

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – June 20, 2023

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Griffith, Campbell, O'Brien, Shaw

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Hicks, Skellie, Ferguson

SUPERVISORS: Henke, Hall, Fedler, Haff, Clary

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – May 23, 2023
- 3) Broadband RFP Responses
- 4) Fort Ann – Whitehall Trail
- 5) 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee Appointment
- 6) STR Legislation
- 7) Other Business
- 8) Adjournment

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 11:40 A.M. in the second floor classroom, Room B214, Municipal Center, Fort Edward. Vice Chairman Hall making the quorum.

A motion to accept the minutes of the May 23, 2023 meeting was moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Hall, and adopted.

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

**BROADBAND RFP RESPONSES** – The Economic Development Director stated there were about 881 addresses on the RFP that were separated out into fourteen different service areas that vendors were allowed to bid on any number of them or all of them. Verizon contacted them shortly before the responses were due and declined to provide a response because they said they could not be anywhere near cost effective. Two response received, one from Slic Network and one from Spectrum and they bid for totally separate areas except for one service area covered by both in the town of Hampton and a portion of the town of Granville. There were four service areas with no bids. No way at this point to get a final determination of a cost to get all of those unserved areas served because of lacking information on four areas. The areas not bid: two addresses up in Putnam, a section of Argyle, a section of Granville and a section of White Creek. Out of the 881 addresses received bids on 690 leaving no bids on 191 addresses. Also have another 600 addresses that were isolated as potentially serviceable by fixed wireless and those were the addresses that we were going to deal with separately with the USDA funding but there are other things to resolve there as well. Do not have enough information to make a decision on the addresses deemed potentially serviceable by fiber. She has reached out to Spectrum and Slic to have them give us a number on all fourteen service areas to come to some bottom line number of what it would actually cost. Looking for ways to secure additional funding. The choice is going to come down to do nothing and wait until all the federal money is in the hands of the State and let the State determine where those passings are, or once we have a better handle on what the cost will be by area, negotiate and get some areas covered, or negotiate with the different providers to either reduce the number of passings that ultimately get served by fiber and see if we can bring in any additional funds. Not enough information for a final decision but not done yet. Both vendors would contribute a portion of the cost. If the lowest bids were

accepted on all the service areas that were bid and got the 690 passings the cost would be about \$5.6M. Have about \$3.5M of American Rescue Plan funds set aside, we do not have enough money to do it and still have 200 addresses to cover. The bid results show that the County is carrying the majority of the cost. The carriers know there is money coming through the federal government. The average of the County cost if all these bids were accepted would be about \$8,000 per passing. To use the USDA funding the minimum threshold speed allowed is 100 x 20. Will bring this back when she has more information, hopefully by next month's meeting.

FORT ANN – WHITEHALL TRAIL – Receive a grant from the State five years ago to get the Empire State Trail from Fort Ann to Whitehall off Route 4 and on to an off-road alignment that would essentially parallel the canal. They have done some preliminary work and identified a route and had conversations with both landowners and CP Rail with positive feedback. Awarded \$430,000 from a State Waterfront Revitalization grant and \$150,000 by Canal Corp. Shortly after the grant award, CP Rail went through some major organizational changes and the Economic Development Director between 2021 and 2022 spent over 40 hours in phone calls and money was spent on engineering giving them the same information over and over. She thought things might be moving along when CP Rail fired the entire real estate department and at the beginning of this year stated they were no longer interested in giving up any land and do not want any trails anywhere near their rail lines. This was a five year grant and at the end of last year asked for a grant extension and it was granted until the end of 2025 so now have about a year and a half to complete the project. She has informed the Department of State and Canal Corp. the original intention of designing and permitting the entire length of trail is not going to happen and are moving on to designing and constructing as much as we can and get as far north as we can before they run into the CP Rail line. This has been five years of back and forth with CP Rail and now another impediment, CP Rail does not want any trail within 90 feet of their track. Does not want to give money back so will do something with it to get as far as they can with the trail. The average cost per mile with the Empire State Trail was about \$3M and now would be considerably more. At this point planning to go as far as they can and then determine what to do.

250<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATION COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT – This group is looking for recognition of the committee as the organization spearheading all of these events and proposed resolution attached. Should have the names by July Board meeting. She has proposed to get the committee organized and asked them to come back to her with a general synopsis of what they would see as the type of events and things that they would need funding for so she could determine how to help them through the tourism budget. Proposing as part of the 2024 tourism budget to use some of ARP funding to help build website and help with planned events. Without creating a new non-profit, they needed an umbrella to work under. The Board would recognize the committee but not appoint the members. A motion to recognize 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Committee with up to seventeen members was moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Campbell, and adopted.

