

**WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS  
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
TUESDAY,  
JUNE 24, 2008—1:00 pm  
MEETING MINUTES**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Committee Members: Leg. Ken Jenkins, Chair; Leg. Lois Bronz, Leg. William Burton, Leg. Judy Myers, Leg. Vito Pinto, and Leg. Martin Rogowsky. Committee Coordinators: Barbara Dodds, Sally Schechter.

Others: Archives: Patricia Dohrenwend, Katie Hite, Courtney Fallin, Jackie Graziano; IT: Marguerite Beirne, Chris Gratie; BOL: Teresa Toscano, Lynda Greene, and Susan Kirkpatrick; Gene Singer .

**ITEM FOR DISCUSSION:** Operations update at the Archives and Records Center.

With a quorum present, Leg. Jenkins opened the meeting and welcomed Marguerite Beirne, the Westchester County Chief Information Officer. She explained why the IT Dept. was involved with the Center. In 1998, the County Charter was revised and the CIO was made the Records Management Officer for Westchester County. They consider themselves the custodians of data. She introduced Patricia Dohrenwend, Director of the Archives and Records Center, her assistant Chris Gratil, and Katie Hite, Executive Director of the Westchester Historical Society.

Ms. Dohrenwend welcomed everyone to the Center. As the center for Westchester history, three agencies are housed in the one building: archives and public records are stored in the archives vault, Westchester Historical Society, the depository for private records—old newspapers, postcard collections, manuscripts, historical books, photographs, etc., and the Lower Hudson Conference, an informational resource for historical societies, museums, libraries and local governments, which will soon change its name to Greater Hudson Heritage Network, probably in the fall.

She described the history of the building from a book depository in 1960. It was purchased by the County in 1973 for \$750,000 under County Clerk Petrano. When County Executive Andy Spano became County Clerk, he launched the business of archives and records management. Around 1988, a formal records program was established under the County Charter with a records commission instituted. In 1989, the WC Historical Society moved in and became a library collection. It is now the official County Historian. By NYS law every local government has a designated Records Management Officer. In local governments, the town clerk is the officer by statute. In city governments, the position can be appointed. All are under the Commissioner of Education.

In 2003, the remainders of the inactive records that have to be maintained by law, were moved from leased storage to 375 Executive Blvd., a county-owned building in Elmsford. In 2007, the Records Commission was reconstituted to address the needs of electronic records management and to allow a revised records policy. She distributed descriptive and statistical materials that can be found on the website (<http://www.westchesterarchives.com/>). Presently, there are about 5000 square feet stored in warehouse conditions because they have run out of space in their vaults. Many databases have been updated and are more secure.

In addition to the archives unit, there is a Scanning Program Unit that handles older large format documents, rare books, all the maps registered with the County Clerk's Office, and special scanning projects funded by state grants such as the Dept. of Planning historical aerial photographs from the 1920's, Dept. of Environmental Facilities maps and plans of sanitary sewer system and the water waste facilities, and batch scanning for other departments.

A requirement of the court mandates keeping numerous documents. Archive Writer creates the microfilm that provides Land Records backup. Dept. of Health program—NYS mandates that children bet ages of 0 and 5 with special needs have access to all kinds of professionals. The private records of medical history for remediation and the vendor files that document what treatment happened to those children are audited by three agencies: the Dept. of Education, the state Comptroller's Office and the County independent auditors. A recent state mandate requires that all of the incarceration records for the Dept. of Corrections when the prisoners are released the release files have to be refiled in the district attorney's files where they were first prosecuted in the case file with the case. So, 20 to 30-year old boxes have to be found in order to place a few pieces of paper

Goals for archiving and storage include: To complete the master plan, improve reference response and department access, to convert the historical society card catalog to online, to expand the use of an official documents folder as a stop gap measure until a content management system is in place for electronic records that have historical value and to improve archival storage under Capital Project BI0081.

Damage from spring rains required moving records and they have just been returned. The roof is in poor condition and hasn't been replaced since 1960, the roof on the wing hasn't been replaced since 1988. They are awaiting approval for the architectural services contract. A decision had been made to consolidate all the design and planning for the building under one capital project.

Leg. Jenkins asked several questions regarding emergency generating equipment that has been approved for \$400,000. Ms. Dohrenwend also said that no, the site was not in a flood zone and added that a deed covenant restricts the height and expansion possibilities at the site.

Leg. Rogowsky asked where the 130,000 cubic feet of old papers are that are required to be stored permanently. The current cost for leased storage space is \$300,000 per year. The majority is stored in the center building but 19,000 sq ft are stored at 375 Executive Blvd. up ten levels of units. All documents are kept in county owned buildings. They want to expand storage capacity for archives from 8,000 sq ft to 16,000 sq. ft. in the archives, scanning and reference center. Part of the BIT01 capital project justification was the elimination of the \$300,000 currently spent for leased space—it is now rolled into BI0081. Ms. Dohrenwend said that perhaps some records might be able to be moved to a less expensive upstate location. The problem with the scanning is that the courts do not accept the scanned image. The judges insist on seeing the handwritten signatures on paper. Legislation is pending to allow microfilm as an acceptable replacement.

She gave a presentation on the archives collaboration with the historical society and the variety of historical documents and photographs that are kept at the center. Most of this material can be found on the expanding Virtual Archives website.

Details on the records center management operation were given and the staff is working to provide training for records coordinators for each department as well as how to reduce the number of records. . This year, WESTARM software developed by Albany County MIS will

be used for record keeping. The center received a large state grant to begin implementing. The system is wireless and can be migrated into other systems. All boxes are bar coded and all information about box contents and location are in the system for space planning and warehouse management. Implementation will take 2 or 3 years to complete and enables departments to see what they have.

Leg. Jenkins asked if there was a disaster recovery plan. The program will be sent to the committee members (on file). He also asked if the NYS emergency services building in Hawthorne serves as a disaster recovery center for Westchester. Yes, for data. We also have servers backing up critical data in a number of county locations. Rockefeller Archives is our disaster back up partner. Usually archival institutions assist one another.

Katie Hite gave the history and development of the Westchester County Historical Society. It is a member-based, not-for-profit organization that is funded by government, private donations and fund-raisers including income from publications, a tag sale and an antiques show in 2009. Three former County Planning Commissioners serve on the board. The mission is to collect, preserve and make accessible to the public, the history of the County.

Leg. Jenkins thanked Mses. Beirne, Dohrenwend and Hite for their presentations and the tour following the meeting. He commented that the Center is another example of cooperation between public and private entities where county government provides the infrastructure to make that happen.

He made a motion to adjourn, moved by Leg. Rogowsky and seconded by Leg. Pinto. All in favor.