

**FINANCE/TAX REDUCTION/MANDATE RELIEF - COMMITTEE**

Monday, March 20, 2023 - 10:30 AM

Thomas Scozzafava, Chairperson  
Noel Merrihew, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Scozzafava called this Finance Meeting to order at 10:30 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Robin DeLoria, Stephanie DeZalia, Derek Doty, Shaun Gilliland, Charlie Harrington, Roy Holzer, Ken Hughes, Steve McNally, Noel Merrihew, James Monty, Tom Scozzafava, Matt Stanley, Joe Pete Wilson, Davina Winemiller, Margaret Wood and Mark Wright. Clayton Barber and Ike Tyler were excused.

Department Heads present: Michael Diskin, Judy Garrison, David Reynolds, David Wainwright and Michael Mascarenas.

Deputies present: Laurie DeZalia and Chelsea Merrihew

Also present: Joe Keegan

New media: Alana Penny, Sun News.

SCOZZAFAVA: I will call the Finance committee meeting to order. First report from Chelsea Merrihew. Good morning.

C.MERRIHEW: Good morning. You have my report. In February we collected \$241,000, transferred \$145,000 of that to the Treasurer for local retention. I do not have anything additional today. I didn't know if there was any questions?

SCOZZAFAVA: Any questions?

MASCARENAS: Chelsea, during the last meeting I think, Mr. Doty did you want to re ask your question? Maybe she can give you a better answer.

DOTY: Well, Chelsea was good enough to come up and visit us a few weeks ago so she briefed me on new hires for the Department of Motor Vehicles so I was asking Jen where we are at moving forward with it. I was under the impression we had four training but I guess you only have two right?

C.MERRIHEW: We have two new hires. One just hit a year, one other employee just hit a year in service so we have the two in training right now and then one additional vacant position but until at least one of the two are training are up to a certain level we don't want to bring someone new in there because we hit the max of trainers to train.

DOTY: Any additional applications, anyone else apply?

C.MERRIHEW: Not that I know of. We got the last round in like the end of January, February and interviewed off of that list and picked the best candidate off of that.

DOTY: When Chelsea did come to visit we both agreed that certainly an effort to reopen the Lake Placid shouldn't be warranted until there is adequate staff because the frustration level is too high when you advertise you are going to be open and then at the last minute have to put a sign. I'm sure Chelsea gets the calls, we get the calls so we're comfortable waiting until the staff is big enough.

C.MERRIHEW: Thank you. I appreciate you understanding that.

MASCARENAS: So Chelsea too, I did inform the board so it is something that we probably have to talk about at some point that when those satellite offices were open they were opened with no increase to staffing levels anywhere so even when we are fully staff it can create somewhat of a poor situation if we have a call in or if we have a vacation or something like that because there was never added positions to that.

C.MERRIHEW: Yes, it is something I would like to look at potentially restructuring how those are staffed.

DOTY: Thank you.

SCOZZAFAVA: Do they generate enough revenue to warrant the cost of running those satellites?

C.MERRIHEW: I believe Ticonderoga definitely does consistently we only have been open two days a week, they were bringing in 25% of the revenue. I think we draw in a lot of people from Washington and Warren Counties. North Elba I don't think ever realized its full potential opening when it did during Covid so it kind of remains to be seen but in visiting Mr. Doty up there it does seem like there is a need for it or at least a want so I would be willing to at least test it out on a basis.

SCOZZAFAVA: Thank you. Any questions for Chelsea? If not, thank you. Laura Carson.

L.DEZALIA: Laurie DeZalia

MONTY: Open your eyes please.

SCOZZAFAVA: Oh.

L.DEZALIA: Good morning. Included in Laura's report you have department head expense reports. Coroners had responded to 26 calls and funeral homes handled 5 removals based on the vouchers submitted here to date.

