

Recruiting and Retention Task Force
Tuesday, February 22, 2022 - 11:00 AM

Joe Pete Wilson - Chairman

Chairman Wilson called this task force to order at 11:00 am with the following in attendance: Stephanie DeZalia, Ken Hughes, Steve McNally, Jim Monty, Joe Pete Wilson, Meg Wood, Mike Mascarenas, Terri Morse, Dan Palmer and Wendy Sayward. Tom Scozzafava, Linda Beers, Jenn Mascarenas and Chelsea Merrihew was absent

Also present: None

News Media present: None

WILSON: While we're waiting, were you at the land bank or were you at the land bank meeting about housing land banks?

HUGHES: With ADK Action? I was not, he was.

WILSON: Do you want to give a quick update, because I don't think most people were there, because housing is a topic here that we're addressing and that land bank one, it would be interesting to hear what you learned there.

MONTY: Well, what I gathered from it and I shared this with the people on the Committee, I shared it actually with the Board. We're looking at Essex County, a formation of a possible land bank. ADK Action has dedicated a specific amount of time, employee time toward this, but they're looking at a more regional approach, forming a land bank with Clinton, Franklin and Essex Counties. Ken and I have had this conversation a couple of times and people on our Committee, we might not necessarily be in favor of the regional approach. We think there's as much money available for us, potentially by ourselves. Right now the land banks are, I think there's 26 in New York State, right now, some of them are standalone land banks, some are multi-county land banks.

HUGHES: Most are standalone; most are single county.

MONTY: Single county land banks, there are nine slots open through the Department of State, land banks, right now. So, for us to get one it would be a land bank, I don't believe it's going to be a difficult process, we're been working on a mission statement and what we want to do. The thought process is again, focusing on low to moderate income housing, but how do we get to that step. That's the big thing. Now, with the other hiccup with our tax sales, so that's going to cause us some issues. We do, we have looked at all the properties that presently are owned by Essex County. There's nothing really that stands out for us to possibly use to try to generate a home of some type. A thought process is that maybe this is a situation where we go in and try to look at some zombie properties, some of these properties and try and clean them up, so that we may be able to make them more attractive to be sold. We could do that as a standalone without forming a land bank, but I think our thought process that we have is a land bank would eventually be something that would be better down the road for us. I think that's pretty much the summation of

where we are. We put together a mission statement, I know there's also been some thought of a multi-use type of facility where we're combining mental health services, addiction services, something under one roof with potential for people to stay there where they can receive help, basically 24/7 and, but there's a lot of factors that go into that, you know, availability of public transportation, availability of medical services, and stuff.

HUGHES: Food

MONTY: Food and stuff, stuff of this nature. So, we're really looking at the full package. Our hope is by June to have something to bring to the Board, as far as, what we think we should be. Does that pretty much sum it up?

HUGHES: Yeah and ADK Action's doing this series of three roundtables, the first one I watched, I didn't participate in, but this one is March 16th and then they'll have another at a future date. So, they'll be able to service Essex County well in terms of a NGO who can provide some support. They're putting in a lot of energy into this. So, in terms of recruitment in retention, I think you're right, you know, this is my first time sitting at this committee, but be able to house individuals that want to work for the County is a big deal and so I am looking forward to figuring how those two very important conversations intersect.

MONTY: And good affordable housing.

HUGHES: Yeah, amen.

MASCARENAS: And I think as an unintended benefit, housing, just anybody who wants to work in Essex County, not just for us as an employer, but you know Mountain Lake Services is struggling. Everybody, I steal from those agencies, they steal from me, this is just kind of what's happening, it's going in circles, so just helping the overall employment industry of the County is a big part of getting some level of affordable housing.

WILSON: Let me jump in for a second, so we had a guest scheduled, but it looks like, I don't mean...

MASCARENAS: I had it for March 7th.

WILSON: Oh, okay. we'll straighten that out.

MASCARENAS: He is coming on March 7th.

WILSON: Oh, perfect, okay.

MASCARENAS: That was on the email that you sent me, March 7th. So, I scheduled him for the 7th.

WILSON: So, then that was my fault. I got confused.

MASCARENAS: I can certainly explain it, if you want to get the ball rolling. Jim sits on ACAP, it's not a lot of...

WILSON: Well, we got a couple of new members here, too. So, have you seen the report, the first iteration, that this committee did? So, the priorities that were identified were; daycare, professional marketing strategies and operations, affordable housing, working with North Country Community College, succession planning and then miscellaneous items for future discussion and the housing and daycare are issues that there's already a lot going on and Mike and Dan have been working on the daycare piece and there's some State impetus behind this, too and some grants coming. So, I messed up the dates for today for when our guest was coming.

