

FINANCE/TAX REDUCTION/MANDATE RELIEF COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 19, 2021 - 10:30 AM

Clerk's note – This meeting was held virtually.

Thomas Scozzafava, Chairperson
Noel Merrihew, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Scozzafava called this Finance Meeting to order at 10:30 am with the following Supervisors virtually in attendance: Clayton Barber, Robin DeLoria, Archie Depo, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland (in person), Joseph Giordano, Charlie Harrington, Roy Holzer, Kenneth Hughes, Steve McNally, Jim Monty, Noel Merrihew, Jay Rand, Tom Scozzafava, Jeffrey Subra, Ike Tyler and Joe Pete Wilson. Davina Winemiller was excused.

Department Heads present: Dan Palmer (in person) Laura Carson, Mike Diskin, Judy Garrison, David Wainwright and Michael Mascarenas. Joe Provoncha was previously excused.

Also virtually present: Sun News, Tim Rowland, Margaret Bartley and Joe Keegan.

SCOZZAFAVA: Good morning. I will call the committee meeting to order. Joe Provoncha has been excused. There is a resolution he has requested.

PALMER: So you need a resolution authorizing to accept, adopt and place on file the 2020 annual accounting of monies received and disbursed by the Office of the Essex County Clerk.

SCOZZAFAVA: Yes, someone want to move that?

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING, ADOPTING AND PLACING ON FILE THE 2020 ANNUAL ACCOUNTING OF MONIES RECEIVED AND DISBURSED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ESSEX COUNTY CLERK. DeZalia, Depo and Merrihew.

SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion? All in favor, opposed – carried. Okay, Laura Carson – Auditors. Good morning.

CARSON: Yes, good morning. Mr. Holzer you had left a message for me that you had a question on my report?

HOLZER: Yes, so when you're reporting to us and you're identifying shortages you're finding on your audit what is that in reference to?

CARSON: Are you talking about the overpayments? When we note the overpayments?

HOLZER: Yes on your last month's report.

CARSON: As we process vouchers from departments we take note of anything that they may have overpaid without our eyes on it. We correct those prior, to the payments going out. So these are overpayments that we've caught essentially so we do not overpay any vendors.

HOLZER: Okay so it's not a question of vendors overcharging us, it's something internal we're catching.

CARSON: Correct.

HOLZER: Okay that was my only question.

CARSON: Does anybody have anything else?

SCOZZAFAVA: I guess not, thanks Laura. Real Property – Dave.

WAINWRIGHT: Good morning. I don't have anything other than I just want to let everybody know that the town and county taxes have been posted out to the image mate program and our website has also been updated with all the newest information as far as the taxes go. Other than that, that's pretty much it everything is going smooth so far.

SCOZZAFAVA: I have a question Dave; our town board we passed a resolution in regards to the exemptions where they can request someone to fill out the documentation so it doesn't just carryover. Are we supposed to file that with you or do we file that resolution anywhere or just have it on record?

WAINWRIGHT: We usually get of copy of anything like that. In this situation I think it's more to allow your assessor to send out those forms because the State said you know, that they can just kind of let those exemptions ride. Yeah, if you would like to send us a copy of that would be great, we'll put it in the town folder and we'll have it. I have a feeling; I hope anyway that this is going to be the only year that we have to deal with this.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay, thank you. Any questions for Dave from the supervisors? I guess not. Thank you.

WAINWRIGHT: Thank you. Bye.

SCOZZAFAVA: Treasurer's office – Mr. Diskin.

DISKIN: I'm here.

SCOZZAFAVA: Do you want to go through your report or do you want to field questions?

DISKIN: No, I'll go through it real quick unless you've got some questions. Sales tax we ended up where we ended up for the year. Actually in cash, we didn't do that bad. We were actually, if you look at just cash for the year we're in a plus about 1%. First one we got this January I do have information, we're down about 1% in January. Keep in mind for those and I keep reminding me of that our budget year actually through February numbers and this won't tell us where we are with the budget for another month or so but overall I don't think we did too bad.

