

# Warren County Board of Supervisors

**ORGANIZATION MEETING  
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 5, 2017**



The Board of Supervisors of the County of Warren convened at the Supervisors' Room in the Warren County Municipal Center, Lake George, New York, at 11:01 a.m.

Board called to order by Amanda Allen, *Clerk of the Board of Supervisors*.

Salute to the flag was led by Supervisor Geraghty.

Roll was called and the following members were present:

Bolton	-Ronald F. Conover
Chester	-Craig R. Leggett
City of Glens Falls	
Ward 1	-Daniel J. Girard
Ward 2	-Peter V. McDevitt
Ward 3	-Claudia K. Braymer
Ward 4	-James Brock
Ward 5	-Matt MacDonald
Hague	-Edna A. Frasier
Horicon	-Matthew J. Simpson
Johnsburg	-Ron Vanselow
Lake George	-Dennis Dickinson
Lake Luzerne	-Eugene J. Merlino
Queensbury	-John F. Strough
	-Rachel E. Seeber
	-Douglas N. Beaty
	-Ronald Montesi
	-Matthew Sokol
Stony Creek	-Frank E. Thomas
Thurman	-Evelyn Wood
Warrensburg	-Kevin B. Geraghty

Mrs. Allen announced the first order of business would be the selection of a Temporary Chairman.

Supervisor Merlino nominated Supervisor Dickinson as Temporary Chairman, and Supervisor Frasier seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations, Supervisor Girard moved that the nominations be closed and the Clerk cast one ballot for Supervisor Dickinson as Temporary Chairman; the motion was seconded by Supervisor Strough and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Allen requested that Supervisors Simpson and Strough escort Supervisor Dickinson to the Chair.

Temporary Chairman Dickinson called for nominations for the selection of a Permanent Chairman.

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Supervisor Seeber nominated Supervisor Conover as Permanent Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and Supervisor Braymer seconded the motion. There being no further nominations, Supervisor Leggett moved the nominations be closed, and the Clerk cast one ballot for as Permanent Chairman; Supervisor MacDonald seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Supervisor Dickinson informed that he had served the Board of Supervisors with Supervisor Conover for the last five years during which time he had learned a number of things about him including the following: he had been married to his wife Cathy for forty-four years, during which time they had two children and four grandchildren; he noted the Town of Bolton had not had a sitting Chairman on the Board for almost fifty years and said he believed the last Chairman from the Town of Bolton had been related to Mrs. Conover. He advised Supervisor Conover had served as a Professional Planner for thirty-five years during which time he worked on projects ranging from Canal Parks to Municipal Parking Garages; he was elected and served as President of the Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association and had won their Award for Excellence; he was twice elected to the Oneida County Legislature; and he currently served as President and Executive Chairman of the Lake George Watershed Coalition which was the Organization that obtained millions of dollars in grant funding from the New York State Department of State for the Lake George region. Supervisor Dickinson stated Supervisor Conover had twice been awarded the James B. Corbett award, the first time for spearheading the establishment of the SAVE Group which was credited with founding the first mandatory Boat Inspection Program located east of the Mississippi River, and the second time his efforts in securing public access to The Pinnacle located in the Town of Bolton Landing. He continued that under Supervisor Conover's guidance the Town of Bolton was the first to be awarded the Low Impact Development Certification and was a leader in the Salt Reduction Initiative that was taking place in the Lake George Basin. Supervisor Dickinson apprised Supervisor Conover had spearheaded a number of improvements in the Town of Bolton during his tenure as Supervisor, such as the Rogers Park Rehabilitation Project. Additionally, he continued, while serving as the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Supervisor Conover had been central to the improvement of the County's economic standing which resulted in having a significant balance in the Unappropriated Surplus fund while affording the ability to remain under the State Tax Cap. Supervisor Dickinson noted Supervisor Conover had spearheaded the restructuring of Occupancy Tax funding which allocated additional monies to the Towns while providing much needed financial assistance to the Glens Falls Civic Center; he added that Supervisor Conover was also key to the implementation of the new reimbursement rates for snow and ice removal to Towns. Supervisor Dickinson advised he was supportive of the nomination of Supervisor Conover to Chairman of the Board because of his willingness to listen, his fearlessness in voicing his opinion and his advocacy for the County, the Lake George region and the Town of Bolton.