MASCARENAS: That's okay.

WILSON: So, maybe we'll get a brief update, but then the housing piece is so key and there's a lot of different efforts going on. ACAP is big in the land bank, North Elba has done a lot on their own. I know individual towns, you know Keene is doing stuff. So, I think that we're going to end up is not one universal strategy, it's going to have to be what fits in the different sectors of the County. You know property values are different in Schroon Lake than maybe in another town and so the land bank might work well in some areas, but not a town with higher property values, it will be harder to get it off the ground or more expensive. But, then in that conversation at the last meeting of 2021 where we had Larry Reagan.

PALMER: Yeah, Larry Reagan

WILSON: Who's doing the housing development on West Valley Road in Lake Placid and we had investigated with him, is there a possibility in other parts of Essex County that type of big project, that's grant funded, private money funded, you know to do a larger scale and the one town that fit the basic criteria was really Ticonderoga, so if we want to peruse that we should pull Mark Wright in and explore with Larry about some of the criteria, also address, this is what made me think of it, what you were saying, it has to be close to health care, walkable to shopping, walkable to public transportation, can you guys remember what else?

MASCARENAS: Basically access to amenities.

WILSON: So, you could live without a car and that Ticonderoga was the town that most closely fit his requirements. So, if we want to peruse that, we should maybe get Larry in, talk to Mark, too, bring Mark in to see if that's a possibility for his town.

MASCARENAS: And typically the one thing that makes those types of public/private partnerships work in terms of housing is property. So, with us getting in the season where we're doing foreclosures/tax sales, the land bank is similar depending on what you would be depending on. So, the government had a piece of property or something that makes it more affordable for the builder, which keeps the costs down. Those are the types of things; Ticonderoga was looking to see if they owned any property that might fit the bill in that area. We certainly don't at this time, we only have a handful left and we looked at those as part of the land bank discussion. So, that's a piece of that process that will come.

WILSON: In Lake Placid, in North Elba they had a private donor.

MASCARENAS: Exactly

WILSON: So, there wasn't the investment in buying the land that would help, as Mike as saying, help make it a project that could go ahead is that they got a gift of land. So, yeah I think that if this group wants to peruse more of the housing we're going to have to support the land bank idea, continue with private developer like Larry Reagan and then see what's maybe coming up already in some of the towns that the County can contribute to in some way, either through an existing agency or a broader grant writing to support what's going on in individual towns. So, that's kind of where we are with housing. Any thoughts people have, because maybe we'll do the same with the childcare as a little update on where we are, because I know the two of you have done a bunch on that. But, does anyone have any other thoughts on housing?

MONTY: I think the donation aspect, not only just in Ti can work, but it can work in any community, because there are people in everyone's community that maybe willing to support something like this for a tax write-off.

HUGHES: Donations were an aspect.

MONTY: Exactly, was a huge aspect of it, that once we facilitate an idea and we get it out there, people may decide, hey, this is a great idea, maybe I have 3 acres of land that sits in the middle of someplace and I don't need it, I want to support this, I want to support Essex County, I want to support putting people in homes, here, here's a piece of property that I'll donate to you and stuff. So, I think once we get concrete on what we want to do, I think then we'll start seeing some, right now we're talking baby steps.

MASCARENAS: In the area of the land use that we struggle with is the APA requirements that will continue to be problematic, likely in perpetuity, without being able to get hamlet expansion, because our housing stock is pretty much at its maximum level, right now in every community, because it was determined, years ago, when the blue line was drawn, right? So, your hamlet's your hamlet and being that's usually where affordable housing can occupy, it's not in those areas where you're subdividing or have multiple acreage or you know, that kind of thing. So, you know there is potential to approach APA, absolutely and ask them for hamlet expansions and those types of things.

WILSON: And one of the things and Friday really highlights is, that often the properties that are the most affordable for us to start on are in the path of climate change. I mean, you look at what happened in the Town of Jay on Friday and I know in Keene as we've tried to identify properties, that most affordable are the most prone to flooding and I think we've got take that in mind as we look at these projects, but it also opens doors. In Keene we've been exploring working with the nature conservancy to try and get around that. How do we, you know, do some flood plain protection projects, but then work with a private donor to free property that's out of the flood plain. So, I think we've got to be aware of not setting up future problems by, oh look, there's all this property down by the river, but that's in Keene. When I looked, our property that's most affordable is the stuff with water marks up the side of it and how do we move our development away from

those areas so that people can have a safe, you know, house that they're not going to be facing a disaster expense, you know during their ownership.