SCOZZAFAVA: No, absolutely not. Any questions on sales tax? Nothing. Room occupancy.

DISKIN: You know we have a positive but those are all numbers that obviously are inflated over the last year because we went to 5% but at this point with one month to go and the January figures we're just getting in now which are actually December rentals. We're almost up a million dollars

over last year that we will be probably in the \$4-million-dollar range which is pretty good increase from last year.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay any questions on occupancy tax?

DISKIN: The rest of it is just the report information. I did want to let you know and I'll send this out, I just got it on Friday so I didn't send it out. NYSAC did a report on sales tax for the year and the report obviously is going to show what we all knew January and February we were going strong and all of a sudden the rest of the year everybody was in the negative, a big part of it dragged down by New York City and some of the larger counties but I will email it so I don't spend a lot of time on it, what each county did for the year in sales tax compared to last year.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay, any questions for Mike? If not, thank you.

DISKIN: Okay.

SCOZZAFAVA: County Manager, Dan.

PALMER: Before we go to the Covid leave time policy I did want to update the board on our discussion. We did have a Zoom call with the school as it relates to the Thrall Dam property and the school board I believe has voted that they are interested in acreage on our Thrall Dam property for location of the school. I think they are looking at like 37 acres. Obviously I need to get permission from you. I think I'm going to hopefully have some resolutions ready by ways and means. I think the process if the board you know certainly that's the direction that we had originally talked about was a possibility of exchanging with the school the use of the property that they are going to be vacating over across the road and trade it off against the property that we own down at Thrall Dam property.

The process will really be that because we're both municipalities we'll need to get appraisals done of the Thrall Dam property what they're looking for in terms of acreage and then we would have to look at as well as what the value of the school would be and compare those two and try to sort out where we are in terms of that. Nothing would happen without permission of my board so to speak but we did indicate to the school that we were willing to look at this and pursue it so that's why I do need a resolution from you guys further down the road here to go ahead with that. I think it's probably a win-win for both of us. We obviously need space. That school does provide that space that we're desperately in need of and that property does you know, represent a valid place for them. It is something that they would have to get approved through the voters I believe they are looking at that in May or whatever it is I'm not sure exactly sure what their timeframe is but again, you know I'm certainly willing to answer any questions at this point. I would come back to you probably at ways and means or regular with some kind of resolution authorizing something you know because again, we can't really make a decision until we know what the value of each of the properties are. So we would have to address the value issue first and then we would talk about how to proceed from there.

SCOZZAFAVA: Where is Thrall Dam located? Is that north west just as you leave the hamlet of Etown?

PALMER: It's going out on Route 9 there.

GILLILLAND: In Lewis.

PALMER: Just before you actually, it's before the Cornell Cooperative Extension is located, before you get there. Jim knows exactly where it is.

SCOZZAFAVA: Up above the DPW building on the right.

PALMER: Yeah, we have about 600 acres there of the Thrall Dam property and Jim Dougan has looked at it. That's the other thing that I'm going to ask Jim Dougan to do is go over and go through the school and look at that facility and find out where we are. You know, we obviously need to know where we are in terms of maintenance and what needs to be done and those kinds of things but it's early in the process but I want the board to be aware that that's what we're working on and we'll come back to you for further permissions.

SCOZZAFAVA: The town I'm assuming has no issue with it, correct James?

MONTY: No, not at all.

TYLER: I would just like to add that, I would just like to make a comment if I could please? I've got my county hat on which looks like it's probably could be something that could work out at the county with everybody involved but with my Westport hat on I'm thinking to myself that a new school situated in Lewis if we lose Elizabethtown would not help out the taxpayers in Westport at all or in any way or the distance to travel for the kids would be crazy but you know this is the conversation that is going to be happening with the school board and all that but I just wanted to make it public and let you know that I don't know if it's a great idea.

SCOZZAFAVA: Any further comments? I'm certainly not going to touch that. Get into a Civil War with Lewis and Westport but I hear you and I feel your pain because we went through that in Moriah where they closed three schools, centralized into one and it was a war virtually.

