over 1,500 followers. As of July 22nd, there are 2,196 followers to the County Facebook page. Using Facebook was a way of getting information out to residents about flood resources, the damage assessment tool for reporting, and closed and re-opened roads.

Future goals are to continue to help with internal and external communications utilizing the email marketing tool; increase communications between villages, towns and the county; inform legislators on community events, committee information talking points, and funding opportunities to report to the towns and villages; create consistent on brand materials to be used externally or internally; build relationships with county partners and media outlets; continue to grow the county social media presence; help departments with communications; and use the county website to create one place for people to find all Lewis County events.

Broadband Expansion update – Casandra Buell, Director of Planning and Community Development

Casie Buell presented the NYS DEC Smart Growth Grant for Adirondack Mountain Communities opportunity back in December of 2023. The board gave their authorization to proceed with the grant application. The application was for \$300,000.00 but Lewis County was only awarded \$125,000.00. The initial project was to accelerate existing Frontier Communications project in Towns of Croghan and Watson, however due to the limited funding the project pivoted to maximizing the limited funding in the best way possible. The revised project is for the Brantingham area and Elijah Lake Road.

The plan is to work with Spectrum, who was willing to assist, for fiber build out in the Brantingham area for 47 passings at a total cost of \$150,000.00. The other part of the plan is to work with DANC for a fiber build out on Elijah Lake Road in the Town of Diana for 10 passings at a total cost of \$50,000.00. The total cost together is \$236,199.00 which will cover 57 passings. The grant covers \$125,000.00 leaving a local cost of \$111,199.00, of that Spectrum is contributing \$36,199.00 which only leave \$75,000.00 for the County to contribute.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Introductory Local Law No. 2-2024 “A Local Law Providing for the Partial Exemption of certain Real Property Owned by Persons 65 Years of Age or Over” and setting the public hearing for September 3, 2024 from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
AYE 4 NAY 0

2. Authorizing an agreement with SymQuest for an additional five (5) year lease of twenty-seven (27) multi-function printing machines as a cost not to exceed \$140,000 including a one-year subscription to print management software at an annual renewal rate of \$2,496.00 and per page printing of \$0.0035 for black & white and \$0.035 for color.
AYE 4 NAY 0

3. Authorizing the transfer of the approximate 0.44 acres of vacant land located immediately behind the property and one family residence of David Hodge and Michelle Smith located at 7456 Emi Lane to said named owners in consideration of the payment of \$2,000.00 and subject to the written consent and waiver of reversionary rights of the Lewis County Agricultural Society as required under the deed restrictions. *Legislator Lyndaker voiced his concerns over getting into the business of selling county land, the location of the current septic tank on the buyers’ property, and the price that was negotiated. County Attorney Joan McNichol stated that since 2014 county property had been sold for various reasons, and that in this situation the buyers were the ones who made the \$2,000.00 offer which they based off other vacant land that was being sold. Legislator Lyndaker made it a point to mention that this development is owned by the County Attorney’s husband. Legislator Lyndaker was opposed.*
AYE 3 NAY 1

4. Setting a public hearing to solicit the views of citizens regarding the potential conflict of interest and requested waiver posed by Snow Belt Housing Company and the otherwise eligible CDBG housing rehabilitation applications, to be held on September 3, 2024 from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
AYE 4 NAY 0

5. Authorizing applications to be submitted to the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority for up to \$3,000,000 in Clean Mobility Program funding and to the NYS DOT Innovative Transit Mobility Pilot Grant Program for up to \$3,000,000 in order to launch a county wide micro-transit program with Via Transportation. If awarded funding by NYSERDA and/or NYS DOT under these grant programs the Board authorizes an agreement with Via Transportation at an estimated cost of \$740,000 per year for up to a five-year pilot period. *Legislator Lyndaker was opposed.*
AYE 3 NAY 1

6. Authorizing an agreement between Planning & Community Development Department and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to accept the \$125,000 in Adirondack Park and Catskill Park Community Smart Growth Grant Program funds to expand broadband infrastructure within the Adirondack boundary and authorizes an agreement with DANC to provide broadband infrastructure to passings on Elijah Lake Road, in the Town of Diana, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.00.

AYE 4 NAY 0

7. Authorizing and approving a PILOT agreement between Lewis County, other affected taxing jurisdictions, and the Nature Conservancy, whereby the conservancy will make annual payments to the named taxing jurisdictions in such amounts and according to the schedule set forth in the agreement over a ten-year term commencing on January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2033.

AYE 4 NAY 0

8. Setting the 2025 Workers' Compensation participant assessments to be based 50% on actual loss experience from 2021, 2022, and 2023; 30% on gross payroll from 2023 and 2024 figures; and 20% on proportionate full property values.

AYE 4 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee Legislator Osborne moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:06 p.m., seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board