



## **GREATER BINGHAMTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

### **April 29, 2005 Meeting Minutes**

#### **Location**

Exhibit Room, Broome County Library, 185 Court Street, Binghamton, NY

#### **Attendance**

**Constituent Members:** Mayor Harry Lewis, Village of Johnson City; Supervisor Anndrea Starzak, Town of Vestal; Executive Assistant Richard David, City of Binghamton; Mayor Kevin Burke, Village of Port Dickinson; Supervisor Margaret Turna, Town of Chenango; Supervisor Lois Dilworth, Town of Barker; Supervisor Tim Whitesell, Town of Binghamton; Supervisor Mike Marinaccio, Town of Dickinson; Supervisor Debbie Preston, Town of Conklin; County Executive Barbara Fiala, Broome County

**Associate Members:** None

**Staff:** Rita Petkash and Jeremy Evans, Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development

**Visitors:** Alex DePersis, Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce; Donald Brown, William Smith, and Gary Holcomb, Town of Fenton; Louise Vanderkulk, Jean Gow, and Laura House, League of Women Voters; Cathy Schaewe; Patrick Brennan and Don Freed, Broome County, Bob Augenstern and Jennifer Gregory, STERPDB

#### **Convene**

Mike Marinaccio announced that President Debbie Preston was running late and that she requested that he convene the meeting. The meeting convened at 4:12PM.

#### **Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board (STERPDB)**

Mike introduced Bob Augenstern and Jennifer Gregory from STERPDB

Bob briefed the Council on the role of STERPDB. He focused on two programs: regional water and sewer mapping inventory and Phase II Stormwater Program development.

Bob explained that STERPDB has begun a regional water and sewer mapping inventory. They are providing a different level of service to each county in the region depending on needs. Broome County is very active in Geographic Information System (GIS) development while other counties have little or no GIS capacity.

Bob also discussed STERPDB's role in helping communities comply with Phase II stormwater regulations. They are going to be helping local communities develop stormwater regulations that are required under state law.

Bob then introduced Jennifer Gregory, the new GIS Administrator at STERPDB.

Jennifer explained that the water and sewer inventory will provide a number of benefits. Having consistent region wide information will help with economic development.

She will be working with Broome County water and sewer operators to collect whatever information is available and put it into digital form. She showed the Council an example of what the digital water and sewer infrastructure would look like on a display.

Jennifer noted that many local communities don't have GIS but that the Broome County Planning Department has a very good GIS program that local municipalities can seek assistance from.

All of the information that is collected and digitized will be made available to the county and the municipalities.

Jennifer also showed a screen printout of Broome County Planning Department's Parcel Information System (*Editor's note: The Parcel Information System is an Internet-based mapping program*). She explained that the system was created and is maintained by Doug English and is one of the best she has ever seen.

Jennifer then asked the Council if there were any questions.

Alex DePersis asked if the Parcel Information System was complete and Jennifer responded that it was complete except for the City of Binghamton. Rita Petkash noted that the City's information will be added fairly soon.

### **County Executive Barbara Fiala**

Debbie Preston introduced County Executive Barbara Fiala and thanked her for speaking to the Council again.

Barbara began by introducing Don Freed, the County Budget Director, and Pat Brennan, the Deputy County Executive.

Barbara thanked everyone for attending the Shared Services Summit that was held on Tuesday and said that she was looking forward to seeing the results of the meeting.

The County Executive explained that she wasn't able to provide the Council with realistic budget figures until the Department of Social Services provided its annual figures on March 30<sup>th</sup> and until New York State passed its budget.

She announced that in 2006, she would present a budget that restores the county-municipality sales tax split to the level municipal officials thought they had agreed to in 2003. She also said that she would attempt to restore a 50/50 split in the 2007 budget.

The County Executive noted that Legislator Arthur Schafer announced a plan earlier today that would restore the sales tax split to what was originally agreed to. She had not had a chance to see the specifics of the plan and did not know when the restoration would occur. She said that she will not include the restoration in the 2005 budget because she does not want to cut services or personnel or take out municipal bonds to balance the budget.

Don Freed said the change in the formula would mean a 5.5% increase in sales tax revenue for municipalities.

Don explained that Broome County will not see significant savings due to the NYS Medicaid cap because the County will have to pick up more costs for Willow Point Nursing Home.

He added that despite a slight decline in sales tax revenue in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2005 compared to a year ago, the County is predicting a 3% overall increase for 2005. 1<sup>st</sup> decline in sales tax revenue from 2004

Debbie told the County Executive that her proposed plan was good news.

Tim Whitesell mentioned to the County Executive that he thought that she had said in her State of the County Address that she was not going to change the sales tax formula.

Barbara countered by saying that she never said that changing the formula was not on the table. She said that she wouldn't look at changing the formula until she knew what conditions the County's finances were in.

Debbie said that the municipalities felt that they were pushed aside and not involved in the process.

Tim said that he is delighted to hear that 50/50 sales tax split may be coming back.

Anndrea Starzak pointed out that the County Executive's plan is exactly what the municipalities had hoped for.

Cathy Schaewe read the press release from the Legislature that announced Legislator Art Schafer's proposed sales tax formula plan.

Anndrea said that the Council was hearing from both the County Executive and the Legislature that municipalities were going to finally get the sales tax distribution formula that they had all thought they had agreed to. She then thanked Barbara for developing her plan.

Barbara said that she had met with Chairman Dan Schofield and discussed plans to change the formula. She told the Chairman that she would announce her plan at the Council of Governments meeting and invited him to attend. She thought that they would jointly announce the plan. She was very surprised to receive the press release earlier today from the legislature and frustrated that they were unilaterally announcing a sales tax plan.

There was discussion about the timing for negotiations for the proposed 50/50 sales tax split and Barbara said that the issue could be discussed a year from now. She also believes that the majority of legislators are in favor of Legislator Schafer's plan.

Barbara isn't opposed to Legislator Schafer's proposal but because the press release doesn't provide details, she isn't sure how they are going to pay for the plan if they intend on implementing it this year.

Mike said that municipalities have been angry because they didn't get the agreement they had agreed to and have been lobbying their legislators since then.

All sides agreed that money is going to be given back but timing will have to be worked out.

In other news, Barbara announced to the Council that in 2006 Broome County will be holding its Bicentennial and is she is hoping municipalities will participate and help out.

Council members received some clarification about Medicaid from Don Freed.

Mike thanked County Executive for attending and explaining her plan.

Tim congratulated the County Executive for hosting the Shared Services Summit but noted that the media coverage was poor. He said that the newspaper didn't say anything about what was really discussed.

Barbara said there were great suggestions about what to work on and about what is already being accomplished. She also thought that Dr. Tom Sinclair did a great job mediating the meeting.

Tim said the biggest problem is the state and its taxes. He also noted that school taxes are the real local problem.

Harry Lewis asked if anyone else had heard the rumor of a proposed state mandate that would require that all parks have a park attendant. Some members had heard the rumor.

Rich David suggested that municipalities involve the media more so they have a better understanding of what is going on. Council members agreed with this suggestion.

Debbie announced that the Council now has a webpage. The address is <<http://www.gobroomecounty.com/planning/PlanningCOG.php>>. She also asked Council members to look at several possible logos and decide which one was the best. She said that she wanted to use the website to develop a database of shared services that municipalities provide.

Jeremy Evans told the Council that the list of shared services compiled by Cathy Schaewe and discussed at the Summit on Tuesday was posted on the COG webpage.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24PM.