WOOD: Are you taking into account a need for utilities, like sewer and water?

MASCARENAS: Absolutely

WILSON: And again that...

MASCARENAS: That's a big part.

WOOD: Because that's a huge issue for a town like Schroon.

WILSON: For Ticonderoga that was one of the things that made it attractive.

MASCARENAS: I was part of the Planning Office before I moved to Commissioner and in that area that Joe Pete is speaking to in Jay, was where the majority of the buyouts happened following Hurricane Irene. I did all the work there and unfortunately what happens after those buyouts is those spaces become green spaces in perpetuity. You can't put permanent structures on them moving forward and any of that, but these were all people that were contributing to water/sewer infrastructure; right? So, when you buyout between 40-70 homes in that district, what happens? Everybody's debit service goes up, because now there's less payers on the system. The ability to expand the hamlet doesn't exist; right? So, the ones that are left behind are charged with an increased burden in those communities.

MORSE: In Ticonderoga, Lowes, that beautiful warehouse type building, is that something that could be converted into apartment complex?

MASCARENAS: That's a good question.

MCNALLY: It's going to take years before they do anything with that building. What that building was built for Lowes for long term lease and we approach them for using the building for a campus for North Country and the owners of that building have Lowes in this crazy amount of money lease and they're not going to terminate that lease.

MORSE: I see.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, they're still getting paid.

WILSON: They wanted like \$7 million to buy the building and the lease was like \$100,000.00 a month. It was insane.

MCNALLY: So, that building is going to sit there until the lease ends. I think it's been 7-8 years, so they probably got 10 more years left on it.

MORSE: Just curious, thank you.

HUGHES: So, I'm trying to understand, I want to make sure I understand, recruitment and retention, the purpose of this committee to recruit people to come work for the County and retain them once they do come here. So, if we're talking about housing, we're talking about housing for potential County employees. Is that a fair statement? So, would it be appropriate to find a way to cherry pick, maybe not the word, put in front of the line when it comes to a land bank or when it comes to localized housing? Because, if we open the land bank or local town housing just to anybody HAPEC for example or anybody that that land bank establishes as meets the criteria, well one of the criteria should be I want to work for the County or hey, I do work for the County and that pump them up ever further than someone else who didn't work for the County. I just want to make sure that I'm understanding correctly that we're talking about housing, we're talking about housing for County employees and if we're talking about a land bank that's not necessarily for County employees, but there should be a caveat that a potential County employee would be able to jump to the front of the line or even somebody else who needed it, because they're going to work for the County.

WILSON: And we haven't talked about that specifically.

MASCARENAS: No

WILSON: But, I suspect and you can correct me if I'm wrong, that depending on the funding sources, like CDBG funding requirements for who the house can go to are pretty strict.

MASCARENAS: Right

WILSON: You know there's going to...

MASCARENAS: HUD, they're HUD qualifications, that's what those are.

WILSON: So, we may be hoping that by improving housing stock we're indirectly helping, but we may find if we do a County project it could be, you know if we identify a piece of property or something big, like the Lowes lot, we may find that could do a project like that, but it's going to be really dictated by the funding stream.

HUGHES: So, we may not have a lot of authority in this Committee to go back to the Board of Supervisors to guarantee housing for future or current employees.

WILSON: Exactly, but with childcare we're on a different track with that, I think. If we want to switch to do an update on childcare?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, if everybody's good. What's going to happen on March 7th, is when Alan Jones is coming to our meeting. We've been in negotiation with Alan since he learned of our daycare issue. Some of you may have sat in on a meeting that they did come to and they basically kind of did their plug. What they're requesting out of ARPA funding is \$100,000.00 a year over a 3-year period to try and increase daycare in our County. They're looking to get 10 a year for a total for 30 was their request. So, how are they going to do that? They're going to do that by giving mini-grants to different providers in be able to maintain, so setup costs for people to do remediation to their homes that would allow them to then house young people. They're going to

target our more populated areas. The areas that seem to be in the biggest need in terms of that. What Dan and I are suggesting to the Board is that we don't do a 3-year, that we do a 1-year and reevaluate after the first year to make sure they're hitting their benchmarks in terms of if it's working. There's two reasons for that; number one, I think it's prudent to do such. I think, you know, we can get that paid for by the \$7 million that we received from the Federal Government, so we would basically contract with ACAP to do that work for us. So, we want to make sure that works. Number Two, the State's recognizing the shortfalls, currently in quality daycare, not only in our region, but New York State and Governor Hochul has addressed that in her most recent budget by offering grant dollars for "grant deserts" is what she's calling it.

