



Schoharie County Administrator

Office of Agricultural Development Services

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Steven R Wilson, Administrator

Vacant, Senior Planner

Schoharie County

Operations Review Committee Minutes

April 5, 2021

Present: Alicia Terry, Harold Vroman, Eric Stein, Dan Crandell, Bonnie Post, John Riedl, Alan Tavenner

Also Present: Bill Federice, Steve Wilson, Fonda Chronis, Kayla Redmond, Scott Haverly

The meeting was called to order by Alicia Terry at 8:35 a.m. via WebEx meeting on April 5, 2021.

Alicia Terry started self-introductions.

Board of Supervisors Chair, Bill Federice and County Administrator Steve Wilson reviewed the mission of the Schoharie County Operations Review Committee. Steve Wilson believed the draft of the Committee's mission is fine. He believed that an important effort from this committee will be to not treat it as a budget exercise. Steve Wilson emphasized the importance of keeping the focus on the County's customers and clients.

Bill Federice agreed. He brought to light the issue of incorrect speculations about the mission of this committee that is going around the County offices and staff. He expressed a need for complete transparency within the County employees. Bill Federice suggested a need for meeting minutes to be open and available for everyone to see. Lastly, he mentioned the importance of obtaining firsthand input from department heads.

Eric Stein asked if there are any restrictions on people doing different things than they are currently doing. Eric asked if people can be moved into other roles and other responsibilities.

Steve Wilson answered that this question needs to be explored more explicitly in subsequent meetings. He stated that per labor counsel, the county is free to reorganize and move people around in any reasonable manner. Steve Wilson discussed the possible complications and emphasized the importance of following civil service guidelines when reorganizing. He explained that this could mean new position descriptions, perhaps some positions will need to be re-classified, and some employees may have to take tests again. There is an implementation phase after this committee that will need to be carefully managed, and oversight will be necessary after this committee's work is done.

John Riedl asked if reports will be needed to provide to the Board of Supervisors.

Alicia said yes, they are looking at providing reports in June and December. She explained that there could be other communications with the Board along the way.

Dan Crandell expressed the need to encourage morale within departments and county employees. He believed that this would help make implementation easier. Dan Crandell stated how the County lacks regular training to get along with co-workers and the public in general. He explained the importance of encouraging positive attitudes and positive work environments and how it is important for large groups like we have here at the County.

Alicia Terry agreed with Dan Crandell. She stated that it is important to maintain good communication with them as they are not only County employees, but most of them are County taxpayers too. Alicia Terry stated that County employees are stakeholders at different levels and the committee absolutely needs to maintain that communication.

Bonnie asked if this communication would include the Union.

Alicia Terry stated that there may be key staff members that need to be included on certain topics to assist in identifying what types of changes are necessary. She was not sure at the time of the meeting of the exact communications that would take place with the Union.

Eric Stein asked to verify that the mission is to look at the expense and efficiency side, not to look at revenue.

Alicia Terry stated that although it is not the primary focus, revenue can be part of the Committee's mission. Bill Federice noted that he would not want to overlook the opportunity for revenue but agreed that the focus of the Committee is to see how we can do better to reduce the expenses and be more efficient in our spending.

Alan Tavenner and Harold Vroman discussed the need to communicate directly with the employees and listen first to their input before moving toward making recommendations for changes and reorganization.

Alicia Terry discussed the timeline of the proposed projects and touched on establishing subcommittees that would focus on gathering research and dive into a specific subject area. Alicia Terry proposed that the work of this Committee be completed by December 2021. She also touched on the tasks at hand such as meeting with department heads, looking at other counties and how our performance compares with theirs, looking into grant programs for funding ideas that may arise in the Committee's work. Alicia Terry suggested looking at data from the State Comptroller's office, private enterprise, etc. that are applicable to the Committee's mission. She said that the Committee also needs to be prepared to report all their findings. Scott Haverly has agreed to create a webpage for the Committee where minutes and other documents for data storage can be kept.

Eric Stein stated that the timeframe will be driven by the Committee's ability to obtain the data and information. He suggested that the Committee list out their questions as an early task.

Steve Wilson stated that he envisions a list of questions be developed and have certain employees/department heads come to the meeting to bring to light issues they feel exist. He stated a tremendous amount of information and data may come from department heads and staff.

A discussion about the first steps occurs. Bonnie Post said the first task is to identify the inefficiencies, look at the data reported, and then determine how to fix the issues.

Steve Wilson discussed the 3 ideas that are most likely to get the greatest improvement.

1. Consolidating Social Services
2. Consolidating Financial Functions
3. Consolidating Property Tax Management

Steve Wilson explained that the opportunity for some of these improvements were brought to light by the retirement of the Personnel Director (appendix A). There are several ways to move forward with this idea to save money. Steve Wilson also noted the potential benefits of creating a non-political office that also has the influence to be able to talk back to the board and be believed. This person needs to be able to provide push back when necessary and not to be a “yes man.” The new organization should have the same respect and ability to communicate with the Board of Supervisors. He felt that combining the budget and personnel positions would help to achieve this goal. Steve Wilson talked about the possibility of changes in the Treasurer’s office.

Bonnie Post mentioned the importance of the balance of power with the new personnel/finance position and expresses her concerns of combining the two.

Steve Wilson discussed the changes in the Department of Social Services (DSS) office. He noted that there needs to be improvement with the office’s service delivery to clients. He explained the correlation between the changes in DSS with the centralization of Human Services.

Alicia Terry proposed the establishment of the subcommittees.

1. Human Services
2. Tax Collection
3. Finance

Alicia Terry will send a follow up email to ask the Committee members to sign up for a subcommittee. Their tasks will be to collect data and report their findings back to the Committee.

A discussion for the next Committee meeting occurred. Alicia Terry said she does not anticipate the subcommittees get together before the next meeting. In the next meeting, she hopes to identify the questions that will help the Committee make recommendations.

The Committee decided on April 19, 2021 at 8:30am for the next meeting. Alicia Terry said this meeting will be in-person and WebEx access will be available to those wishing to tune in remotely.

Alicia Terry thanked the Committee members for their time and attendance.

Eric Stein moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:57 A.M. Dan Crandell provided a second and the motion was carried 7-0.

Recorded by:

Kayla Redmond