HUGHES: If I could just jump in real quick. This is a bit tangential. This is going back to my school administrator hat but I know that there's education law that states how long children can have you know, the maximum amount of time children can be on a school bus so when you think about kids who live in the southern part of Westport who may have to be transported all the way up to the central part of Lewis, I mean, that's a bit of a hall. So I'm sure that the school board will have to wrestle that and answer those questions with the Commissioner of Education if they're in deep thinking about going forward on that kind of discussion. That's a long trip. I totally get where Ike is coming from.

MONTY: I just want to say that this is just the beginning of the process because the school has a lot that they have to do, the county has a lot that they have to do. It's just the beginning of a process and I think if you look at it from a county standpoint, it fits our needs as far as needing more space. From a taxpayer standpoint, I think it's something that they can get, the school district can get a new school without a large levy going against the taxpayers with the swapping of the land and the buying of the school and I do feel Ike's pain about losing something else out of Westport I do understand that but again, I think we've just got to allow the school to do their due diligence, the county does their due diligence and then let the chips fall where they may. Thank you.

PALMER: Another thing I wanted to mention was for us, if we relocate DSS into that facility, it resets the clock so to speak on what we get reimbursed from the state. Right now the space that the DSS is in we get no money from the State because it's gone by the base year. You are

allowed a reimbursement of cost when you relocate DSS into either a new building or a used building so we could potentially pay out some of the money for the facility and have that reimbursed by the State as a reset to our DSS yearly cost that becomes eligible because it's a new location for DSS. We couldn't charge the whole school off against that only the space which DSS occupies but it does allow us to recoup some funding through that DSS reimbursement process for location of our DSS Department.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay so does someone want to move the resolution that our County Manager has requested so that we can prepare everything for ways and means?

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY MANAGER TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BOQUET VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AS IT RELATES TO THE THRALL DAM PROPERTY IN THE TOWN OF LEWIS. Merrihew, DeZalia

SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion? Being none, all in favor, opposed – carried. Okay Dan?

PALMER: I think that's all I had Tom unless there's any questions?

SCOZZAFAVA: You had a resolution?

PALMER: They did it.

SCOZZAFAVA: For Covid? Covid Leave Policy.

PALMER: Yeah, you did that right?

GILLILLAND: No, we just did the school.

PALMER: Okay you did the school?

SCOZZAFAVA: We did the school. We didn't do the Covid.

PALMER: Alright, I was confused on which one you were on. Okay.

SCOZZAFAVA: Welcome to my world.

PALMER: There we go. Again, we are asking to establish a Covid leave time policy. I understand the concerns. You know, again this, in terms of budget I want to say that this would have little if any impacts to the budget. It doesn't change, you know essentially when we budget for employees' time we budget for it based upon a year's salary. What you end up here is a loss of productivity obviously if you grant additional time off and somebody's not here then that's a loss of productivity. It doesn't change what we're paying. The only time that it would have an impact on what you pay out in terms of wages would be if we had to hire somebody either A to take their place or B to come in and work overtime. The intent here is to prevent people from coming into the workplace and infecting more employees. I mean, for example, if you have you know a correction officer come in and wipes out an entire shift of correction officers now you would be looking at additional overtime because somehow you're going to have to cover those shifts regardless. The idea of this is just to have an additional tool as it relates to encouraging employees to because what we're finding is especially as we get more and more positive cases we're getting instances where people are not getting orders directly from the health department