WILSON: Childcare deserts.

MASCARENAS: Is what she's referring to. So, I think I want to see where that goes and what the criteria is. Why would we spend our money on something that you can get somewhere else, is kind of our thought process on that. So, I think if we did a trial run on a year basis, see how this goes. This is a program that they are running in a couple of other counties and it seems to be successful in terms of establishing better daycares around. Currently we don't have the capacity to do it here, at the County. We still don't have the capacity, we don't have the space, the school is still in limbo, they're waiting on Department of Education on wording on their funding and whether that's going to be approved or not, with that being said, we simply don't have any space to do daycare here and our only ability, I feel, is to extend that out into the general public and try and let the private sector take care of the daycare problems, not only of our County, but of every employer in our County that's having that issue.

WILSON: Yeah and so this relates to your question about housing and can we make it for specific County employees, in a lot of what we're talking about in this are big strategies, it's for improving the conditions for employment all over the County and with the focus on the County workforce. That's really the goal of it, but knowing that with some of these things really we're trying to improve the general conditions and you know get as much benefit for the County as possible, but we can't build houses with Federal money just for County employees or if we started our own daycare here, it's a lot of investment and compliance and cost, so why not boost the general, you know the conditions across the County.

HUGHES: And the data collection, I did read that report a couple of months ago. In the data collection, did the County employees indicate that they did prefer to have daycare in their own community where they stomped and dropped or did they indicate that they would love to have it here at the County?

MASCARENAS: I don't believe they said anything.

SAYWARD: They didn't say anything. We asked if employer based childcare would make a difference to come to work here or not. You know, like 80% said yes, but then one of the other questions was the one where it would need to be based in their hometown was there was a lot of need for afterschool daycare, because most of the daycare providers, now that they have, can't take any more kids, so they can't have afterschool children. They save their spaces for full-time children, obviously.

HUGHES: Of course.

SAYWARD: So, that was the issue for not having daycare in your town, was mostly that.

WILSON: Thank you for that detail, because really having it closer to your home was key for the afterschool care.

SAYWARD: Afterschool and then full-time was here, they were okay with that.

WILSON: Or for early drop off.

MONTY: ACAP is looking for more funding for the afterschool program. Every year, every year we request, every year, every year, every year and it's so critical and the only thing that has happened is they cut us. They have taken programs from us, which the need is there and would help greatly and I think, going back to the daycare situation, I am just going to speak on what happened this year with our summer program where we opened it up to other communities and we stayed open until 5:30, basically and went from an average to 40 kids, granted it was two programs to 100 kids and parents were able to drop, we had employees here, we had people coming down from Chazy, West Chazy who worked in the area who dropped their kids here, because they knew they would keep them here, they were safe, we feed them twice a day and the program was such a success. So, I think if we could get a place here for, all employee based and we may not have enough kids to fill then you open it up to the people in the community and I think, as much as we don't want to take away from the people who are having their home based daycare centers, because we see that there's such a need for them. I think we're going to have a successful program if we can build that County base.

SAYWARD: I think you'll be as successful.

HUGHES: There's a whole wing of the school ready for that.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, they brought us on a walkthrough.

WILSON: Do you feel like the partnership with ACAP is a good first start to help community based and then see what happens with the school?

MONTY: ACAP would also, I don't mean to interrupt you, but ACAP would be happy to help you with a County based program.

DEZALIA: Would the ACAP program that you're talking about be income based in way? Could anybody could take their kid to this or?

MASCARENAS: Well, that's the issue.

DEZALIA: Because some of our County Employees won't qualify to bring their kids there.

PALMER: Yeah

MASCARENAS: That's going to bring your issue, yes. Is what we're really going to be contracting with ACAP to do is to increase capacity. We still have, we still lose our control over determining rates and those types of things.

WILSON: And eligibility.

MASCARENAS: That's the issue. Now, in DSS we have daycare subsidizes for those that qualify.

DEZALIA: What I mean is, our County employees will make too much.

MASCARENAS: For that subsidy?

MONTY: For the subsidize, but they can pay themselves.

PALMER: I think that's the point to try to make more of it available.

WILSON: Again, to the general conditions, because we, you know, we can't, the same with the housing, we can't prioritize a County employee, if we're accepting these funds. Yeah, so again, we're trying to make a more robust system across the County.

