

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
MINUTES: July 15, 2008

MEMBERS: Chair: Ken Jenkins; Legislators: Bronz, Burrows, Burton, Pinto, Spreckman

OTHER LEGISLATORS: Kaplowitz

IN ATTENDANCE: Kathryn Burke, Katelyn Burke, Nick Chirekos; **LWVW-CBAC:** Barbara Strauss; **PARKS:** Joe Stout, W. Chip Mathews, Peter Tartaglia, Dan McBride; **PLANNING:** Norma Drummond, Jerry Mulligan; **BRIDGE FUND:** Lisa Buck; **CLUSTER:** Jon Shenk; **CATHOLIC CHARITIES:** Karen Reynolds; **GRACE CHURCH:** Paul Anderson-Winchell; **LEGAL SERVICES HUDSON VALLEY:** Robin Stibel, Barbara Finkelsein
HILLTOP HANOVER: Lucille Munz;
UNITED WAY: Mary Ann Luna;
WESTCHESTER COALITION FOR HUNGRY & HOMELESS: Rosa Boone, Keemya Bullard; **WESTCHESTER MEDIATION:** Andy Cohen, Henry Grub;
C/E: Bill Randolph; **JOURNAL NEWS:** G. McKinstry; **BOL Staff:** Jocelyn Rand, Wendy Wild, Miguel Melbourne, Rick Pezzullo, Chris Giliberti, Louise Gantress, Sally Schechter

With a quorum present, Chair Jenkins called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. Legislator Harckham called to say that he had a family matter to attend to and was sorry that he would not be at this meeting.

The first item was the acceptance of the minutes of the March 11, 2008 and June 17, 2008 meetings. On the motion of Legislator Pinto, second by Legislator Spreckman, the minutes were accepted.

Chair Jenkins introduced Kathryn Burke, the author of "Images of America – Playland" who did a power point presentation of the pictorial history of Playland starting with pictures of the original park in 1928. She obtained most of her information from the County Archives. Upon completion of her presentation, Chair Jenkins thanked her very much and mentioned that there would be a book

signing at Playland.

Commissioner Stout then did a power point presentation on Lasdon Park and Muscoot Park. His first presentation was on Lasdon. Lasdon has 234 acres and is located on both sides of Route 35. It was purchased in the mid 80's by the County. There is a bird sanctuary on Wood Street which is south of the main property. It encompasses about 20 acres of open space and trails. There is also a Chinese Friendship Pavilion, the Lasdon Memorial Garden, and the Vietnam and Korean War Memorials. The home was originally the summer residence of the Lasdons who were owners of the Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical Company. It was patterned after Washington's home in Mt. Vernon. There are five annual and 5 seasonal employees. The tax levy is \$426,000 and there are approximately 40,000 visitors a year. There is a garden lunch program and the Ridgefield Symphony presents a program as well. Friends of Lasdon is very active.

Muscoot Farm consists of 777 acres. It is the County's interpretation of what a working farm was like in the 1800's to the mid 1900's. There are many trails. The actual farm consists of about 20 acres. There is a program where Muscoot houses minor breeds which are a historically accurate breed of animals from colonial times. There is also a young farmers camp during the summer where youngsters learn what it is like to be a farmer. During the winter the County sponsored an indoor farmers market and from the spring through the fall, there is a farmers market at Muscoot which is extremely popular. When Route 100 was being reconfigured, the main house was moved from the East side of Route 100 to the West side. There was a discussion also about the various environmental demonstration projects that could be done on site. The Friends of Muscoot is very active. There are 6 full time employees and 10 seasonal employees, the tax levy is approximately \$313,000 and about 100,000 visit Muscoot – lots of school children. The Muscoot Museum will be redone thanks to a grant from Senator Leibell's office. There is 100 feet of water that separates Lasdon from Muscoot and it is controlled by DEP. There is talk of having a bridge span this water and it would then connect Lasdon and Muscoot giving the County 1000 acres of land. It might be done eventually.

Chair Jenkins then had questions about River Ridge Equestrian Stable. Commissioner Stout said the work is about 80% done. There are a few stalls short, the back end of the barn which was a semi tractor trailer has been removed, a new roof has been put on, the deck, sprinkler system and painting the stalls needs to be done. There is a question as to when the contract was actually signed and when this work needs to be done by. According to the law department, the work needs to be done by January 2009. Rusty Holzer, the lessee, and his wife, are involved in high level equestrian events. His wife will be

competing for another country in the Olympic events in Beijing, so they would not put themselves at risk in jeopardizing the horses.

