

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
OSWEGO COUNTY LEGISLATURE HELD ON
JANUARY 4, 2005**

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Roll call was taken with all legislators present. Invocation was given by Ted Jerrett, Clerk of the Legislature, followed by the salute to the flag. Chairman Johnson then turned the meeting over to the Clerk.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, CLERK

CHAIRMAN

Clerk of the Legislature Ted Jerrett opened nominations for Chairman:

Leg. Proud nominated Leg. Russ Johnson, which was seconded by Leg. Anson.

There being no further nominations, a show of hands vote was taken on Leg. Johnson's appointment as Chairman, with Leg. Malone abstaining. Motion carried.

Leg. Johnson was then sworn in as Chairman, accompanied by his wife Susanne and daughter Susanne, with Hon. Judge Norman W. Seiter Jr. officiating.

VICE CHAIRMAN

Leg. Beardsley nominated Leg. Osetek, which was seconded by Leg. Ospelt.

Leg. Kunzwiler nominated Leg. Malone, which was seconded by Leg. Vasho.

There being no further nominations, Leg. Waters offered a motion to close nominations, which was seconded by Leg. Bullard and carried unanimously.

A roll call vote was taken resulting in the following:

FOR OSETEK: THOMAS, ANSON, WATERS, LEEMANN, BRYANT, PROUD,
BROWN, BEARDSLEY, SEAGER, RUSAW, OSPELT,
GARDNER, BULLARD, OSETEK, SANTORE, HOEFER,
BECKWITH, FRENCH, BREWER, JOHNSON

FOR MALONE: GEARSBECK, PONZI, KUNZWILER, MALONE, VASHO

Leg. Osetek was then sworn in as Vice Chairman, accompanied by his father Joseph.

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE

Leg. Brown nominated Ted Jerrett, which was seconded by Leg. Santore.

There being no further nominations, Leg. Waters offered a motion to close nominations, which was seconded by Leg. Bullard and carried with Leg. Bryant opposed.

A show of hands vote was taken on Mr. Jerrett's appointment as Clerk of the Legislature, with Leg. Bryant opposed. Motion Carried.

Mr. Jerrett was then sworn in as Clerk, accompanied by his wife Donna.

MINUTES

The minutes of December 9, 2004 were approved under motion by Leg. Waters, seconded by Leg. Leemann and carried unanimously.

MAJORITY LEADER

Chairman Johnson announced that Leg. Leemann has been appointed Majority Leader. Leg. Leemann offered a few remarks and announced that Leg. Bullard has been appointed Majority Whip.

MINORITY LEADER

Chairman Johnson announced that Leg. Kunzwiler has been appointed Minority Leader. Leg. Kunzwiler offered a few remarks and announced that Leg. Malone has been appointed Minority Whip.

RESOLUTIONS

Leg. Santore offered Resolution No. 1 entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OSWEGO COUNTY LEGISLATURE TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH NEW YORK STATE FOR THE 2005 STOP-DWI PROGRAM. Leg. Santore explained that Stop-DWI is a fully funded program and this resolution places it into the budget.

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Santore offered Resolution No. 2 entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION TO THE NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF PROBATION AND CORRECTIONAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION CLASSIFICATION FUNDING. Leg. Santore stated that this funding is provided by the State annually upon submission of a yearly plan. The program saves money in prisoner costs.

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Bryant offered Resolution No. 3 entitled, RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS FOR PUBLICATION OF ALL ELECTION NOTICES, OFFICIAL CANVASS, LOCAL LAWS, NOTICES AND OTHER MATTERS REQUIRED BY LAW TO BE PUBLISHED with an amendment to add the designated newspapers: the Oswego County Weeklies of Mexico, NY and the Palladium Times of Oswego. The amendment was seconded by Leg. Waters.

The Amendment Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Bryant offered Resolution No. 4 entitled, RESOLUTION TO APPOINT MEMBER TO THE OSWEGO COUNTY PUBLIC UTILITY SERVICE BOARD. Leg. Bryant stated that Mr. Dougherty was highly recommended by both the minority and majority caucuses.

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Proud offered Resolution No. 5 entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – ANDREW MICHAUD NURSING HOME. Leg. Proud stated that as a result of an RFP process, NeighborCare, Inc. was selected by the Health Committee to provide Pharmaceutical Consulting Services to Andrew Michaud Nursing Home.

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
With Leg. Brewer opposing.
AYES: -24 - NAYS: -1- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Waters offered a motion to suspend the rules in order to exchange the order of the sixth and seventh resolutions. This was seconded by Leg. Kunzwiler.

