

FINANCE & RULES COMMITTEE
April 15, 2025

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

Legislator Osborne called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

Legislator Osborne moved to approve the March 18, 2025 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

Snow Belt Housing update – Robert Grunert-Loud, Executive Director of Snow Belt Housing

The mission of Snow Belt Housing Company is to strengthen Lewis County Communities by providing access to quality affordable housing and create pathways to homeownership. The core values of Snow Belt Housing remain rooted in dignity & respect, access & equity, and local solutions by understanding that housing is essential, meeting people where they are, and focusing on what works for Lewis County. To help face challenges head-on in a way that restores trust from the community, Snow Belt Housing is working on creating a 5-year strategic plan.

The first arm of Snow Belt Housing is Homeless Prevention & Housing Navigation. This is done by providing temporary and permanent housing navigation, with a focus on long-term stability and safety, through compassionate support and a structured approach. Snow Belt Housing provides the tools clients need and maintain respect and focus on outcomes. There are currently 31 individuals and households that are supported, many others have successfully been housed and are rebuilding their lives. This shows that Snow Belt Housing is a vital support system in Lewis County.

The next arm is Home Rehabilitation Programs. This is done by preserving affordable homeownership, creating health, safety, and livability improvements across the county. Snow Belt Housing is a subrecipient of Lewis County's \$653,000 CDBG grants, which involves managing 11 active home rehabilitation projects. Currently there are 24 homes receiving critical disaster repairs from structural work to mold remediation and flood resilience.

The third arm is Property Management Division. Snow Belt Housing ensures safe, clean, and dignified living environments by offering over 160 units as affordable housing and serving diverse populations from seniors to families to those with special needs. They are a long-term partner in housing stability.

Snow Belt Housing has entered a new era, which is the Development Division, building affordable homes for residents. Funding from the New York State Affordable Homeownership Opportunities Program will allow construction of up to 20 new homes for residents earning equal or less than 80% of the average median

income. They are applying for HCR funds to rehab and resale up to four homes for first-time buyers. The Whitton Place Rehab project in Port Leyden is a \$2M renovation of a 12-unit building.

Looking ahead creates an opportunity for partnership by working together to meet Lewis County's housing needs. A revolving fund for financing; continued investment in power, water, sewer, and internet; and establishing a Lewis-Jefferson Land Bank. Housing needs can be met with continued vision, tools and open collaboration.

Alpine Express Route – Casandra Buell, Director of Planning & Community Development

Alpine Express is the name Fort Drum dubbed for the on-base shuttles service with Lewis County. On June 12, 2024, a meeting was held with Fort Drum, Jefferson County, and the City of Watertown to discuss a possible transportation partnership for an on-base shuttle service. An Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA) was needed, which is an agreement between the Army and a local public partner to improve installation support for Mission, Soldier, and Family Readiness. Jefferson County was not ready to support this request so Lewis County was identified as the best option for a partnership; however, discussion with NYSDOT would need to be initiated.

System Planning began to figure out funding through NYS DOT and FTA; bus tops and route configuration; system operator; route needs; and a route budget. A few roadblocks were discovered along the way like the 5311-funding making this project a gray area; vehicle purchases and use of life; on-base facilities; system operator capabilities; and time frame. They were overcome one by one and now the target launch date of Alpine Express is June 1, 2025. This on-base shuttle service will run seven days a week, 12 to 13 hours a day, but not on holidays. Birnie Bus agreed to add this as an additional service to the existing contract. Fort Dum has offered to provide on-base parking space, office space, and vehicle maintenance facility. Birnie Bus will be operating with 6 to 7 new drivers and 2 to 3 new buses. The annual mileage is estimated to be about 120,000 miles.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Adopting the Employee Meal Allowance and Reimbursement Policy.
AYE 4 NAY 0
2. Authorizing a licensing and service agreement with SHI International Corp. effective May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2028 for software licenses & products under Microsoft 365 with cloud hosting at a cost not to exceed \$100,000 annually.
AYE 4 NAY 0
3. Opposing the Legislation Granting New York Power Authority additional authority to own renewable energy and energy storage projects in New York State.
AYE 4 NAY 0

4. Appropriating \$2,500.37 in CDBG payback funds to the Planning and Community Development Department to be used for various community projects.

AYE 4 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee Legislator Frost moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:47 p.m., seconded by Legislator Nellenback, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board