DEZALIA: Yeah, I get that, but if we're talking records and retention for here, we're still not offering more daycare for our people.

MASCARENAS: We're hoping that they'll get it by the increase capacity.

DEZALIA: Because others will come here and it will open it up elsewhere?

MASCARENAS: That's the thought.

WILSON: Well and that's the crux of this Committee, how much can we do to directly affect our workforce here to recruit and retain, but again, every town is struggling with these same issues, you know, the housing, childcare, workforce. So, we're using County workforce as the focus, but really we're doing countywide, you know, addressing this countywide. And I know like Willsboro couldn't run their summer program last year, because they got no staff. I'm worried about the same.

HUGHES: They figured something out.

MONTY: They ran a kind of program.

SAYWARD: A kind of program.

WILSON: But, not the traditional?

HUGHES: It was something.

WILSON: It didn't step in for daycare.

SAYWARD: And it wasn't every day, it wasn't a full day.

MONTY: And for us to operate our program we had to hire kids from Willsboro, Essex, Moriah to find enough people to run, we did and stuff. We could have probably hired 4 more and taken on another 40 kids and they we're there, because we had a waiting list, 25 child waiting list for our program.

MASCARENAS: I can tell you that we have parents here that work here right now that have school aged children that are 5, 6, 7 years' old that are paying for daycare slots all year long just so they have one in the summer. So, that provider's getting paid for those 10 months without having to have that child step in their home.

PALMER: \$500.00 a month.

MASCARENAS: Just so they don't lose their slot for summer. That's how much need there is for daycare in our region.

WILSON: So, we're going to get into daycare more in-depth, this is a catchup meeting. Other issues that were identified in the original report that was adopted this fall were, working with, this is where it's more directly County; working with Personnel to do more marketing, sort of working with ROOST, they've been a good partner in this, how we package what we're offering. You know, ideas we can up with there to bolster that and the next meeting we can have Jen give us a little fill-in, because she's been doing a lot, already on that. But, that's a key thing. How are we reaching out in a way that markets not just the job, but the whole region, what we have to offer. So, if we do bolster housing, bolster childcare that feeds into that second issue, you know here's a map of where we're, you know where we've got childcare and here's a map or resources for finding housing. You know, so I think that's going to come together more as we work on these bigger issues.

North Country Community College has been working with, have they been talking with you about and some Department Heads about having their programs more available and having their enrollment specialist visit departments in the same way they would visit a high school, have a regular schedule, so that they can start tying in employees already here with furthering their education; which ties in with the succession planning, as well. How do we bring, get people more of a path upwards here and get them the resources to go up that path? So, these other pieces are more directly what can we do for our workforce and I talked to Joe Keegan last week and some of this, like changing scholarship requirements or aid eligibility runs through the State. They have very limited control over those things, but a lot of our employees are eligible for grant money through the State already, so having those, the recruitment, you know, the North Country Community enrollment people coming can help employees understand what they're already eligible for. So, you know the college is trying to help with that training and making it a place where you see a ladder up and Mike's done a lot with the succession planning to identify where those pathways are and where the needs are and just pulling it together in a strategy to think about. I'd never seen that before. So, having just a concept of a succession plan I think is something that we need, as Supervisors on different committees, we need to start enforcing with all the departments that where on that succession is, you know, you don't want to have gaps in your middle management and you don't want to have holes, you know nobody coming to step in to take on more responsibility.

MONTY: In the same vein of what you're speaking of. I think it's also important that Department Heads chime in to us, as to what helps them recruit. What's going to retain employees? Obviously, salary's going to be Number One, I believe for most departments and stuff. Our salary is kind of locked in and stuff within things that we can do. But what's going to recruit people to want to stay in Mental Health? What's going to recruit and want people to stay with Emergency Services? What's going to recruit and help people stay with Social Services? I mean and each one, we can make a blanket policy for County employees, but every department's different. Every department that we serve is different. That we really need to look at and I know we had, in one of the initial meetings we had someone suggest spa days, someone suggested things, those aren't to me aren't legitimate things that are going to, maybe they'll like it, but is it really going to appeal to them, because I get three spa days a year? You know, let's look at something that's going to have some foundation and I think the Department Heads need to kind of provide that to us. What's going to work to bring them to you? What's going to work to keep them with you? And go back and incentivize positions, you know here's a potential for you to continue your education and take the next step up. Things like this, I think they really need to be included in what we want to do.