The Motion Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Anson offered Resolution No. 6 entitled, RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN OSWEGO COUNTY INVESTMENT POLICY AND DESIGNATING BANKS AS DEPOSITORIES OF COUNTY FUNDS. Leg. Anson stated that this is a standard annual resolution designating qualified banks in the county that County government will do business with.

The Motion Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

Leg. Bryant offered Resolution No. 7 entitled, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AMENDMENTS IN THE OSWEGO COUNTY LEGISLATURE RULES AND ORDER OF BUSINESS. Leg. Waters offered an amendment to the proposed rules, consisting of the following changes: page 4, remove paragraph 3, which states, “The filing requirements as set forth in Rule 9, shall apply to both meetings.”; page 8, item I, line 1, remove “, or two or more members of a committee”; page 15, rule 16, add a fourth paragraph as taken directly from rule 17, paragraph 1, of the current rules, which states, “These rules shall not be altered or amended except by two-thirds vote of the members of the Legislature, and then only after at least one week's notice, accompanied by a written or printed copy of the proposed alteration or amendment. These rules may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the whole Legislature.” The amendment was seconded by Leg. Bryant.

The Amendment Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

The Resolution Passed by a Show of Hands
AYES: -25 - NAYS: -0- ABSENT: -0-

UNFINISHED AND MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Steve Lyman, County Administrator, reported concerning the December resolution concerning transferring property to the Cooperative Extension. He stated that the agency had been asked to respond within 20 days. On Dec. 19, Mr. Lyman received a letter indicating the agency's willingness to accept the offer. Documents are being drawn up to effect the transfer.

Next, Chairman Johnson gave the State of the County Address as follows:

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

Not quite a year ago, I was privileged to stand before you and speak to the challenges and opportunities facing Oswego County and its government. All of us in this room knew that we were in the midst of a time of fundamental change - what we did not know was whether we could achieve a consensus that would allow us to lead the process of change, or whether we would remain so divided that we would merely be bystanders as the future of our great county took a deeper dive.

Well, today I have good news to share with you.

Let us consider for a moment what was before us at the beginning of 2004. Clearly, the first order of business for this Legislature needed to be to bring stability back to county government - both with respect to the services this government offers to its citizens, as well as the resources that county government requires in order to deliver those services. By stability, I do not mean an absence of change, but rather an orderly, well-reasoned process for instituting the kind of changes that make us stronger and more responsive. Working together this past year, and I mean together, we have taken huge strides to make this happen. Let me point to some examples:

- This County is entirely free of debt. Not one cent of the 2005 budget had to be earmarked for debt service. This not only provides tax relief for our citizens, but also ensures that the County will have the flexibility to access capital should it be required at some point in the future.
- After a period of diminishing fund balances, we expect that when the books for 2004 are closed next month, there will be a significant increase in unappropriated general fund balance. While there is still much work to be done to get fund balance to recommended levels, this is nonetheless a most positive step in that direction.
- The future of the Andrew Michaud Nursing Home has been secured. Our work with St. Luke Health Services is making it possible for the home to serve the elderly and disabled for decades to come.
- Oswego County's own Power for Jobs Program is in place, providing fiscal relief for this government and creating a new tool for the county's economic development efforts.
- The Legislature has now funded a reserve account for retirement system contributions, so that for the immediate future, there will be protection against unforeseen spikes in costs.

And, most notably,

- The County is providing for essential needs, but doing so with a tax rate well below constitutional limits.

But as I emphasized last year, it was also critical that this Legislature look beyond the short term and begin to understand and address the challenges that will be facing Oswego County in the future.

This government, as well as local governments across the state and nation, has been under stress - expectations by citizens for performance of governmental service have never been higher, yet resources are constrained. This is not a temporary phenomenon, I am afraid. It is likely to be a permanent reality. There is no guardian angel for local governments - no Secretary of a federal agency, no Commissioner of a state office, no CEO of a corporation, no philanthropist - who is going to come and solve our problems for us. But what we do have - a diverse and knowledgeable Legislature, a dedicated and experienced workforce, and dozens of talented citizens willing to give freely of their time to make their community better - is a considerable force. And we have made full use of this force this past year in helping Oswego County government chart a new and fresh course for the future.

I spoke last year of the need for us to look beyond day-to-day issues and take up the challenge of remaking county government to serve its citizens for the future. The Strategic Planning Task Force and its committees have met that challenge. Steering Committee Chairman Fred Beardsley and other Legislators, staff and many, many volunteers have devoted literally hundreds of hours of their time to helping us analyze our current ways of doing business, forecasting the needs of our citizens in the years ahead, and suggesting ways we can creatively respond to those needs. We are now in the process of synthesizing the findings from the committees and prioritizing recommendations.