they are actually calling their physicians and their physicians are saying, you know what if you think you've got it, get tested, stay home. So you know we're having people that are running into that kind of circumstance which is creating question about well, is it my time, is it Covid time? Well obviously, if you have an order from the Public Health Department that says you are either quarantined or isolated or if you have a positive case than we cover that time. It's for those instances where we're not able to cover that time because we don't have those things and we're trying to encourage people to sort of avoid coming in and infecting the workforce. Is that a perfect answer? No, I don't believe so. You know, Stephanie raised the issue of why would we not go back to the sick leave bank? I just want to address that. The reason why we haven't gone back to the sick leave bank for that is because we have contract language that's specific to the sick leave bank and in order to change that, we would have to actually go back to negotiations with the union as it relates to change to that. Specifically, it talks about it being a catastrophic illness or injury and it talks specifically about you have to be out of your current time in order to apply to the sick leave bank so that creates a problem and turns the sick leave bank. So what we felt was it really doesn't change what you're doing in terms of whether it comes out of the sick leave bank or whether it comes out of what's established as a Covid leave bank. It just allows us, as a management team to try to keep infected employees or potentially somebody who believes they were infected that's in fact, that's the real key here. And you know, again it would be nice if everybody had perfect behavior and stayed home but unfortunately that doesn't occur. I think what you see is that you know somebody might have been at an event and then they heard a rumor that somebody at that event was positive what we're trying to do is say don't risk coming in and infecting more of our employees and creating more issues for us. So that's really what you know we kind of came up with in we're hoping that that helps. I'm not saying it's a perfect answer but I do think it's another tool that we can use.

SCOZZAFAVA: I'll open this up for, we actually should get it on the floor and then we'll have discussion. Does someone want to move this?

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A COVID LEAVE TIME POLICY. Giordano, Tyler

SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion?

SUBRA: I appreciate what Dan has put together here and the thought about it but I still disagree with the whole premise of increasing benefits before they run out. I highly suggest we go to a case by case bases throughout the year develops. This is no different than you know, any of our employees here having to use their personal time with suspected being sick or with Covid but I'm just strongly opposed to this because I just don't see it a good, overall for finance and I know it doesn't affect our costs the productivity is affected no matter where they're mandatory or they stay home if they think they've been exposed. I just don't see adding more county benefits to this is the best way to go. I'm requesting that they go by a case by case bases after regular sick time has been used it's based on my comments before. Thank you.

GILLILLAND: I will say from the accuracy of what Dan was saying of us knowing from the Health Department or from the State that you know, what's safe or who's on an order to quarantine or an order of isolation is getting slower and slower and slower and at some point, in some cases completely goes by the wayside and as you know the gear shifting towards vaccinations and then the machinations from the vaccinations as you've seen from this weekend the health department is going to be even more because they're going to have to be constantly rescheduling pods and stuff it's just going to get bad and one of the things I see personally about this program here is we are keeping that those issues under control with an appointed board that will approve these and

additionally the rules, the executive orders, the laws are going to change about it and they are constantly changing and it's very confusing out there whether somebody gets paid, doesn't get paid, how many days those kinds of things. I'm getting numerous, numerous calls from the private sector on that issue as I'm sure that many of you are as well. This basically codifies and controls this issue particularly when you have such a large workforce and everybody is different, every family situation is different and every job situation is different.

SCOZZAFAVA: Further discussion?

DEZALIA: I had just one thing. I wanted to thank Dan for clarifying the reason we're not using the sick bank and the facts that you would have to change the contract language. I just always questioned by would anybody have a concern when they knew the sick leave bank was there from the beginning that they could use if they needed to? But I would also recommend that we use the same committee that decides the sick bank because they're used to looking at those approval papers and they're used to approving additional leave time and that type of thing so rather than make another whole committee.

SCOZZAFAVA: Further discussion?

MONTY: I think Dan another aspect that you're trying to do is in preserving the workforce is not having the employee come to work sick and then the supervisor say, maybe you probably ought to be going home because you're sick it forces them to use time when, in fact, they may not have Covid they're just ill but we don't know that without them going to get tested. So, I think that's a big part of this in preserving the workforce am I wrong?