Supervisor Dickinson requested that Supervisors Sokol and Thomas escort Supervisor Conover to the Chair.

With his wife Cathy by his side, Chairman Conover subscribed to the Constitutional Oath, as administered by Pam Vogel, *County Clerk*, following which a round of applause was given.

Chairman Conover thanked his wife Cathy for her love, support and encouragement over the last forty-four years. He then presented the following remarks:

“STATE OF THE COUNTY  
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“On behalf of the Board I would like to thank Kevin Geraghty for serving as the Chairman for the past four years. All of you know that I have asked Kevin to stay on as the Acting

County Administrator and I hope you are all supportive since Kevin has agreed to continue in the roll. We are thankful for his continued service on behalf of the residents of Warren County.

“Further I have asked Supervisor Frank Thomas to continue as Budget Officer which he has accepted. I have also asked Supervisor Matt Sokol to serve as the Chairperson for the Finance Committee which means Matt will be the Vice Chairman of the Board.

“We will also be making Personnel & Higher Education its own Standing Committee, and Supervisor Rachel Seeber has agreed to serve as Chair to this important Committee. All County personnel matters will shift back to this Committee including employment review and evaluations. Finance will return to its historical role as acting as the ways and means Standing Committee of County Government.

“I will be reestablishing the Occupancy Tax and Tourism Committee as two separate Standing Committees and I have asked Supervisor Dickinson to serve as Chair of the Occupancy Tax Committee and Supervisor Gene Merlino will continue to do the excellent job he has done serving as Chairperson for the Tourism Committee. Moreover I have asked Supervisor Dickinson to form an Advisory Group of Supervisors and members of the private sector to begin the process of considering how and where we spend our occupancy tax receipts. There will be much discussion regarding this subject going forward but I am optimistic that we can improve the decision making process while maintaining the broad support of this Board.

“Today in Warren County we find ourselves with an improved financial condition. A recent financial evaluation of Warren County by Standard & Poor’s Rating raised the County’s Bond Rating from AA- Stable to AA+ Stable which I believe all of us here played a roll in, lead by Supervisor Geraghty. Also for 2016, we are in the enviable position of having an estimated total Unreserved Fund Balance of \$21 million. We have not needed any short-term borrowing for cash flow purposes for quite some time and I expect this positive cash position to continue in 2017 and beyond. For the past four years we have been able to stay within the property tax cap, which was no easy feat, largely attributed to the fine efforts of Supervisor Thomas. Year end sales tax estimates are on track for increasing 2.4% year over year which was certainly good news for both 2016 Budget but also good news for the 2017 Budget. We have made adjustments in our employee health care plan that has reduced the amount of our overall healthcare costs. We are very interested in what we are hearing out of Washington these days about reducing health care costs; however, I believe that we need to keep a watchful eye on these developments while continuing to move forward with our own plans which could even include self-insurance.

“I have also asked Supervisor Matthew Simpson, Chairman of the Public Works Committee, to begin the process of reviewing projected deficits in the Road and Machinery Fund and the Highway Fund which are projected to occur and take place in or about 2018. Looking ahead we need to investigate all ideas including moving to private contracting for County paving along with what we charge for these programs. Unattended the equipment and highway fund will place an impossible financial demand on our general fund. We cannot allow the erosion of these balances which were earned with great effort over the past seven years.

“Our multi-year budgeting initiative continues to pay big dividends. We should continue the process of adding to the multi-year plan for Warren County with a Capital Plan. I have discussed this matter with Supervisor Thomas and he shares the opinion that we need to incorporate multi-year capital planning as part of our budgeting process.

“I look forward to meeting with each Committee Chair to discuss what they would like to see happen this year and beyond. Those that know me well know that I like working as a team and my door is always open. We are fortunate to have great employees here in Warren County that have worked well together and have been very supportive of our Acting County Administrator and our Committee Chairs. I have every confidence this cooperation and support will continue.

“We are presently involved in a major \$16.5 million Court Expansion Project. My message to our consultants and staff is simple, be on time, be on budget and no surprises.