As we said at the outset of this process, our interest was not in producing a slick document to adorn our shelves, but to develop specific goals for this government. The product of the Strategic Planning Task Force will be, in essence, a work plan for this Legislature. Beginning this month, Legislative Committees will be taking up specific recommendations.

Among the issues we will tackle:

- Greater utilization of the County's fixed assets
- Alternative management of the Solid Waste System
- Opportunities for new partnerships with other municipalities
- Creation of an Airport Commission
- Adoption of budgetary and fiscal benchmarks
- Development of a capital plan
- Technology and communications upgrades

These are just some of the recommendations that we will take up - a process that I expect will engage the full attention of this Legislature this year and next.

One of the areas of emphasis of the Strategic Planning Task Force has been to examine the role of County government in promoting the economic development of Oswego County. It is clear that local government plays a vital role in creating an environment that is supportive of investment and job creation. The development of infrastructure, the efficient delivery of critical services, the maintenance of a safe community, and a rational tax policy - all are key factors for a positive business climate. Our careful attention to these matters makes it possible for all businesses to profit - large or small, new to the area or long-established. Ensuring that Oswego County remains a hospitable place to invest and grow has to be a main priority for this Legislature for 2005 and beyond.

That is why I will be proposing in the coming months initiatives to strengthen Oswego County's position as a home for job creation. I believe Oswego County government has a unique responsibility to lead efforts to improve our business climate. We participate in a global economy, where producers and consumers are often oceans apart. We are a community of one - a county of only 122,000 men, women, and children. There is no room for battles between local governments within our own County. We can ill afford to allow parochialism in Oswego County to compromise our efforts to attract new business and industry and retain our current employers.

We know that there are opportunities - take the retail sector, for example. You've heard me talk about this repeatedly. We know from studies, and our own observations of the traffic flow on Interstates 81 and 481, that many more people from Oswego County are shopping in other counties than the reverse. Those are not just sales tax dollars needed to pay for essential services that are driving down the interstate - more importantly, those are jobs that are leaving this county. Does it have to be that way? Why can't those services and products be equally available right here in Oswego County? Are there issues of land use, or infrastructure, or tax policy that work against the development of a vibrant retail sector in Oswego County? I believe it is time we find out what those problems are, and start fixing them - right away.

Surely this is not the only opportunity for expanded economic development and growth - just look out the window! We recognize Lake Ontario for its natural beauty and the recreational opportunities it provides. But it is also a gateway to our country's largest trading partner. In fact, the trade between the U.S. and Canada is the largest partnership in the world - over \$440 billion per year. As the lines of trucks backed up at border crossings stretch out for miles, an opportunity presents itself for Oswego County. Are there steps that could be taken for Oswego County to take better advantage of this enormous two-way trade? Let us see if we can find out.

Today I have outlined an ambitious agenda for Oswego County government for the months and years ahead. I know that some of the issues that will come before this Legislature will be contentious. It is not realistic, nor necessarily healthy, that we all agree on the same issues all the time. After all, each member of this Legislature has a unique background. We have different experiences, different priorities, and represent different districts. That's democracy at its finest! But what we can, and must, share is a common dedication to public service, a sense of fairness and good will, and an understanding of the immense responsibility placed upon our shoulders by the good people of Oswego County. We owe it to them to demonstrate continued professionalism as we delve into the exciting tasks before us, and that we continue to do so with respect for each other, and the process itself. We must remember to provide full disclosure of information on the issues as it becomes available to us, and to not fall into the trap of disseminating partial information that could tend to be dangerously misleading to the public.

Of all the accomplishments of the last year, the one of which I am most proud is the manner in which this Legislature has conducted its business. We have been confronted with difficult decisions, yet we have dealt with them without partisanship and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Floor leaders Leemann and Kunzwiler: you have both raised the bar of professionalism on this floor and with your respective conferences, and for that, I am very grateful. Thank you. I tell you now; the people of Oswego County have been served well because each one of you has chosen to provide true, professional service. Let us all resolve today to continue this effort - our constituents deserve no less and we can get so much more accomplished. Let's roll up our sleeves and get right to work because 2005 will be gone before we know it. Why do I continue the fight for a better Oswego County? You can find the answer in the beautiful little blue eyes of my adorable little girl, who is right over there with her lovely mom and my best friend. God bless them, and God bless this great County of Oswego.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m. under motion by Leg. Kunzwiler, seconded by Leg. Brown and carried unanimously.