PALMER: No, that's correct. I mean, one of the issues that we have and truthfully I think if this issue went to PERB we would run into trouble so in other words, if somebody comes into work sick and says, I don't feel well but I don't have enough time, I'm coming into work anyways now, as an employer you can say go home but immediately when you say go home you are ordering the employee home and there's a valid argument from the employee's side that you're forcing me to use time that I didn't want to use so therefore, you should pay for that time while I'm gone. Whether that argument you know, would be settled by PERB one way or another I've got a feeling that we would actually lose, because if you, as an employer say I don't want you here go home then I think you are going to have to cover their time. Could be wrong. I've been doing this a long time but you know, I certainly could be wrong.

I know, but I want to clarify that, I know this sounds like a benefit for those employees to stay at home, it's not intended to be that kind of a benefit. It's intended to protect the ones that have to keep working. What I don't want is somebody coming in, maybe their behavior wasn't good, maybe they went somewhere where they shouldn't have, maybe they did something that they shouldn't have but the people that are going to suffer from that are the people who are left here working and have to come in contact with somebody who has done that. Again, does that guarantee that that's not going to happen I don't doubt it but I think this again is a way to try to mitigate that risk to the people that have worked here for almost a year on an everyday basis without any breaks of any kind.

SCOZZAFAVA: So Dan if the employee comes in and reports to their supervisor that he doesn't feel well, he's sent home. We can require a doctor's slip, correct?

PALMER: Sure if you can get one.

SCOZZAFAVA: I know in Moriah we require a doctor's slip if you're out for three days. What kind of a safety net is there so it doesn't get abused? I mean, you can have an employee come in on a Monday morning, I don't feel good well, you've got to go home so –

PALMER: And again I think the idea of the sick bank committee was to kind of address that issue in terms of somebody looking at it so in other words, the committee however it's set up is going to look at this and say, okay wait a minute this guy has done this three times you know, maybe this is not legitimate you know somewhere there is a subjective view of this going on but I know without it, I don't know what you do.

SCOZZAFAVA: Right, I know we can't require a test. I've been down that road here with employees but we can require them to bring in the doctor's slip, ours is after three days. The other issue that I just ran into in Moriah is I had an employee that was out in isolation, had Covid, his isolation time ended, he came to work and then went home because he didn't feel well. Then I started getting calls from all the other employees wanting to know why did we let him come back? I said, well, you know his isolation ran out so he absolutely had the right to come back so that's another issue that I have been handed a couple different times now and you know, our policy here is that once that isolation or quarantine order runs out at that point you are using your own time. You know whether we are going to get called out on that or not I don't know but there's a lot of unanswered questions that hang out there. It's difficult to try to come up with something that protects the rest of the workforce as you're trying to do here. Any further discussion on any of this?

DELORIA: I have just a brief comment, I negotiated on the other side of the table for the highway employees' association in Newcomb for 24 years and I can assure that requiring an employee to stay home from an employer's standpoint would not make it past PERB okay and you would be doing a check after the fact. I would tend to agree that Dan is trying to put in some checks and balances so that we can go to these employees and say, hey look, you know I don't want to have to use my time but I'm not feeling good. You know I think you could request perhaps the two-day test and then if it comes back negative you know come on back to work otherwise it's regular sick leave but I think we need to have something in place that's going to preempt the possibility of continued spread until we get this vaccination out to people. And I think that if the policy is structured in such a way that you can catch the ones that are looking for the trap door, then I think you should continue with this. That's just my opinion from the side of the fence over here.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay Dan, anything you want to add before we vote?

PALMER: No, again it's just an attempt to protect the workforce.

DEZALIA: Can I add something?

SCOZZAFAVA: Absolutely.

DEZALIA: Tom you brought up a good point and I think Robin did just now too and being I know somebody who has had it and is still a month later is still having some symptoms they are not going to infect the workforce, they are back to work but they are still having days that you probably could want to stay home so I think in this I think we should mention like after isolation and your quarantine is done they would be using their regular sick time if they didn't feel well because they are no longer, they can't re infect the workforce when they come back to work because it's supposedly, there's this 90 day safe window after they've had it. They would be using their regular

sick time for the next month or two that they are not going to feel good some of them. Some people have effects for that long. So I guess we should have put in place that after the isolation and quarantine then they would be using their sick time. Is that correct? Is that how we were thinking?

