

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OSWEGO COUNTY  
LEGISLATURE HELD FEBRUARY 15, 2007.**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Roll call was taken with all legislators present, except Legs. Thomas and Proud. The invocation was given by Ted Jerrett, Clerk of the Legislature, followed by the salute to flag.

**MINUTES:**

Hearing no objections and/or corrections to the minutes of January 4, 2007, the minutes were approved.

**PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS AND NOTICES:** None.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS:**

Chairman Johnson invited Leg. Seager and members of the Health and Human Services Committee forward, along with Commissioner Fran Lanigan and Senior Social Welfare Examiner Addie Dolbear. Leg. Seager presented a certificate to Ms. Dolbear, acknowledging her 30 years of service to the County. Commissioner Lanigan offered a few comments.

Chairman Johnson invited Community Services Worker Esther France to join the Committee up front. Commissioner Lanigan presented a certificate to Ms. France in recognition of her 29 years of service to the County, offered a few comments and wished her well on her retirement.

Chairman Johnson invited Social Welfare Examiner Lillian Moyer to join the Committee up front. Commissioner Lanigan presented a certificate to Ms. Moyer in recognition of her 26 years of service to the County, offered a few comments and wished her well on her retirement.

Chairman Johnson invited Aging Services Administrator Larry Schmidt to join the Committee up front to be recognized for 25 years of service to the County. Leg. Seager presented a certificate to Mr. Schmidt and both Leg. Seager and Mr. Schmidt offered a few comments.

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN JOHNSON.**

Chairman Johnson presented the 2007 State of the County Address. (A complete copy is attached to the end of these minutes.)

**PUBLIC SPEAKERS ON RESOLUTIONS OF THE DAY:** None.

**REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS:**

Leg. Brown gave a report on the recent NYSAC Conference and provided attendant documents to the Clerk of the Legislature.

Chairman Johnson and County Attorney, Richard C. Mitchell, gave an update on the Fire Training School.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:** None

**REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES:**

Leg. Brown stated that the Fish and Wildlife Board meeting in Cortland had been canceled.

Leg. Malone inquired about the Administrator and Highway positions that are currently vacant. Chairman Johnson said that the committee is very close to filling the County Administrator's position and that they were still in the searching process for a candidate to fill the Highway Superintendent's position. Leg. Brown commended Acting County Highway Superintendent Kurt Ospelt for aiding in the rescue of a family in New Haven who had been overcome with carbon monoxide during the recent storm. She went on to mention that members of the Mennonite community had been in Oswego County helping farmers shovel off barn roofs.