“We have made great progress implementing our Shared Services Plan and I have every expectation that under the leadership of Supervisor Beaty, and with the inclusion of the City of Glens Falls, we will continue to experience increased savings in this regard. We have had suggestions regarding reducing out operating expenses at the Airport and after talking to Supervisor Girard, Chair of the County Facilities Committee, I have every expectation that his Committee will entertain all proposals aimed at reducing expenses or increasing revenue at the Airport.

“As you know we can on occasion disagree but I would rather be here with you, participating in the process of governing, as imperfect as some may find it, than sitting on the sidelines. I think Teddy Roosevelt said it best, “it’s not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man whose actually in the arena”. This Legislative Chamber is our arena. It is our watch. It is our time to write the next chapter. I have had the great privilege these past seven years of being Bolton’s representative to this great union of government, four of which was as Vice Chairman of the Board. I have come to know each and every one of you and I know you have the best interests of Warren County and its residents foremost on your mind. This chamber is where we come together to determine our mutual direction. It is not, in my opinion, a place for the timid. It is a place to deliberate, speak your mind and cast your vote. As Chairman it is my job to help set the agenda, steward the process and ensure that it is open and fair and that those wishing to speak are heard. This is the essence of our democratic system of government and you can be assured that I will perform this new role to the best of my ability so help me god.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ronald F. Conover, Chairman  
Warren County Board of Supervisors”

Proceeding with the Agenda review, Chairman Conover called for the reading of resolutions. Mrs. Allen announced that a motion was needed to bring proposed Resolution Nos. 1-18 to the floor. The motion was made by Supervisor Dickinson, seconded by Supervisor Simpson and carried unanimously.

Chairman Conover advised that the Standing Committee list for 2017 would be distributed to the Board immediately following the meeting and he encouraged anyone with questions and/or concerns to

contact him.

Chairman Conover called for any discussion on resolutions or requests for roll call votes.

Supervisor Geraghty requested a roll call vote on proposed Resolution No. 17, *Appointing Kevin B. Geraghty as Acting County Administrator until Vacancy is Filled and Authorizing Compensation to Acting County Administrator.*

Supervisor Braymer advised she would like to make a few comments regarding reorganization and reflection, the first of which pertained to proposed Resolution No. 17. She said a number of concerns had been expressed last year by individuals in this arena regarding the lack of a County Administrator and a desire to move quickly to fill the position, during which time she felt they had managed the process appropriately. She commended Supervisor Geraghty for the stellar job he had done in the dual role of Chairman/Acting County Administrator; however, she noted, she would like for the discussion to resume regarding the process of filling the vacancy, as they were all aware it could take a significant amount of time to do so. Supervisor Braymer informed that she and Supervisor Sokol had attended The Open Door's big announcement at their new location this morning. She said she was impressed with their new facility and the food and emergency shelter services that they provided. She informed they planned to expand upon these at the new facility and provide long term shelter to individuals with the most need, as well as to incorporate a resource center and training. She commended the efforts of the Department of Social Services to assist individuals; however, she noted, the volunteers at The Open Door worked side by side with those in need to assist them. She apprised of her desire to see the County providing assistance to The Open Door during their transition into the new facility and the new services they would be offering. Supervisor Braymer indicated since they were currently researching the consolidation of EMS services on a County-wide basis, she would also like them to continue looking into the consolidation of the Glens Falls Police Department with the Warren County Sheriff's Office.

Supervisor Beaty advised he would like to discuss removing the stipend allocated to the Vice Chairman position, as he felt the additional \$8,000 was not necessary.

A motion was made by Supervisor Beaty to remove the stipend for the Vice-Chair position from the County Budget.

Supervisor Conover stated that they would address the motion following the vote on resolutions which he called for; votes were taken and Resolution Nos. 1-18 were approved as presented.

Returning to the motion made by Supervisor Beaty regarding the removal of the stipend for the Vice-Chairman position, Supervisor Conover asked Brian Reichenbach, *County Attorney*, what the proper procedure was to handle the matter and Mr. Reichenbach replied that a roll call vote would be required. He added that there may be some restrictions on removing the stipend for a position while there was an individual in the position.