STR (SHORT TERM RENTAL) LEGISLATION – The County receives revenue from Airbnb collecting occupancy tax but not Vrbo or any other entity because they have declined to enter into an agreement with the County. There has been discussion at the State level many times over the last few years in which the New York Department of State would take over regulation of short-term rentals and acquire all the platforms to collect occupancy tax and this year legislation has made it through the Senate and it is in the Assembly. If passed and signed by the Governor occupancy tax will be submitted to the County. Legislation Bill Nos. S3407/A1140.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board (LCLGRP) - Beth Gillis, Executive Director, addressed the following item with the committee: CFA (Consolidated Funding Application) – Countywide Program – Department of State Resiliency Grant – This is for the creation of a county-wide plan to prepare for future climate change risks and vulnerabilities to the County's built environments. The attached handout provides a program overview. The difference between this plan and like the hazard mitigation plan is that this is a lot of public outreach, public engagement. The grants are due July 28<sup>th</sup> and it is a 90% grant with a 10% match. Anticipates a \$200,000 grant with \$180,000 NYS DOS grant and Washington County local match of \$20,000 match. The State has moved towards these resiliency plans and at the end of this process there would be a list of projects to get implemented and what the cost would be, and prioritized for short, medium or long-term implementation. Vulnerable places would be identified and how to try to mitigate those issues before something happens. What they would be looking at is future conditions. A motion to approve applying for NYS Department of State CFA Countywide Resiliency grant was moved by Mr. Campbell, and seconded by Mr. O'Brien. Discussion. The Economic Development Director stated this would be the County hiring a consultant/Planner to do the work of evaluating where the issues are in each of our communities and some of it might be County owned infrastructure issues and some local town issues. An RFP would be issued for a consultant and LCLGRP would do the grant administration and grant management. The County responsibility would likely be participation with the consultant so for example DPW would probably be involved in discussions on issues and the Treasurer paying the bills. The motion to approve applying for NYS Department of State CFA Countywide Resiliency grant was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. O'Brien and defeated. Mr. Shaw opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:47 PM.

*Debra Prehoda, Clerk  
Washington County Board of Supervisors*

**Whereas**, milestone anniversaries commemorating significant historical events to reflect on our past and gain a better understanding of the way these people, events, and ideas shaped our county, state and nation; and

**Whereas** the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Revolution will occur in 2026 and be observed from 2025 through 2033, and throughout that period the geographical area that would become Washington County played a significant role in several events, conflicts, meetings, raids and marching routes as well as being the birthplace of the US Navy; and

**Whereas** in recognition of this uniquely important role, it is important for Washington County to commemorate this anniversary by planning events and activities that engage its citizens and provide an opportunity to learn about our common heritage, develop pride of place and celebrate our shared history; now therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the Washington County Board of Supervisors authorize a Washington County 250<sup>th</sup> Committee consisting of xx official members tasked with the organization of ceremonies, events, activities and celebrations recognizing the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in Washington County; and it is further

**Resolved**, that the Committee members will consist of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, official Town Historians and other such individuals as may be invited by the Chairperson to participate, and it is further

**Resolved**, the appointed committee will operate under the auspices of the Washington County Historical Society through which county contributed programming funding will be remitted; and it is further

**Resolved**, that the functions, scope, and activity of the Washington County 250<sup>th</sup> American Revolution Committee shall be solely and strictly of an advisory nature and the acts or statements of the Committee or any of its members individually or collectively shall in no way bind or be deemed to bind the County of Washington its agents, or employees or the Board of Supervisors or any of its members; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the members of the Washington County 250<sup>th</sup> American Revolution Committee shall receive no salary or compensation for their services; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the committee shall submit a report to the Washington County Agriculture, Planning and Tourism Committee bi-annually to inform the board of its meetings, plans, activities, and events; and be it further

**Resolved** that the Washington County 250<sup>th</sup> American Revolution Committee will be active from the date this resolution is passed until December 31, 2033.



LAKE CHAMPLAIN-LAKE GEORGE

**REGIONAL  
PLANNING**

**BETH GILLES  
DIRECTOR**

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## Washington County Countywide Resiliency Grant Program NYS Department of State CFA grant

### Program Overview

Creation of a countywide plan to prepare for future climate change risks and vulnerabilities to the county's built environments. The purpose of the planning work is to proactively address risk and reduce vulnerability. This work can include:

- research and data gathering to assess the vulnerability and risk of infrastructure (flood modeling).
- mitigation of "heat island" effect in developed areas.
- identification of natural assets available to mitigate flooding while also providing for future recreational assets for economic development.
- farmland protection measures.
- identifying ways to protect vulnerable populations (accessible cooling centers, cell availability, etc).
- Public outreach and engagement

### Grant Information

- Due July 28, 2023 through CFA portal
- 90% grant, 10% match
- Maximum grant funding of \$300,000

### Grant Application

Source	Funding Amount	Percent
NYS DOS grant	\$180,000	90%
Washington County Local Match	\$20,000	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>100%</b>