

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Tuesday, June 16, 2009, 11:00 am
MEETING MINUTES

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Leg. Ken Jenkins, Chair; Legislators Lois Bronz, Gordon Burrows, William Burton, Judy Myers, Vito Pinto, and Bernice Spreckman. Committee Coordinator: Barbara Dodds.

Others: Alfred A. Gatta, CAS Committee Chair, Village Manager, Town/Village of Scarsdale; Josette J. Polzella, Assessor, Town of Ossining; Lloyd Tasch, Assessor, City of White Plains; Mark Russell, Assessor, City of Yonkers; David Jackson, Executive Director, Westchester County Tax Commission; Lee Kyriacou, Exec. Dir., NYS Office of Real Property; Linda Trentecoste, County Attorney's Office; Karen Schatzel, LWVW; BOL: Chris Crane, Katy Delgado, Louise Gantress, interns: Jeff Lord, Lily Newman.

With a quorum present, Leg. Jenkins opened the meeting at 11:32 pm.

• **ORPS Presentation**

Leg. Jenkins welcomed Lee Kyriacou, Exec. Director of the NYS Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) to give an update on the work of his office. Mr. Kyriacou explained that that his office oversees property tax, equalization rate and aid for fully assessed municipalities. Although assessment processes are local decisions, his agency educates local governments, elected officials, business and civic organizations to make sure the issues are understood. Their role is an educational one to make sure that people understand the advantages of improved assessment processes. The proposed legislation creating the commission and funding the photometry is smart, cost effective and a very important step.

• **Presentation on the future of data collection.**

Mark Russell, Assessor of the City of Yonkers, was introduced to make a presentation from the International Assn. of Assessing Officers (IAAO) on the cost of doing data collection. The organization recently issued a mass appraisal standard that basically says "Jurisdictions may employ a set of digital image technology tools to replace a routine cyclical field inspection with a computer assisted office review." In an inventory improvement program assessors can analyze what has changed over the last 60 years or whenever it was last done. The photography allows us to do that. Digitalizing the image creates an environment which can be overlaid to display changes. This allows the technology to bring the properties to the assessors desk. In Dade County, Florida their assessment improvement project cost \$1.2 million but they recouped over \$1 billion in revenues.

Some of the things that can be done in addition to the photometry for all 250,000 Westchester parcels are

- Scanning in color for about \$1 a parcel (\$250,000),
- Digitalizing the image on property record card at \$1.75 a parcel (\$680,000 to \$700,000).

So for less than an additional million dollars, the assessor can now look at the property record card on the computer. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Russell said the county should be encouraged to undertake these techniques to the data collection already budgeted giving a total cost to just under \$2,000,000. These additional assessment tools would make the it easier and quicker for the municipalities to update their records. The digital environment would allow people, especially children, in front of their homes to be removed.

- **Resolution recommending legislation to create a Westchester County Collaborative Assessment Commission**

Resuming discussion on the proposed resolution establishing an assessment commission, Leg. Jenkins said the resolution memorializes some of the recommendations of the Collaborative Assessment Study Committee Report. The purpose of the resolution is to continue the work of the study committee and give some direction on improving the assessment process. The resolution recommends the establishment of a Westchester Collaborative Assessment Commission (WCAC) with members from the professional organizations that participated as volunteers on the study committee. It was asked why the exact number of members was not spelled out in the resolution. Since the study committee was self-directed among the members of the County Tax Commission, the Assessors' Assn. and the Municipal Officials Assn., the GO Committee did not want to be heavy handed and presumptuous in dictating how the committee would be structured. Leg. Jenkins said the number of members was not named for the study committee yet they had the appropriate number of volunteers to get the work done and we have confidence that that will be the case with the commission.

Mr. Gatta said the GO Committee can have confidence that the professional organizations will get together and work out the equity issues and the numbers. Discussion ensued regarding changes in the resolved clauses. Mr. Jackson asked that the Tax Commission be called the Westchester County Tax Commission, Mr. Lasch asked that the assessors association be rewritten as the Westchester County Chapter, New York State Assessors Association. The Executive Director of the Tax Commission would serve as the official liaison to the Board of Legislators on the commission. The members of WCAC shall serve without compensation.

A motion to accept the resolution as amended was moved by Leg. Burton and seconded by Leg. Bronz. All voted in favor.

Leg. Jenkins made a motion to adjourn, moved by Leg. Pinto and seconded by Leg. Myers. All voted in favor.

[A copy of the resolution as amended and approved on 7/7/09 is attached]