MASCARENAS: You're right, Jim. Some of it comes back to the Department Head, what I've done in the last year is working our butts off to get help to places. Dan Palmer will tell you, Department Heads have never had to worry about recruitment and retention. They worry about their program and their service.

MONTY: Yup, understand that.

MASCARENAS: That's typically what a Department Head is concerned about in terms of operations and it's a lot of work. So, I've been to colleges, I go to North Country, I do, you know some individuals will ask me to come in, professors, and do different classes for their people, explain what we do in Human Services and those types of things. Lots of job fairs that we're going to and it's helped, it's increased our applicant pool, for sure. But, I think it getting the Department Heads involved and trying to take ownership of their own recruitment and retention is the key. So, what a better person to go tell you what the job's like then the highway worker that does it. Jim Dougan and I were talking about it, we need to go down to Champlain Valley Educational Services and meet with those kids. Those are your next group of workers and tell them what we have to offer, those types of things and what it actually means. A lot of those kids graduate and go right into private contracting, because that's what they know; right? They don't know that we even have this opportunity. Talk to guidance counselors, come visit us, do tours, come shadow us for a day, see what caseworkers, see what mental health professionals do, those types of things to garner interest. A lot of young people don't even know what we do unless they need us; right?

DEZALIA: On the job postings, can we put like the value of the benefit package? The job posting says you get \$17.10/hour, but your benefit is valued at this. I think a lot of people don't understand what else they get for a job here that they might not get elsewhere that pays them \$17.00/hour.

WILSON: Well and I think that's part of the marketing with these jobs, because we also should be marketing the area, you know? You know, if you want to relocate here, because you brought up the census, you know if you look at the census and you look at the age stratification, there's, we're losing the entry level workers, the early career age people and we're all, you know, we're getting

an older demographic, people that are leaving the workforce. So, you know, some of our recruiting is going to have to look outwards and what makes it attractive to move here, you can buy a home in Lewis that's affordable, be close to work, have access to childcare, a path up. We're going to have to start thinking about things like that and doing more of the active recruitment. Like hiring people now has become a job, you know this past summer season I put more work into recruiting than I ever had to before by a million miles, just to get people and we've got to start thinking like that and really coordinating what's on there. What's going out to perspective employees. You know if you live in Lewis, you're close to work, there's daycare in the community, you've got walking trails at Thrall Dam, you can mountain bike in Etown, you know, we've got to start packaging the whole.

MONTY: The problem is in Lewis, the last 5 homes that sold have be to out of towners, second homes.

MCNALLY: For twice as much money as they were five years ago.

SAYWARD: Everywhere, everywhere, it's everywhere.

WILSON: And that's why we got to really follow up on the land bank ideas, support what towns are doing or what non-profits are doing in the County, because it's brutal. Yeah, we're not going to get people to relocate here for a \$60,000.00 project supervisor in DPW, that's a decent job, but if a house is \$500,000.00.

MONTY: I think to Mike's point on the job fairs, I know, Ken when you were next door and Rob was next door they had one every year and it was huge and I was working for the Governor's office then and I'd attend, I bet you I attended in the North Country, I probably attended least job fairs that were huge and they don't seem to do it, granted Covid has kind of cause a lot of that.

HUGHES: When I was over there, my guidance counselor did it the first year and got burned out and so I had no one to do it the second year, and I said I'm doing it, because I knew the value of it and we filled the gym and I worked my off for that and it was awesome.

SAYWARD: What if the County did a job fair, itself?

MASCARENAS: We did, kind of last year, we tried and I had people assigned.

SAYWARD: What if each department set up a little booth and this is what we do and this is what we have to offer.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, we did outdoors on the front lawn; which was actually kind of cool. We didn't do a great job, but for a starter I think we did okay and I absolutely think that's a good idea.

SAYWARD: You know I mean we could help, the Union could help set something up.

WILSON: And partnering with like North Country Community College who does them and is good at them and has two campuses in our County.

HUGHES: That's a great idea.

WILSON: But, that brings up a question for me for this group, we have this report to go on, but how hands on to we want to be? Like do you want to volunteer to run job fairs or how hands on, what level of gradual detail does this Committee want to be involved on or how much focusing on the big picture? Because, all these issues; the housing, the childcare, the working with the College, working with Department Heads, those are going to take up time, too and you know, I kind of think if we leave Department Heads out of this we're totally missing the boat.

