

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: LEGISLATIVE & RULES

DATE: APRIL 24, 2017

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS: STROUGH
MONTESI
BROCK
BRAYMER
SOKOL
MCDEVITT
GERAGHTY
LEGGETT

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR: GIRARD

OTHERS PRESENT:

RONALD F. CONOVER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
MARY ELIZABETH KISSANE, ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, WARREN COUNTY BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS MACDONALD
SEEBER
STEPHEN ACQUARIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NYSAC
MASTON SANSOM, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS,
FOOD INDUSTRY ALLIANCE OF NYS
MONA GOLUB, PRICE CHOPPER/MARKET 32
REPRESENTING TRI-COUNTY NY TRANSITION:
JANE KANA
ANTHONY KRIVITSKI
BERNICE MENNIS
CATHERINE ATHERDEN
DIANE COLLINS
LESLIE LOVELACE, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the April 24, 2017 meeting of the Legislative and Rules Committee; the meeting in its entirety can be viewed on the Warren County website using the following link:

<http://www.warrencountyny.gov/gov/comm/Archive/2017/legislative/>

Mr. Strough called the meeting of the Legislative & Rules Committee to order at 10:46 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Montesi, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Copies of the agenda packet were distributed to the Committee members and a copy of same is on file with the minutes.

Commencing the agenda review, Mr. Strough advised the only agenda item pertained to single use plastic bags and he acknowledged several guests present to speak on the topic.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Catherine Atherden, Tri-County NY Transition member, who distributed a brochure and leaflet on the plastic bag initiative. She explained why Tri-County NY Transition started 5 years ago and what their mission was. Ms. Atherden thanked Ms. Braymer for inviting them to the meeting to speak and proceeded to inform the Committee on facts about single use plastic bag usage, history and decomposition age. She then presented a film clip titled "Bag It" on the topic of the negative effects of plastic bags. Lastly, Ms. Atherden apprised of two Bills currently being considered by the Legislature and she explained both.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Maston Sansom, Vice President of Government Relations, Food Industry Alliance of NYS, who apprised the Committee he worked for the grocery stores. He acknowledged there was a need to look at alternatives to plastic bags; however, he informed, paper bags cost up to five times more than plastic bags and were not the answer to combat the issue. Mr. Sansom then spoke on charging fees for plastic bags and sharing those fees with municipalities for

environmental purposes; however, he said, Governor Cuomo initiated the issue for review by his task force to come up with a solution this year.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Stephen Acquario, Executive Director, NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties), who commended the excellent presentation made and added it was accurate. He briefly spoke about the plastic bag and stated it was a national problem. He referenced the micro beads issue that was resolved by local governments acting first. He voiced his opinion that the plastic bag problem should be addressed by a national solution. Mr. Acquario recommended the Committee take action however they deemed appropriate, but suggested making plastic bag recycle bins mandatory in the grocery stores. He apprised Madison County was going to ban the bag, and said he had brought a copy of their local law for review. Mr. Acquario used Suffolk County as another example, as they were the largest County in New York who were implementing a 5 cent per bag fee on carry out bags and if that law failed to reduce the use of plastic by 75% in three years they would then ban plastic bags all together. He closed by giving the statistic of 20 billion bags in New York State in landfills and the environment.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mona Golub, Vice President of Public Relations and Consumer Services, Price Chopper/Market 32, who thanked the Committee for inviting her to the meeting. She apprised their stores have had recycling bag bins available for over fifteen years but only 50 percent of the bags that left their stores were returned. Ms. Golub added that their stores gave a rebate of 3 cents per bag for customers who brought in their own to try and reduce plastic bag use. She added that she believed a change in behavior, as well as legislation involving government, consumers and stores was necessary to combat this problem. Ms. Golub reiterated the reduction of plastic bag use would be driven mainly based on knowledge and behavior. She voiced her belief was that government and retailers needed to work together and measure progress.

A discussion ensued among the Committee with Ms. Braymer thanking the speakers for attending, following which Mr. Strough summarized what points were made during the meeting.