**RESOLUTIONS AND MOTIONS:**

Leg. Osetek offered Resolution No. 3, entitled RESOLUTION REALLOCATING THE TITLE OF CHIEF ACCOUNTANT.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
Leg. Santore opposing  
YES: 22 NO: 1 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Osetek offered Resolution No. 4, entitled, RESOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE COUNTY OF OSWEGO TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 48 OF 1996, AS AMENDED, IMPOSING SALES AND COMPENSATING USE TAXES, IN RELATION TO THE DISPOSITION OF NET COLLECTIONS FROM SUCH SALES AND COMPENSATION USE TAXES. Leg. Seager commented on the importance of this resolution, and hopes the City of Oswego will also consider this. She brought up the fact that there was an issue about when the city will be getting paid versus when the town gets paid and that perhaps an amendment will be proposed to the rules to reflect payment to the county.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Bullard offered Resolution No. 5, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BUDGETARY MODIFICATION SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT ACCEPTING FUNDS FROM THE GOVERNOR'S TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE. The Sheriff's Department requests permission to accept \$14,700 from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee into revenue line 3110.4330.6 (STEP-Selective Traffic Enforcement Program Grant, No. PT-3800132) and to transfer \$12,600 into expenditure line 3110.5120 (Overtime Payments), \$350 into expenditure line 3110.5445 (Other Travel Reimbursement) to cover the cost of related Traffic Safety Conferences/Seminars and \$1750 into 3110.5260 (Other Equipment) to purchase on dual-antenna Radar Unit.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Bullard offered Resolution No. 6, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BUDGETARY MODIFICATION EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE TO ACCEPT HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT. This resolution accepts a grant from the FY06 Homeland Security Grant Program in the amount of \$55,700.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Malone offered Resolution No. 7, entitled, RESOLUTION CORRECTING AN ERROR ON THE TAX ROLLS FOR THE TOWN OF SCRIBA. This resolution corrected an error on the tax roll for the town of Scriba in excess of the \$2,500 limit.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Malone offered Resolution No. 8, entitled, RESOLUTION CORRECTING AN ERROR ON THE TAX ROLLS FOR THE TOWN OF CONSTANTIA/VILLAGE OF CLEVELAND. This resolution corrects errors on the tax rolls in excess of the \$2,500 limit.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Malone offered Resolution No. 9, entitled, RESOLUTION CORRECTING AN ERROR ON THE TAX ROLLS FOR THE TOWN OF SCHROEPEL/VILLAGE OF PHOENIX. This resolution corrects errors on the tax rolls in excess of the \$2,500 limit.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Malone offered Resolution No. 10, entitled, RESOLUTION CORRECTING AN ERROR ON THE TAX ROLLS FOR THE TOWN OF SANDY CREEK/VILLAGE OF SANDY CREEK. This resolution corrects errors on the tax rolls in excess of the \$2,500 limit.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. French offered Resolution No. 11, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING IN THE FIRST INSTANCE OF THE STATE AIR 99 PROGRAM-AID (AND STATE ADMINISTERED FEDERAL PROGRAM-AID) ELIGIBLE COSTS OF AN AVIATION PROJECT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THERETO.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. French offered Resolution. No. 12, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURE FROM CAPITAL RESERVE NO. 146 - HIGHWAY & AUTOMOTIVE EQUIPMENT-PUBLIC WORKS. This resolution transferred \$511,000 from Capital Reserve Fund #146 to Capital Project #148 for the purchase of road equipment.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Seager offered Resolution No. 13, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BUDGETARY MODIFICATION YOUTH BUREAU-REALITY CHECK-COLA. This resolution allowed the Youth Bureau to accept an additional \$1610 for the Reality Check program as a cost of living adjustment.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Seager offered Resolution No. 14, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BUDGETARY MODIFICATION YOUTH BUREAU US TENNIS ASSOCIATION. This resolution allows the Youth Bureau to accept a \$3,070 grant for the tennis program throughout Oswego County.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 22 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Seager offered Resolution No. 15, entitled, RESOLUTION APPROVING 2007 CAMP HOLLIS FEE SCHEDULE. Leg. Malone moved to amend the resolution to leave the rates for local residents as it is, seconded by Leg. Brown. After a lengthy discussion, Leg. Malone withdrew the motion to amend the resolution. Discussion returned to the original resolution. A roll call vote was requested with the following results:

Resolution passed, with a roll call vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

YES: POTTER, DOYLE, LEEMANN, BRYANT, GEARSBECK, BROWN, BEARDSLEY, SEAGER, NATOLI, OSPELT, GARDNER, BULLARD, OSETEK, SANTORE, PONZI, KUNZWILER, CHALIFOUX, MALONE, BECKWITH, VASHO, FRENCH, BREWER, JOHNSON.

NO: NONE.

ABSENT: THOMAS, PROUD.

Leg. French offered Resolution No. 16, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CHAIRMAN TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH OSWEGO HOSPITAL - MENTAL HEALTH DIVISION. The resolution authorizes the Chairman to execute a lease agreement with Oswego Hospital in regard to its use and occupancy of the Bunner Street Office Complex from January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2011.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Seager offered Resolution No. 17, entitled, RESOLUTION APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE OSWEGO COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD. This resolution appointed Kathleen Fenlon and Anne Wart, to the Oswego County Community Services Board, terms expiring on January 31, 2011.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Legs. Bryant and Doyle offered Resolution No. 18, entitled, RESOLUTION CHANGING THE LOCATION OF THE AUGUST 9, 2007 MEETING OF THE OSWEGO COUNTY LEGISLATURE. This resolution changes the location of the August 9, 2007 meeting of the Oswego County Legislature to the H. Douglas Barclay Courthouse in Pulaski, NY at 2:00 pm.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
Leg. Natoli in opposition  
YES: 22 NO: 1 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Chalifoux offered Resolution No. 19, entitled, RESOLUTION APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE OSWEGO COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS. This resolution appoints Hon. Jack Beckwith, Hon. Barry Leemann, and Mr. Samuel Weber to the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. French offered Resolution No. 20, entitled, RESOLUTION APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE OSWEGO COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT BOARD.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Bullard offered Resolution No. 21, entitled, RESOLUTION TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO THE OSWEGO COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD FOR 2007.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Chalifoux offered Resolution No. 22, entitled, RESOLUTION SUPPORTING APPOINTMENT TO THE REGION 7 FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. Bullard offered Resolution No. 23, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION TO THE NW YORK STATE DIVISION OF PROBATION AND CORRECTIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION CLASSIFICATION FUNDING.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. French offered Resolution No. 24, entitled, RESOLUTION AWARDDING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT "HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION".