PALMER: Yeah, I mean again it would be. The idea is to get somebody tested and cleared and if they're okay but then again if they don't feel well to be honest what you described to me really fits into sick leave bank. In other words, if my physician is going to say that I have long term effects from Covid you know, in my way of thinking that falls back into the sick leave bank as a long term catastrophic illness from what is a very serious disease. There are people who are having very serious long term effects of this.

DEZALIA: Right, okay.

PALMER: And that is what fits into the sick leave bank.

DEZALIA: Okay thank you.

SUBRA: I have a question. In your policy Dan you wrote a paragraph, for receiving a quarantine order from the Health Department will be an automatic qualifier to receive an additional benefit time and will not be capped. So you're saying if people are quarantined multiple times this benefit is endless?

PALMER: Well it would go up to the 10 days of paid sick leave. In other words, if you get quarantine and it comes back a second time, you get quarantined a second time then we would cover up to 10 days again. That's what we mean by not capped. In other words, it's not like a one-time event that you know, I run into a Covid positive case that's it next time I run into it I'm on my own. What we're saying is you run into a positive case, you get quarantined, you can apply to the bank. If you do it a second time, then we would consider it as well but I don't know the likelihood of that is that you would come in contact. I just came into contact with a positive last week is there any guarantee that I wouldn't come into a contact with a positive next week? I don't know that. So I think that's what we're talking about when we are talking about the cap.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay is there any further discussion?

DEPO: Is there something that's covered under the Federal Corona Act that they only get two thirds of their pay that they are off?

SCOZZAFAVA: I can't answer that. I don't know? Dan, do you have an answer?

PALMER: I think what you're referring to is the paid Family Medical Leave Act, that's up to two thirds pay but that's not required of public entities to participate under that and we don't because we again, provide leave benefits in different ways. That was specifically designed for the private sector employees who may run into this that didn't have any leave time, didn't have any benefit time provided to them. What the Covid originally under the Federal Leave time program was if an individual is quarantine or tested positive then the employer is required to cover their time for public sector employees but that two-thirds is a different package and we do not do that.

DEPO: I went through that anybody that was prior to April 1st they had to use their personal time but after that they were entitled to use their entire pay but only at two-thirds.

PALMER: That's for actual Family Covid Leave policy but again as public sector employees we didn't have to participate in that as long as the employees were considered essential.

SCOZZAFAVA: I've got some friends that work for National Grid and I read their policy after Dan had submitted his and Dan correct me if I'm wrong, if an employee is ordered quarantine or isolated, that's not the issue, we have to pay them.

PALMER: Right.

SCOZZAFAVA: If you have that order from Public Health then they get paid Covid time.

PALMER: That's correct.

SCOZZAFAVA: The issue is the employee that comes in and doesn't feel well.

PALMER: Or calls in and says I think I was, I think I came in contact with a positive well, you get tested, come back in three days and we'll cover you.

SCOZZAFAVA: And that's what private, from what I've seen and I've got a lot of friends that work in the private sector that they are pretty much doing that same thing. The only issue that I'm finding, is that an employer cannot force someone to get tested but you can tell someone that you're going to need to bring a doctor's slip in you know, if they refuse to go and have the test done.

PALMER: Right, I believe that's correct.

SCOZZAFAVA: So I don't think that we're doing anything above and beyond maybe in some cases private employers but I don't think we're doing anything above and beyond what the private sector is doing and I absolutely know because I've been involved in the public sector for over 40 years is that you know are we or our employees or even ourselves anymore direct contact with the general population? Absolutely we are it's because of the nature of the business that we're in. So, our chances of being exposed are far greater than a lot of our people that are in the private sector so I don't think that we're doing anything above and beyond to grant any kind of a special privilege to a public employee. That's my opinion. So with that, we have a motion and a second. All in favor, opposed – Jeff Subra is opposed. Carried. Okay, Dan, anything else?

PALMER: No, that's all I had. Thank you.