Chairman Conover asked what the pleasure of the Board was and Supervisor McDevitt responded that he would like to have a roll call so they could vote on the matter. He remarked that he was supportive of Supervisor Beaty's position, as he believed it was the responsibility of the Board to be as transparent as possible and not mirror the New York State Legislature wherein no one would stand up and be counted publicly when it pertained to a salary increase. He referred to mandates which they all complained about and indicated that this stipend was a Warren County mandate imposed upon the taxpayers.

Supervisor Montesi pointed out that Supervisor Beaty indicated he did not want to pay the Vice-

Chairman a stipend; however, he noted, the position they were referring to was the Chair of the Finance Committee which was vital and time consuming. He questioned whether the salary had been increased from the previous year and Chairman Conover replied in the negative. Supervisor Montesi informed the position not only entailed being the Chair of the Finance Committee but also serving as the Vice-Chairman of the Board.

Supervisor Dickinson remarked that the Finance Committee was one of the most prominent of the Board's Committees, dealing with every Department, and would require a significant amount of effort from Supervisor Sokol, in addition to his duties as Vice Chairman of the Board. He said he felt it was appropriate to compensate Supervisor Sokol for the additional time and effort he would be exerting in his new role.

Supervisor Brock asked Supervisor Beaty to explain his rationale for this proposal and Supervisor Beaty responded that as stewards of the public's money it set an example as to how they expended taxpayer funds. He questioned whether they were going to pick and choose which Committee Chairs were going to be compensated and which were not, or essentially which Chairs were important and which were not. He pointed out that even though he Chaired the Shared Services Committee, which saved the County a significant amount of money, he did not feel he should be compensated for it. He said that the Chair of the Finance Committee should be separate from the Vice Chairman position and he reiterated his sentiment that he took issue with compensating Committee Chairs.

Supervisor Wood informed she had served on the Board for several years now during which time the Vice Chair had always been compensated for the additional work and duties associated with the position. She pointed out they had just approved a pay increase for the Acting County Administrator due to the significant amount of duties associated with that positions and she was vehemently opposed to deleting the stipend for the Vice Chairman. She suggested that, if it was his desire to save the County money, Supervisor Beaty forfeit his own salary for his Supervisor position as that would save a much higher amount.

Supervisor Seeber reminded the Board that they had forfeited their own raises for several years now due to the fact that the majority of the members felt it was inappropriate for them to vote on their own pay increases. She commented that the work each Supervisor performed over the course of the year was significantly more than what would be covered by the minuscule salaries they received. She pointed out that last year Chairman Conover was assigned with overseeing the Finance, Personnel & Higher Education Committee which had significantly more duties than that of the Finance Committee Chair and yet he received no additional compensation for them. She said a number of them sat on several Committees and put many hours into the job because they were aware of what the position entailed when they decided to run for election due to their desire to be the voice for the communities they represented. She informed they had all agreed that the Budget Officer position deserved the stipend for the work and responsibilities associated with that position. She apprised she was unaware that the additional stipend in question was paid for the duties associated with serving as the Chair of the Finance Committee and not for serving as the Vice Chairman of the Board. She said she believed they should take the opportunity this year to review the stipend and determine where it should be attached.

Chairman Conover inquired whether there was a second to Supervisor Beaty's motion and Supervisor McDevitt responded that he would like to second the motion.

Supervisor Sokol questioned why Supervisor Beaty had not notified him of these concerns prior to the meeting, as he would have been more them willing to sit down and discuss them. Supervisor Beaty apprised that his concerns did not relate specifically to Supervisor Sokol but rather to the position

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itself, and his feeling additional compensation should not be provided. Supervisor Sokol interjected that they should have discussed the matter well in advance of this meeting.

Chairman Conover called the question and the motion to bring a resolution to the floor which would remove the additional stipend provided to the Vice Chairman of the Board failed due to the lack of the majority vote required, with a vote of 227 in favor (*Supervisors McDevitt, Seeber and Beaty*) and 688 against (*Supervisors Leggett, Girard, Braymer, Brock, MacDonald, Frasier, Simpson, Vanselow, Dickinson, Merlino, Strough, Montesi, Thomas, Wood, Geraghty and Conover*) (*Abstain - Supervisor Sokol- 85*).

There being no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, on motion made by Supervisor Dickinson and seconded by Merlino, Chairman Conover adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.