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

Leg. French offered Resolution No. 25, entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING OSWEGO COUNTY TO FILE APPLICATION AND TO ENTER INTO A STATE CONTRACT FOR A STATE GRANT-IN-AID FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION PROGRAMS.

Resolution passed, with a voice vote  
YES: 23 NO: 0 ABSENT: 2

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS/MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Leg. Bullard moved to adjourn the meeting, and Leg. Kunzwiler seconded the motion. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Chairman Johnson reminded members of a short meeting of the Republican Caucus immediately following the Legislature meeting.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING COUNTY ISSUES:**

Pastor James Hinman, Fulton, NY, voiced his concerns regarding the Bristol Hill Landfill.

There were no others wishing to speak.

**2007 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS BY RUSS W. JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN**

Member of the Legislature, Staff and Honored Guests...

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to speak to you once again about the State of this County government. This is an honor I do not take lightly, and I pledge today to work as hard as I possibly can to reward your faith and trust.

I suppose the conventional place to start would be to recognize the differences of opinion that have been voiced over the last few of months, and urge us to work together to heal our wounds.

I won't be doing that.

It's not because I am blind to what had transpired, but because I don't think we need healing. This, my friends, is a healthy, dynamic organization, not a sick one. This legislature is composed of 25 entirely different individuals, who have different backgrounds and different constituencies. If we agreed on every issue, that would be a sign of weakness and sickness. You know that I enjoy a good debate. I've said that since you first elected me as your Chairman in 2004. I enjoy a good debate because I think it makes us all think and work harder. I would much rather have us pulling and tugging to go in a positive direction, than all of us marching in lock-step in the wrong direction. We are legislators, not lemmings.

What I do want to offer, however, is my promise to do my best to ensure that our debates and differences are on matters of principle - that is, what each of us thinks is best for the people we represent. We cannot let our personal likes and dislikes cloud our judgment when it comes to making decisions that affect our constituents.

This past holiday season was a treasured time for the opportunities it afforded us to be with our families, to share our good fortune with others, and to contemplate the truly important facets of our lives. And it now gives rise to the time when we are given the license to organize our thoughts about the year ahead, to renew our commitments to those persons and values we hold dear.

So it is altogether fitting that we use this occasion to spend some time thinking about this government's goals for the year ahead.

We need to begin not with a goal, but a statement of principle. It would be tempting to think that the County's restored fiscal health makes it possible for us to coast this year. We might think that all we need to do is maintain the status quo, to just continue doing business as usual. Such a notion is both illusive and dangerous. Every year there are new challenges and new twists on old ones. Some are specific to Oswego County; others are common to all local governments. If we think we can manage by merely treading water, then we are sure to be swept back by the current, and it would be necessary to move forward just to stay in the same place. But we want more for our constituents than that. We want this government to be more responsive, more efficient, more affordable, and that is a principle that will underlie each decision we make in the year ahead.

One of the first tasks for us this year is to get to know the new administration in Albany. Governor Spitzer has promised to put property tax relief to the top of his agenda. In fact, the Governor just recently announced his property tax cut proposal. Welcome, Governor, to the crusade. Certainly he will find willing partners for this effort here in Oswego County. But as we know from experience, talking about tax relief and delivering it are altogether different creatures. We know that providing better service at a lower cost only comes about through hard work, a willingness to challenge customary ways of doing business, and above all, a commitment to put the public interest ahead of our personal needs.

We enter 2007 with a solid foundation upon which to build. Consider what we have been able to accomplish together:

- We have been able to provide significant property tax relief and stability.
- We have fair contracts in place with all our labor organizations.
- We have made provisions for unexpected financial challenges.
- We continue to be debt free.
- We have provided funding for a number of capital projects that will preserve the investment that have been made in the County's infrastructure.
- We have undertaken initiatives in support of our tourism and agricultural sectors.

And,

- We have adopted a strategic plan that provides us with a guide to future decision-making.

These accomplishments, however noteworthy, are the starting point, not the culmination, of our work. I know each of you have issues you would like to see addressed, and I hope you will feel free to share them with me and your colleagues. None of us are mind-readers, I know I'm not, so open discussion can only breed stronger communication. To start the conversation, I want to speak to the priorities that are at the top of my list.

One of the first orders of business, of course, is the selection of a new County Administrator. We are moving closer to that end, and I am confident that the search committee is doing its homework and will bring forward to this body a good recommendation. It is critical that we legislators give full support to whomever we appoint.

This past December, the Legislature took an important step toward reopening a fire training facility in the County. Much work remains to be done in order to equip and staff this operation. We want and need to solidify a coalition of users so that this resource is fully utilized, but with a minimum impact on the County taxpayers. I'm confident that the Public Safety Committee, along with the Office of Fire Coordinator, are ready for the challenge to make our new fire training facility the best in New York State. God knows our firefighters deserve it.