SCOZZAFAVA: Is there anything else to come before this committee?

GILLILLAND: Yeah, Tom you have Joe Keegan.

PALMER: You have Joe Keegan from North Country Community College.

SCOZZAFAVA: Oh, I'm sorry Joe. How can I miss you Joe?

KEEGAN: Easy enough Tom. Nice to see you all. Happy New Year, hope you're all well.

SCOZZAFAVA: Happy New Year. Any questions for Joe? Joe, anything to report?

KEEGAN: Sure Tom let me just share a couple of things with you as always, thank you for your ongoing support of the college and our mission. I wanted to let you know we've reached out to both Essex and Franklin County early in the month about seeing if there was ways we can support the vaccination efforts that both of the counties were undertaking and at this point Essex County is exploring opening a site on our Saranac Lake Campus to be able to serve north-west Essex County and Southern Franklin County and Franklin County similarly is looking at our Malone campus. We are delighted and hope that will come to pass. We have also and Jeff, this maybe music to your ears we're looking to be able to offer to have our PN students those in the practical nursing program be able to assist in those efforts so that there would be some of that applied learning on the clinical side. The devil is always in the details but we're very hopeful. Linda has been a great partner as has been her counterpart in Franklin so that's good.

SCOZZAFAVA: Joe, what about the Ticonderoga site for a clinic?

KEEGAN: So we offered that, we put that out there at that time I thought that they're, my recollection was that they had identified the site Tom but I will run that back by them again. Does that answer your question Tom?

SCOZZAFAVA: Yes, go ahead.

KEEGAN: So, just to bring you up to speed I think you all know that we've pushed out the start of the semester so classes resume for the spring on Monday, February 1st that was to accommodate a change in our schedule where we are not going to have a spring break that was really an effort to any contribution we can make to not having the virus spread. So we're going to start February 1st with classes, we'll run right up through May 13 and then the graduation will be on the 15th. Jeff, we're also looking for additional PN opportunities for students to come on campus so they can get that clinical hands on experience and that's a work in progress.

We're doing surveillance testing for all of our students. We were doing 50% of the student body every week and we're now exploring, looking up to doing 100% every week. It's a pooled surveillance test. It's pretty cost affordable, cost effective. It's run through SUNY upstate and thus far we've been very pleased with the efforts there.

I think you all know that one of our long-term goals has been to try and help people in our communities particularly those that have been adult students that don't have an education, that haven't seen higher education as a pathway for them that's about 60% of adults in Essex and Franklin counties and so part of that effort was our opportunity scholarship. North Country Community College Foundation put up \$100,000 this past year and they have done that again for this upcoming year. I wanted to share with you just a couple of testimonials that came out of that, because I think it tells you what our communities are experiencing not that you don't know that already but it was really music to our ears. So one student wrote when we offered them additional funding through the scholarship, said, "continuing my education has been something I've been putting off for many years because of the difficulty of paying for college. It's not easy to go back after so many years with the help of this scholarship I'll be able to go further along in my dreams of becoming an elementary school teacher." A second wrote, "wow, I'm beyond words at this email, the scholarship money is greatly appreciated as an adult student and a single mother of two. It's been a struggle to try and work and provide for my girls." And then finally a student wrote, "I'm going to be completely honest and I started to cry when I saw this. It means so much to me. I started college for massage therapy due to losing my job at the beginning of the pandemic was completely unsure how I was going to do it or how I was going to afford it. It has allowed me the time I need to do my assignment and better prepare for exams and quizzes." So that was

really gratifying for us and you know these are many are, these are dollars particularly focused on adults in Essex and Franklin County so we're really grateful for our foundation as well. Just a couple of other things Tom, like you we're waiting to hear what's going on with the budget. The Governor our understanding is going to be releasing details of his for this upcoming year and we're waiting to hear what happens in regards to as the Biden Administration comes on whether they'll be additional dollars for Federal in for State and localities that we're hopeful for that. And then finally the college is in receipt of some Supplemental Cares Act funding which will help us with our supportive students and also to absorb some of the costs due to the loss related to Covid. That's it Tom. Thank you.