Planning Commissioner Mulligan introduced Lucille Munz, Manager of Hilltop Hanover. The County purchased Hilltop in 2003. There are 130 acres on the east side of Hanover Street and 50 acres on the west side. Most of the east side is natural, wooded with a house and a barn and it has been turned over to the Parks Department recently and is dedicated as park land. The farm itself is a work in progress. It is intended to be an educational, environmental resource center. There are several buildings – the main house is historical and is used as classrooms. It requires minor upgrades. The next building is where the offices are located and is ADA compliance. There are several barns that are in various states of disrepair. One needs a roof. They are installing new water lines and by the end of September they should have town water. They are in the watershed area and there is an engineering firm working on their septic system. There is a green roof shed project which can help with the flooding. Last year they had a farm stand. An Eagle Scout, for his project, built them a stand. He worked on it from September through April. The stand is open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 7 p.m. and they sell produce grown on the farm. A farmer was hired from New Hampshire in April and she has 8 interns and 6 volunteers working with her on 6 acres of land. On Saturday there is pick your own produce from 9 – 1 p.m. There are classes in the main house on canning, information on their web site as to what to plant each week, how to build a “hoop” house which are hoops covered with plastic to allow the growing season to be extended. Other programs are dinner and a movie (bring your own food), how to freeze and store food, teaching about crop rotation, and reaching out to people that have no access to fresh produce by bringing Hilltop’s van to them and selling vegetables raised on the farm. “Something Good in the World” is a group that is working with the students. There is a wine maker on the grounds that will teach adults about wine making and wine tasting in the home. Cornell Coop Extension is very involved in the farm. They have worked with a company to install a composting facility. There is a building assessment master plan, not a site plan. It is a 10 year master plan with various recommendations for buildings use and capital improvements. Chair Jenkins requested a copy of the plan. There also will be an RFP going out the end of the summer for use of the buildings. Website is www.hilltophanoverfarm.com. Chair Jenkins asked if there was a potential for an environmental component demonstration for the septic system. Lucille is hoping to put in a composting toilet similar to one that is being used in Rockefeller Preserve. It would be self contained but according to the DEP, DEC and our Health Department, there are certain codes that have to be adhered to.

Chair Jenkins thanked the Commissioner and Lucille and then introduced Norma Drummond from the Planning Department.

Norma gave out two reports – one is the Planning Department's recommendations for the \$300,000 for the Eviction Prevention Program and the other is a summary of legal assistance. In the 2008 budget, the Board put in two allocations - \$100,000 for legal assistance and \$300,000 for cash assistance for Eviction Prevention. The Board recommended sending out an RFP for legal assistance to prevent homelessness and they received 3 responses. Planning needed help from our legal department to determine which agency was better suited for this purpose. The law department questioned the RFP as the Board had put in the budget money for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley to run an eviction prevention program for low and moderate families and the law department would not allow them to proceed with the RFP.

Planning would now like to look at the entire eviction prevention program and target the \$100,000 to hire an agency to look at the issue of expiring Mitchell Lama's that are converting, to help the tenants resolve issues. Norma would like direction from the board. She would like to send out a reformulated RFP that would maintain affordable housing and also have this agency put together a publication giving tenants basic information. Legislator Burton was concerned as to how long it would take for an RFP, A & C and approval. Norma Drummond said it would all be done by the end of August. The Committee indicated that she should go ahead with the RFP.

RFP #2 was for the \$300,000 cash assistance. Nine responses were received for a total request of \$416,000. The Department of Planning and the Department of Social Services recommended \$241,000 be given to the responding agencies. Last year \$185,000 was given to five agencies. All have applied again this year. Last year Westchester Coalition requested \$50,000 but this year they only requested \$30,000. Last year Catholic Charities requested \$30,000 and they will be receiving \$30,000. They were the only agency that returned money last year. Grace Church received \$25,000 last year and this year they requested \$60,000. They will be receiving \$30,000. WRO received \$30,000 last year and this year they will receive \$40,000. CLUSTER will receive \$50,000. Preservation Company with a new executive director, will receive \$18,000. And Human Development Services will receive \$25,000. The Committee also indicated that she should go ahead with the RFP.

If the Board approves the requests, contracts can be drawn and the money will be available by September 1.

Chair Jenkins questioned why A-Home was on the list and no money was recommended for them. They basically wanted to build up a reserve for clients who couldn't pay their rent. They were put on the list to indicate that they had

requested money - \$25,000.

On the motion of Legislator Pinto, seconded by Legislator Burton, the meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.