MASCARENAS: Right

WILSON: But, at the same time if we don't make sure other Supervisors understand that this is a new demand on Department Heads. You know that we're asking them to not only run their program but now dedicate time to being out there trying to fill those empty desks or those empty trucks, it's going to be a change for Department Heads, too, I big change and you know that's something that we as a group should continue to talk about and we might even actually have to do something a little bit more formal, you know what is it, but we may need to give some guidance and training to support Department Heads to get them to do this effectively. That might be something that this Committee could do that would, you know could start changing the, you know the grassroots level here. I don't know.

MCNALLY: I would guess and I could be wrong, I was a couple years ago, probably most of the employees that we get are familiar with someone that already works here and probably our best recruitment is the actual employees themselves. A lot of companies how, I work part time for Target, they have a referral program. So, you work for the County and you like your job and you say, hey listen, anybody, if you can get somebody that wants to come and work for us, maybe you'll get a \$500.00 stipend, if they last 6 months and I think we're missing an opportunity and it could be a small stipend that may promote that, hey, I got a friend that's looking for a job, but they're not really sure that they want to come to the County, but you say, you know, if you come to the County, you're going to like it, plus I get another \$500.00.

WILSON: So, this is the kind of thing that we should keep talking about, because that's a good hand's on.

MCNALLY: I don't know where the money would come from, but I think our best salespeople maybe the employees or the happy employees, because, one, they do live here in the community or they live in the surrounding communities that do come here, so they know people.

MASCARENAS: I can tell you that's how I get a lot.

MCNALLY: So, Wendy says to one of her friends, I think I'm thinking about going back and getting a job, and she says, hey, listen, you should come and work for the County, we've got some good benefits and everything, do you? And we send \$500.00, that's what they do, all the time, all over the place, the referral program.

PALMER: I like that idea.

WILSON: So, to keep things moving here, because we can talk for the rest of the day. Our next meeting is March 7th, we're going to have ACAP talking to us about daycare and supporting how we're going to support that program. I think we should follow up on Steve's idea. At that next meeting, you said you thought it was going to take most of the time to talk about?

MASCARENAS: I would think so, Alan goes pretty in-depth in terms of the data and supporting how it and actually when you see our information, you're going to be like, oh, we're worse off than most of the State in terms of the amount of places that we've lost over the last handful of years and what the need actually is. So, I mean it's all going to be up to what you have for questions. My guess is, is he going to take 15-20 minutes to do a presentation type thing and then.

MONTY: Like you say, I think it depends on how in-depth.

MASCARENAS: Yeah and then open it up to you guys for questions on how the operations will happen.

MCNALLY: And along that daycare, you know adult daycare seems to be...

MASCARENAS: That's a huge problem.

MCNALLY: I mean my wife doesn't work, she has to go to her mother's three times a day, because there is no adult daycare where she can drop her off.

MONTY: Well, they did try and run a, adult day care, several years ago at the Social Center and stuff.

MASCARENAS: Yeah

MONTY: And that didn't pan out, because there was not enough interest, so they ended up taking it to Clinton County.

MCNALLY: But, that changes as the population continues to age, that could be very popular right now.

DEZALIA: And you're lucky that your wife doesn't work, so that she can do that. Otherwise you would really be trying to figure something out.

WILSON: So, to keep things moving though, to keep things moving. So, the next meeting is going to be dedicated to childcare, looking at the use of County ARPA funds, looking at this very specific, but the following meeting, do we want to try and pick up some of these threads of, what did we just call that?

DEZALIA: Referral program, employee referral program.

HUGHES: Is daycare ARPA?

PALMER: I talked to the auditor's.

HUGHES: If the County wants to do a job fair, I would organize that, at some point. I would volunteer my time to do that.

MASCARENAS: I think that would be a great thing to do in the spring and I do like the front lawn idea, you can see us.

HUGHES: I am scared about the front lawn, because it could be a washout. I would want to do it over at the gym. I would want to ask Boquet Valley to use their gym.

WILSON: So, we could talk about that.

HUGHES: And you guarantee it, would have to know what the budget would be for it, you know balloons, signage, food, drink, things like that.

WILSON: So, we'll talk about that some more.

DEZALIA: Advertise at all the schools.

HUGHES: Oh, yeah, absolutely. We can knock that out of the park.

MASCARENAS: Tracy could help, too.

MONTY: I mean they were phenomenal, because they invite so many different vocations, it's not just, they invited some colleges, so there was some educational aspect to it, but they also invited the services, NYSEG, EMS people were there.

HUGHES: Local small businesses, excavators, things like that.