Mr. Leggett made a motion to propose a resolution including the following language: "Whereas the Legislative & Rules Committee has heard testimony from various groups regarding single-use carryout bags, and whereas the Legislative & Rules Committee recognizes that there is growing trend among local governments to address the health, safety and welfare issues regarding single-use carryout bags, be it resolved that the Legislative & Rules Committee recommends the Warren County Board of Supervisors memorialize support of the reduced use of such bags with wording to be satisfactory to the Board of Supervisors and sent to our legislative delegation, the Governor's Office and the appropriate task force."

Mr. Strough questioned who would be tasked with writing the letter and Mr. Leggett suggested that Mr. Strough, as Chair of the Legislative & Rules Committee, work with the Chairman of the Board to draft the letter with the assistance of the County Attorney's Office. Ms. Braymer seconded the motion.

Bernice Mennis, of the Tri-County NY Transition, noted that the language Mr. Leggett suggested spoke only to reduced use which was very open, and she opined it should be expanded to incorporate the two specific options they had discussed for reducing use (banning or charging a fee for use). She stated that while she agreed with allowing input from different parties in writing the letter, she felt it was easier to include specifics for discussion, even if those specifics led to arguments against the initiative, than to leave the language so vague. Mr. Leggett responded he had used the words "reduced use" at this point in time because he expected a further resolution to be presented in the future that would speak to specific options and would open discussion with the community then. He mentioned the resolution he suggested would address one of the three ideas put forth while respecting the process the Board of Supervisors employed. Mr. Leggett said that

although the Committee was not prepared to enact an “either/or” option at this time, authorizing a letter to be written was an easy alternative step forward for them. Mr. Strough suggested tying this motion into a public hearing which would allow for public comment on the matter at the upcoming evening Board Meeting scheduled for June 14th at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Leggett and Ms. Braymer amended their respective motion and second to include provisions for a public hearing.

Ms. Braymer pointed out the letter could indicate they were looking for action on reduction and while they did not have specific details yet, they were looking towards something more than just generic reduction of use and were seeking recommendations from the Governor’s Task Force. Mr. Strough indicated that he and Ms. Braymer, as well as any others interested, could be involved in the process.

Chairman Conover interjected that the idea of holding a public hearing in June was premature as public hearings were typically reserved for legislative action. He said at this stage they were just beginning to wade into this issue, and while that did not mean they might not take action later, it was not happening now. Mr. Strough responded they were looking to provide an opportunity for public input and to try and get the newspaper involved to get more press from the issue; he added they may as well schedule the public comment session for the June Board Meeting.

Diane Collins, of the Tri-County NY Transition, opined the letter should include options for reduction, such as banning the bags or charging for them, as she did not feel they would generate public interest without their being at least mentioned in the letter. Mr. Strough questioned whether Ms. Collins would like to be involved in the group charged with writing the letter and Ms. Collins replied affirmatively.

Mr. Sokol stated he was not comfortable with being pushed to act on the options suggested at this point. He said while he was aware some in attendance may be looking for a resolution or letter with more bite to it, there was a process the Board followed, and the way Mr. Leggett had made his motion was appropriate as there were some on the Committee who were not comfortable with moving legislation forward at this point.

Mr. Strough summarized the motion on the floor was for a resolution stating that the Committee supported doing something about the plastic bags, which they perceived as a serious issue, and that a letter would be composed to address these concerns and which they expected would be sent to State Legislators and the Governor’s Task Force. He added that to best represent the Committee’s feelings in composing this letter, several people would provide input, including himself, Ms. Braymer and Ms. Collins; additionally, he noted that the motion called for the Chairman and County Administrator to work on scheduling a public comment session for the June 14th Board Meeting. Mr. Strough called the question, and the aforementioned motion was carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Legislative & Rules Committee, on motion made by Mr. Sokol and seconded by Mr. McDevitt, Mr. Strough adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Lovelace, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board