We have the supervisor expense report. Invoice data collection summary. February is a very busy month for us as is January and March because we had year end and we also are rounding up Assigned Counsel. Mike can tell you because he sees all the approvals in his box how busy we are there. We processed 1,740 and we had 304 errors probably most of those were lawyers. YTD overpayments we've caught \$4,881.99 and YTD duplicate payments we've caught \$17,999.02.

Your auditor YTD budget report is included. Assigned counsel monthly summary and yearly comparison. We received 53 vouchers to process and we paid 195 vouchers totaling \$95,029.61. Your Assigned Counsel yearly to date budget report for 2022 and your Assigned Counsel year to date budget report for 2023. She has a note here, admin. Costs only that's only on our side and she has a highlight on there for the assigned counsel administrative portion and that's it is only

assigned counsel costs not like supplies and printing and all the other stuff things that you've added in positions and such since we started.

You have tax roll corrections, another busy time for us for that. They get the bills out and that's when it hits us and then special prosecutor summary report is your last one. Does anybody have any questions on them?

SCOZZAFAVA: I guess not, thank you.

L.DEZALIA: Oh, wait, Mr. Doty.

DOTY: Well, I'm not sure if this question is for you or Mike can answer it but under, you recognized 26 calls from our Coroners and I remember a resolution just last session where we accepted mutual aid I believe it is like from Clinton County are we dependent at all on Clinton County or is really just a formality agreement we do back and forth?

MASCARENAS: I think they actually do utilize that service across both counties on occasion, I don't think it is often but I think having that tool in the tool box for both counties I do think they use it on occasion. It's not regular but it happens.

L.DEZALIA: I concur. If you have somebody on vacation or one or two are sick you need to have a backup plan.

DOTY: Very good.

L.DEZALIA: Anything else? Okay have a wonderful day.

SCOZZAFAVA: Thank you. Dave Wainwright.

WAINWRIGHT: Good morning. Other than my budget I have a request for a resolution. I had to deny an application for a refund for water and sewer taxes. It was sent to our office which is typically for something that's taxed on our warrant. This was not. This was town water, town sewer charges, the quarterly charges. This individual continued to pay those bills even though he was being charged as a two family, two unit parcel when it is a single family so I did have to deny that. I sent it down to the Auditors but then we have our resolution that says it has to come to the board for denials. There are copies of the bills that the taxpayer received from the town in there.

MASCARENAS: Authorizing a denial of the application for water/sewer refund for Joseph Sinisgalli.

**RESOLUTION DENYING A REFUND OF WATER/SEWER TAXES, TOWN OF TICONDEROGA  
- JOSEPH SINISGALLI. Merrihew, Wilson**

SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion? Being none, all in favor, opposed – carries. Anything else Dave?

WAINWRIGHT: Yeah, I just want to talk a little bit about grievance day, board of assessment review training. The tentative roll comes out May 1<sup>st</sup> and grievance day is typically the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday in May, unless your assessor has more than one town. If you have a sole assessor that has multiple towns then they have to stagger their days. Grievance Day this year for the majority of us is May 23<sup>rd</sup>. We've got BAR training scheduled, live training again this year April 26<sup>th</sup> which is

a Wednesday. We'll have it right here from 6-9 p.m. We currently have eleven members that are required to take the training, three of those are brand new members so we have total of 20 people that we've invited for the training. The extra nine are for the three towns that are doing full revals this year we always send out letters to the BAR's just telling them you know, you may have more than normal volume this year because it is a reval so if you'd like a refresher we are here, we are giving a training at this time. If anybody cannot make, any of your members cannot make that day April 26<sup>th</sup>, they have the option to go to Clinton County, Franklin County, Warren, Washington depending on where they are they can always get the training there and they can contact our office, let us know that they won't be able to make it and we'll tell them what other days are available from the other county directors. Doesn't matter, they do not have to come to this one and anybody else that is interested if you've got BAR members that just want to come for a refresher we open it up to anybody. That's it.

HUGHES: Do the Board of Assessment Review members that just want a refresher like you were just speaking about, pre-register with your office or can they just show up?

WAINWRIGHT: It would be better if they let us know that they would be coming that way if there are any, every year the State hands out a little extra things having to do with laws and exemptions and stuff so we'll print those out and people can put them in their books that they've already got.

HUGHES: Okay, great. Thanks.

MONTY: Could you resend that email Dave, to us on the dates and stuff?

WAINWRIGHT: Oh, sure.

MONTY: Thank you.

DELORIA: Dave are you going to send emails out to the supervisors telling them which board members need it this year?

WAINWRIGHT: We can.

DELORIA: I would like that at least for me because I've got two out of the three of my BAR members that don't go on the computer, they are old school so if you would let me know I will let them know.

WAINWRIGHT: They do get letters from our office, the members that are required to take it but I can certainly send you guys the list as well.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay anything further for Dave? I guess not, thank you. Mr. Diskin.

DISKIN: Good morning. I don't know if it's a sign that I'm getting old but the first three people you called all by their first name but you called mine Mr. Diskin.

SCOZZAFAVA: You're getting old.

DISKIN: Happy first day of spring. You can tell by looking outside. Let's start with the sales tax. We are still having good returns on our sales tax as you can see both payments that we got this month were in excess of last year for the month, we picked up almost \$353,000 more than we did

last year and the year to date for the first three months we are \$1,295,500 ahead of last year which is running good but it's too early to tell if that's going to hold out. A lot of things can happen, if the gas drops out like it did one other time, we depend a lot on tourism and gas prices so we'll see what happens as the year goes along but so far things have been good. Any questions on the sales tax?

If not, on the occupancy we've reported the first month actually you'll see the month of February but that is actually we start with February but we start with January returns so we always list February 1<sup>st</sup> and end with January and we were down slightly but not enough to really notice it. I think in March you will probably see some good pickups because there is a lot of stuff going on in the North Country in January and February so we should get those returns back up next month but so far we've been doing alright.

The expense report for my department and that's pretty much all I have except I do want to briefly give you kind of an update and maybe some of you know this, some of you may not but I did send everybody out a copy of a paper that NYSAC did in conjunction with the State Association of County Treasurers on the Governor's proposal to retain excess on foreclosures back to either owners or people who have liens. Both of those by the way have been rejected by the Assembly and the Senate at least for now neither the Assembly or Senate included that in their proposed budgets which is good news but I also think and what we're hearing now is that it could be part of a negotiation and maybe there will be some slight tweaks to this but something is going to be more than this and also keep in mind in April, I believe it is April 23<sup>rd</sup> this same thing is coming up in front of the US Supreme Court from a case out in Minnesota in Hennepin County. Someone sued the county out there and Minnesota law took it through their court system in Minnesota and is taking it all the way to the Supreme Court so it will be interesting to see how the Supreme court rules on this if they do basically it's what you call the law of the land and it could very well effect every state in the country whether they sell liens or whether they do foreclosures. It is going to be an interesting case to follow on that one.

The only other thing I wanted to let you be aware of you may also be aware of it, the Governor had proposed that local sales tax be kept. That we not have to go back every couple of years or three years whatever it is to ask for an additional amount of money and wanted to make it permanent up to 4% for each county, that has been rejected by both Senate and Assembly as well so we're back to where we were before and our County Manager may have more updates on this but I understand the eFMAP was both rejected by the Senate and Assembly so far. They agreed to put back the \$624,000,000 at least for this year so we'll see where that goes at this point and that is kind of the legislation that I've been watching as far as finance. That's all I have.

SCOZZAFAVA: Any questions for Mike?

WINEMILLER: Mike thank you for that. I was wondering if you would give us all the updated STR list since we had new people sign up?

DISKIN: What we can do we can run through what we have by the town and send one out to each town. The only one that is going to be pretty large again is Mr. Doty's but he still wants it. He has the biggest share of them but we can make one out for each town.

DOTY: That is still being debated how much I get.

DISKIN: I'm sure there is still more out there probably but we are still getting, we had another, I just signed for new registrations this morning so there are still registrations coming in and I think it's the fact towns that are starting to get into their local watch of them and they are adding their own local review and these people are having to report to us and get that before they can move

on with the towns so it's been beneficial. We've had, I think we had fifteen again last month. We have a total so far this year of probably a little more than 30, 35 so far new ones just in January and February and as I said, it's probably going to be the same amount for March if not more. I just got four new registration applications in this morning but we will get out what we do have registered.

WINEMILLER: Thank you. The reason I ask is because our town is working on a STR local law so it would be great to have it.

DISKIN: And personal registrations in the town. I know that Schroon has done it and Wilmington has done it.

HOLZER: Bless you and good luck.

WINEMILLER: Thank you.

McNALLY: We are in the process of working on one but in all fairness with this program everyone should have a STR law to make it fair to people registering. I know it's not popular but all the towns in Warren County have now done it and I think really in all fairness this everyone on this board should have one in their town so that everybody is paying their fair share and the best way to monitor who is paying that law and have some enforcement in it if they don't register.

HOLZER: Well, to carry that even one step further there is actually legislation proposed in Albany right now that would have the State's starting to oversee some of the STR regulations in registration so I'm sure that they are going to want to have a bite of this STR occupancy funds.

DISKIN: They are going to be looking for sales tax.

HOLZER: Get ready so North Elba.

DISKIN: Yeah, I've heard the same rumor out of Albany that they are looking to pursue the STR's and in all likelihood they are going to be including them in sales tax coming down the road so far they haven't but watch for it because they are looking for additional revenue obviously the State. I think they see this as a good revenue for sales tax which it could help us as well because we get our 4% out of that sales tax.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay anything further for Mike? If not, thank you. Mr. Mascarenas.

MASCARENAS: Yes sir. I didn't get a formal resolution request out but I did send an email explaining what I'm going to ask for today last week to everybody regarding student trainee program that Essex County had that ended sometime around 2009. When I surveyed the employees here I was surprised, I knew of some of them but I didn't know of how many and Mrs. DeZalia yes, there's 22. You are absolutely correct there are 22 individuals that still work in Essex County that were part of those original programs which says a lot being that we have instituted it in the last 13, 14 years so I would a resolution from the board requesting that we are allowed to put on ten student trainees for the summer months and have those slots in the County Manager's budget. We have the money to pay for it with our vacancies. I'm not asking for additional funds. I wouldn't budget this going into 2024. I think I want to see how these things go if we feel like it was successful I would bring it back to you on an annual basis with the appropriate number of slots and ask that the board do that at that time. There are other departments that do have it in

their budget that have a couple that have been continuing but the large portion of the county does not so I would like to be able to fit these individuals with a department of interest and see if we can secure some young folks that want to have careers here in Essex County moving forward.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN ESSEX COUNTY STUDENT TRAINEE PROGRAM FOR TEN (10) POSITIONS FOR SUMMER EMPLOYMENT 2023. Wilson, McNally**

SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion?

McNALLY: Is there an age requirement?

MASCARENAS: The way we did it before we really didn't have an age requirement. You have to be of legal working age. I think we would look at it more so with somebody that has a specific interest so if we didn't have enough applicants we could kind of go the other direction. I would like to see individuals that are either entering the workforce following high school or are in some type of college situation where they might come into the human services field not to say we couldn't hire 16 year olds and 17 year olds. I'd like to start with the 18 year olds that are entering the workforce or have a specific program of interest that they would like to look at in a career.

McNALLY: Would the pay be based on the position?

MASCARENAS: It is a graded position just like everything else so if they are a student trainee title, I don't know what it is exactly Jen? \$22.00 an hour?

J.MASCARENAS: No, it's a grade 2.

MASCARENAS: Oh, it's a grade two. So I can get you that information. I don't know, I'm guessing it's right around the minimum wage.

McNALLY: And the length of the program?