We have spent a great deal of time in recent months in committee meetings considering opportunities for expansion of County recreational trails. We know that there are a number of issues that must be dealt with to make this happen. We have literally thousands of trail enthusiasts both in and outside of our county who are depending on us. I suspect this enthusiasm will only grow larger, and while Jefferson and Lewis counties already have an organized chain in place; Oswego County can no longer be the missing link. The positive impact our trails can have on our tourism industry and the overall economy can also no longer be overlooked. I think we all recognize that the next step is to determine which arm of County government is best suited to take the lead in the effort, and for us to allocate the resources necessary to make it happen. To that end, I will ask the Economic Development and Planning committee, along with the Community Development, Tourism and Planning department to develop an acceptable strategy that will meet the needs of our trail enthusiasts, yet still keep in mind the need to maintain the integrity of the private lands owned by our county residents.

Another priority for the coming year needs to be bringing greater focus to risk management issues. A sizeable portion of our budget is devoted to insurance - indemnity and casualty; health; and workers compensation. These functions have been vested in different department, but my sense is that there are opportunities to achieve savings and better protect the County by improving our management efforts. In addition, the Workplace Violence Prevention Act imposes new mandates on the County that must be addressed in the coming months. I will be calling on our Finance and Personnel committee to work with the Personnel department to develop an approach to better help Oswego County government identify and address risk management issues, and also to develop and implement workplace violence protection training and programs to prevent and minimize the hazard of work place violence to our public employees.

For some time now, we have been anticipating significant changes in the manner in which elections are conducted in this County. It may be that the timetable is still uncertain, but it is clear that it is time for this Legislature to take an active role to ensure successful implementation. We have a responsibility to our constituents to see that the new system is both cost-effective and reliable. We should not rely on unelected partisans in Albany to decide on what's best for our residents. We have just provided Board of Elections Commissioners and staff a state-of-the-art facility. So, it is clear that our Community and Consumer Affairs committee must continue to work closely with our Board of Elections office to make the HAVA transition reliable to our voting population.

Every few years Oswego County Government offers a household hazardous waste event that provides an opportunity for our constituents to discard their paints, fluorescent lights, pesticides, herbicides, and many other types of household hazardous waste. We know that this event gives us some assurance that these items are safely collected and disposed of in a manner consistent with sound environmental practices. And we are all aware that our residents deeply appreciate the opportunity to safely dispose of these items of waste. The problems over the years, however, such as the long waiting lines, infrequency of events,

and the accumulative costs of the events haven't truly allowed us to send the signal to our residents that we are serious about preserving our environment. Moreover, routinely our Solid Waste department will field complaints from our constituents that they have no place to dispose of household hazardous waste while we spend months and years trying to figure out when we will have another event. The time has come for Oswego County government to absorb the cries from our constituents and give them an opportunity to dispose of household hazardous waste on a regular basis. I will ask the Infrastructure and Facilities committee to work together with our Solid Waste department for the purpose of developing a plan for a permanent household hazardous waste facility in Oswego County.

Every year we pour in tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars into data lines to support our data communications between county facilities. Together with this recurring charge, we are bound by the technological fact that we are nowhere near the data push capacity now available in this new millennium. We are aware that we have addressed this problem in part by seeking implementation of a wireless data communications network with some of our facilities, but that merely represents that the cup is only half full. I will ask that the Community and Consumer Affairs committee work closely with our Central Services Department to make our data communications wireless throughout the entire county. In a few short years, the project will pay for itself, and we will then realize a savings to the taxpayers of over \$100,000 per year.

We have some major financial decisions to make this year. We expect in the coming months to receive an estimate of the County's liability for funding post-employment benefits, in accordance with the new rules established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. This will have a major influence on how we approach budgeting and funding capital projects for years to come. This will be a decision in which every legislator will want to become educated and involved.

We also will need to make a decision regarding how we should fund our Medicaid obligation. The legislation that established a cap on the rate of growth of Medicaid costs provided an option for counties - we can continue to pay our share on a weekly basis, or instead, give up a portion of the local sales tax revenue. This is not a decision to be taken lightly, and will again require all of us to do our homework.

These are but a few of the matters this Legislature will be taking up in the months ahead. I expect, and indeed welcome, a wide variety of opinions on each of the decisions that we face. We should not be afraid to debate the issues - we can only become stronger if we do. But what we must all agree on is the need to, after the debate is over; make a decision and move on to the next issue.

This is a Legislature of action and accomplishments. Working together, we have faced up to challenges, not run from them. Let's stay consistent and mindfully focused in 2007.

Thank you so much!