WILSON: So, if we put one more thing on our agenda; should it be housing related or following up on the Department Head piece about starting to put together some standards, some expectations and then how we're going to support Department Heads? Like do we want to follow up and then if we're going to do a job fair, do we want Department Heads involved in it? I'm looking for feedback of what we should be focused on.

DEZALIA: I think if there's a job fair and if we have departments that have openings, whatever department has an opening, somebody should be there, whether it's an employee or they could send their best employee over there to say, we've got 3 opening in our department.

MONTY: I think the Department Head thing should be on that more than the housing, because we're still on infancy stage.

HUGHES: I agree with you on the housing, that needs to wait a little bit.

WILSON: So, with the Department Heads the items I'm identifying, is this need to become part of their...

MASCARENAS: Normal practice.

WILSON: Yeah

MASCARENAS: Like even if you don't have opening, you know a caseworker needs a bachelor's degree, so I need to be able to start getting into school systems. I need to talk to those kids, tell them what career paths that they need to go down, whether I have an opening today, doesn't mean I might not in four years; right? I need to be proactive in trying to plan for those vacancies.

HUGHES: Educating them on what they need to do in order to get there 4 years from now, when there is a vacancy.

MCNALLY: I think the referral program is going to be really successful. I think it is, because I think it puts the sales people right in contact with people that live here that know people and I think it's going to be really successful.

MONTY: Don't doubt that, but think about where you want to get the funding from.

PALMER: I almost think you could push that through ARPA.

MONTY: Could you?

PALMER: I almost think so.

DEZALIA: Anything that promotes recovery, if we can fill our positions that's going to promote recovery.

HUGHES: It's lost jobs from, because of the virus.

WILSON: So, what I have for the meeting following our childcare one with Alan is the referral program, job fair and setting up more of an in-depth, I don't know what we're going to call it, standard or expectation for Department Heads and not just, we want you to this, but here's the resources we're going to give you to do it.

MASCARENAS: Well, maybe you can even come to a Department Head meeting.

WILSON: Yeah, yeah

MASCARENAS: Or Dan and I could certainly do it, too, but as the Chairman.

WILSON: Yeah, I would be happy to do that.

SAYWARD: One other thing that I wanted to bring up is the Union, I know that this isn't something that probably, I sent you and Dan and Shaun an email before I sent it out, I didn't want to send it out, but the Union, in the last month, has been working really hard on Tier 6 retirement. It's becoming a very large issue for recruitment and retention or employees. It's terrible. So, they've been working really hard and they're getting ready to shove a lot of CSEA money at trying to get it changed. So, I just wanted you guys to be aware of that. They're going to try and help in some

way to get it fixed, but if you guys look at the email I sent you, it's just a little start, but for people to send letters to, like Dan Stec and Matt Simpson and be like, there's a big issue and we need to get it changed. I don't know what the change is going to be. We have another meeting in a couple of weeks, what they're going to be asking for, but that is also a big issue with recruiting of employees. The retirement was really good and now it's not so great.

HUGHES: How long as Tier 6 been a thing?

MASCARENAS: 3 years - 4 years?

SAYWARD: I was going to say 2 or 3.

MCNALLY: I'm not familiar with Tier 6, but I heard there is some good parts to that retirement, not so much, you can invest money somehow.

PALMER: You can contribute, just like a 401. I mean it's the same kind.

MCNALLY: Is there a match on that?

HUGHES: You've got to work until you're 70?

MASCARENAS: Your percentages are way lower, you're paying for your life, where Tier 3 were what, 10 years and then you never paid again?

PALMER: Tier 4.

SAYWARD: Tier 4 you're vested after 10.

PALMER: And you don't have to contribute.

WILSON: So, do you feel like you're up to speed, Meg?

WOOD: I think so.

WILSON: Ken?

HUGHES: Yeah, I'm running a job fair.

WILSON: So, we got a couple of meetings planned out, making real process. I'll talk to you about maybe coming to a Department Head Meeting, maybe I'll do that after we have a meeting, so we have a more clear idea.

PALMER: It's always the second Wednesday of the month.

WILSON: Let's talk briefly about Larry Reagan, again, just following up, maybe getting him to come to meeting down the road, so we can pick up on the housing.

MASCARENAS: Well and Mark.

WILSON: Well, yeah, I want to talk to him first.

MONTY: And I also spoke to a local contractor that said he would be interested in some way helping out, in regard to a piece of property that he could build something.

WILSON: Excellent, well, thank you everybody this is productive. I think we've pulled some threads together here today, thanks a lot.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS RETENTION AND RECRUITING TASK FORCE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:54 AM.

Respectively Submitted,

Dina L. Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board