SCOZZAFAVA: Excellent report. Any questions in regards to the college? Alright, if not I'm going to ask our Chairman Shaun, if you could give us a brief update on Covid, the vaccines, clinics so on and so forth. If you don't mind?

GILLILLAND: Sure, absolutely. I think the good news I don't have the actual numbers from Linda this morning but it looks like we are heading down on our numbers. The post-holiday surge seems to be over which is good news. I passed out to you guys over the weekend a couple of emails concerning the allocations of the vaccines and you can see that the Public Health Departments are essentially getting shorted. The State strategy as you know is to have the drugstores, Kinney's and Walgreens, etc. I guess the Schroon Lake Pharmacy as well administer to the 65 and above age groups and the county health departments initially try to finish up the 1A group and go into 1B essential workers, etc. I know that Linda was planning on going to the Moriah Central School and bringing in teachers. You also saw that we were supposed to get, you know we ordered 300 for next week and again, got the email back saying they are only going to give us 100 but about the same time the State Plattsburgh facility went online and started and I do understand that there's a tremendous number of people that are benefitting from the Plattsburgh facility and that's good. The downside is the news is reporting this morning that they're getting a lot there from Saratoga County, Rensselaer County, Albany County those kind of things which is displacing our people and that not a good thing. Otherwise, I don't have a whole lot. I've got a control room today at 2:00. I've got the vaccine HUB meeting tomorrow at 7:30. We'll get some, probably more fidelity on going forward with the plan for further allocations. You may have read in the paper today that the Governor is thinking about going out and buying directly from Pfizer, don't think that is going to help us much because we don't have the super cool facilities up here we are a Moderna area. So if I get more information I will pass it out. So are there any question for me, anything you want me to bring forward?

SCOZZAFAVA: Shaun I did speak with Jim Boland this morning which is good news for the county because he's also planning to start doing vaccines at the Moriah Pharmacy located in Port Henry and also at your pharmacy in Willsboro.

GILLILLAND: That is good. Thanks for that Tom. I appreciate that.

SCOZZAFAVA: Yes it is and that will help and his focus as you pointed out earlier is on the 65 years and older group. One of the biggest problems that I've seen in my community, I have a lot of age population and thankfully my staff has been able to help them is just getting through the system, the maze of the system and understanding. A lot of them don't have computers or they don't have the computer savvy including myself to get through that system and get everything all lined up so again, for anybody out there, if you have children, adult children have your family you know families should be stepping up to the plate in trying to help their parents or any age people you know, get through this system.

GILLILLAND: I would also encourage to call the Office for the Aging, Krissy Leerkes is doing yeoman's work and I'm getting people up to be pushed through the Plattsburgh facility.

SCOZZAFAVA: And the other concern that I have, you did address it is that I know that they're going to have the clinic at Moriah Central School for faculty and hopefully the 100 doses cover, I'm hoping there's non left over but I do think Linda does try to make arrangements with other groups if there are any left over. One of the concerns that I have is that I know a number of the faculty at Moriah and Correction Officers have been going to their providers to get the vaccine so you know, how do you, it's a tough spot to be in and I feel horrible that the fact that our seniors are not getting this vaccine. The 75 years of age and older who you know are the most vulnerable and that's who this Covid is impacting with fatal consequences. So trying to do everything we can do to get that group taken care of as soon as possible.

MONTY: Tom at our meeting the other day Linda was talking about the same thing you're saying that not having any vaccines left over and they are making contingent plans to do that. They've sent notices out to the fire departments, to the EMS squads, if there's anybody that's been missed, send them a list of people that you want or need to be vaccinated and if they have five, seven vaccines left in a bottle they will contact those people and get them in so there are contingency plans that they are making it's just that it's going to take time unfortunately.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay, anyone have anything else? Shaun, thank you for the report. If there is nothing else to come before the committee. We stand adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Finance Committee it was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors