

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BROOME COUNTY LEGISLATURE MEETING MINUTES
February 14, 2019

The Committee of the Whole Broome County Legislature met on Thursday, February 14, 2019 in the Legislative Conference Room, Sixth Floor, Edwin L. Crawford County Office Building, Binghamton, New York.

Members Present: D. J. Reynolds, S. Flagg, S. Baker, K. Wildoner, D. D. Reynolds, G. Baldwin, M. Pasquale, J. Shaw, M. Hilderbrant, C. O'Brien, S. Ryan, R. Balles, B. Weslar, M. Kaminsky, M. Whalen

Members Absent: None

Others Present: J. Garnar, K. McManus, C. Wagner, C. Cramer, County Exec's Office, M. Ponticiello, N. Haight, C. Rogers, J. Buckler, R. Serowik, OES; J. Knebel OMB; R. Duclos, E. Wright, J. Dickens, C&S Companies; F. Akshar, R. Alpaugh, Senator's Office; C. Hall, J. Bertoni, M. Tanzini, Legislature

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 5:00 p.m. Mr. D. J. Reynolds stated that the meeting was called to get an update from the Administration on the Office of Emergency Services Communications Upgrade Project.

County Executive Garnar stated that the project needs to move forward now. There are gaps in coverage and it has turned into a public safety issue. It is their intent to pay for the upgrade with an increase in landline and cell phone surcharges.

Mr. Ponticiello provided a handout of the presentation, which is attached with the minutes.

Responding to questions from Mr. Baker, it was stated that the issues that the fire companies had with tower placement have been resolved; there should be no interference with the height and placement of the towers. The Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that he recently had a constructive meeting in Albany regarding future funding for a shovel-ready project. He further stated that there was no commitment to funding, but that he was optimistic about the potential to secure future funding. The projected cost of the communications vehicle is based on a basic internet search (\$750,000+) and was included in the tentative budget as a placeholder to show the State how the money will be spent.

Responding to questions from Mrs. Ryan, it was stated that, at this time, solar panels are not feasible to utilize on towers due to the small size of the tower's footprint. A surcharge on apartment buildings/property owners that are being serviced by 911 would not be allowed. It was further stated that, as the State dictates regulations on the 911 surcharge, the County does not have the ability to impose changes as to how the surcharge is applied or collected. This is why a Home Rule Request must be submitted to Broome County's NYS representatives for consideration at the state level.

Responding to questions from Mr. Whalen, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that they are physically building to capacity to be able to lease space on the towers to cell phone and cable companies. Companies such as Verizon, Sprint and AT&T have been notified. It was further stated that local municipalities would also need to approve. Two of the tower sites are being abandoned; structures will need come down. The prepaid cell phone loop hole was addressed last year.

Responding to questions from Mr. Baker, it was stated that there is no tax on phones that only use 911. A phone service needs to be connected with the phone in order to be billed the surcharge.

Responding to questions from Mr. Flagg, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget stated that debt service costs are met every year and that the sunset on the surcharge can always be considered earlier than the 10 years, if necessary.

Responding to questions from Mrs. Ryan, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that municipalities should continue to budget for radio replacement, as the existing budget only allows for the initial purchase/upgrade of equipment so that all stakeholders can operate on the same system.

Responding to questions from Mr. D. J. Reynolds, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that if grants are awarded they will pay off items that are covered under the terms of the grant. The project will be structured in a way that mandates that the additional revenue may only be used for 911 equipment; the current surcharges for operating costs are segregated into two accounts and two additional surcharge accounts will also be segregated reflecting the additional surcharge revenue. Reconciliation of the accounts will be done yearly.

Responding to questions from Mr. Hilderbrant, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that there is no plan for a total replacement of the system in the future. Ongoing costs will be covered by the State and there is an aggressive maintenance program in place for the upkeep of the equipment.

Responding to questions from Mr. D. D. Reynolds, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated the shared core with Cortland will work independently but they will be able to back each other up.

Responding to questions from Mrs. Kaminsky, the Director of the Office for Emergency Services stated that there will continue to be costs to keep the current system running until the new system is ready in 2021. The new system was structured as a three-year project for budgeting purposes.

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, Mr. Wildoner made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Baker. The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.