MASCARENAS: We are going to operate until August, the end of August so we'll start probably in May and when those either go back to high school and/or college or maybe some that are entering the workforce end up staying and fill some of the rolls we have now and vacancies we have now.

SCOZZAFAVA: All in favor, opposed – carried. Anything else Mike?

MASCARENAS: That's it sir, thank you.

SCOZZAFAVA: Joe, North Country.

KEEGAN: Good morning everybody, nice to see you. Tom, I'm glad to hear you're not sick. Just a couple of quick updates for you. I wanted to thank you for the letters of support that we received a number of you that we reached out to you we've got a grant opportunity to compliment the work that's happening in May to update our science labs and nursing labs and so several of you were really quick and sent them out. Davina, JoePete, Shaun thanks so much. Derek thank you for the support, Tom and the other thing I just wanted to update you on was just on the bids for those science nursing labs. They have gone out, well they haven't actually we had a bid walk through today up on the Saranac Lake campus with the architect and hopefully some bidders we got

people that have drawn down plans so that's good. 24<sup>th</sup> of May is the start and anticipated completion date is at the start of the full semester so that's exciting. And like the county I think it was Mike that said, you're waiting to hear what is happening out of Albany we are too. The one house bills for both the Senate and Assembly were very positive for SUNY and for the community college. Our three principal asks that the funding floor the 4% increase in base operating aid and \$75 million transformational fund to support enrollment initiatives all made their way into those proposals and because the Governor had already put in the funding floor that, we are cautiously optimistic and really pleased that we've had so much support across all branches of Government. I think that's it. Those are the only three things I wanted to update you at this point.

Mike as I was thinking, the career college has that college central network which is an opportunity to put and post jobs if you've got summer jobs we can get them out to students and if you want to work with our departments we are happy to work with you on that.

MASCARENAS: Absolutely, thank you.

KEEGAN: I can take any questions if there are any?

DOTY: Joe I would just like to remind folks around the table here who haven't seen it occupancy tax funding our local Leaf Committee and board has located \$734,000 toward non for profits of which North Country was a recipient for I believe, \$45,000 for two sheds that will help continue sustain ability of both rugby and lacrosse. I believe that's kind of targeted toward the bowl right?

KEEGAN: It is, exactly.

DOTY: I just want to thank you for your continued support of both of those avenues and it brings tons of sales tax revenue and short term rental occupancy tax so it was money well spent.

KEEGAN: Thank you for mentioning it Derek and we appreciate the support that really helps. Those are difficult capital projects to find funding for we are really pleased thank you.

SCOZZAFAVA: Anything else for Joe? If not, thank you.

KEEGAN: Thank you Tom. Thanks everybody.

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay anything further to come before this committee?

WRIGHT: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I'm not a member of this committee but I understand there's a vacancy on the Lake George Board of Commissioners. Michelle Jebb of Ticonderoga has expressed an interest of becoming part of that board. She's worked in the boating industry for many years now on Lake George and I think she would bring a good balance of boating experience and her family is on the lake. Her experience in boating industry and her understanding the necessity of the type of lake in the future. I issued a letter of support on her behalf last week from Ticonderoga and I would like to recommend that the Essex County Board of Supervisors offer a resolution of support for Michelle Jebb in that position and follow up with a letter of support as well.

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MICHELLE JEBB, TOWN OF TICONDEROGA AS A MEMBER TO THE LAKE GEORGE PARK COMMISSION BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS.  
Scozzafava, Merrihew**



SCOZZAFAVA: Discussion?

GILLILLAND: Just point of fact of information for the board to look at this, there are two Essex County residents have to be on the Lake George commission I don't know who they are at this time or who the other one is and these are Governor appointed positions that's why we rarely delve into them so the people from Ticonderoga reached out to me and I talked with Mark about her and we have a citizen that's willing to step up and get involved in that board I support that.

SCOZZAFAVA: Further discussion? If not, all in favor, carried. Anything further to come before the finance committee? If not, we stand adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Finance committee it was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk  
Board of Supervisors