



## Tioga County Worksession Minutes January 20, 2022 – 10:00 a.m.

### Legislators present:

Legislator Brown  
Legislator Ciotoli  
Legislator Hollenbeck  
Legislator Monell  
Legislator Roberts  
Chair/Legislator Sauerbrey  
Legislator Standinger (*Arrived at 10:27 a.m.*)  
Legislator Weston

### Legislators absent:

Legislator Mullen

### Guests:

None

### Staff present:

Peter DeWind, County Attorney  
Cathy Haskell, Legislative Clerk  
Amy Eiklor, Deputy Legislative Clerk  
Michael Simmons, Director of Emergency Services (*Departed at 10:43 p.m.*)  
Katie Chandler, Deputy Treasurer  
Stephanie Jerzak, Chief Accountant

**Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Sauerbrey opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m. with the ***Third Special Legislative Meeting*** for Legislature consideration of the following:

- **Adopt Local Law No. 1 of 2022 – A Local Law Imposing Additional Surcharges for Telephonic Communication**
- **Adopt Local Law No. 2 of 2022 – A Local Law Reapportioning the Tioga County Legislature**

Legislative Clerk Haskell took roll call. Legislator Weston led in the prayer, pledge, and voting process. Special Meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m. with regular worksession immediately following.

**Interoperable Communications System – Emergency Services Director:** Michael Simmons, Director of Emergency Services, gave an overview of the Interoperable Communications System. He reported the Computer Aided Dispatch System, known as the CAD system, is used when a 911 call comes in. The CAD system will show the caller's information and provide mapping to their location. It provides guidance to dispatchers so they can send the closest first responders.

In 2018, it became evident that the CAD system was not functioning properly. Coverage problems persisted and first responders could not communicate accurately. Mr. Simmons reported there was little to no support from the manufacturer and about 45 tickets for repair have gone unanswered. He stated the CAD system would report every address in Tioga County as coming from the Town of Nichols. Communication is lost in the computer and dispatchers are forced to type all the information into a summary box, which causes extra paperwork.

A study was conducted by Federal Engineering, which concluded there are areas in Tioga County that have no radio coverage. Mr. Simmons explained all communications are funneled to a tower and building on Carmichael Road. The information is then sent to several other towers throughout Tioga County. Occasionally, that link fails which results in the entire system crashing. Communication with fire departments and first responders is lost until the system is back online. The study determined Tioga County needs to update the equipment and system.

New York State is supposed to have Interoperable Communications Grants available in blocks of \$6 million. Mr. Simmons reported Tioga County applied for grants in 2018 and 2019, but the State is highly delayed in releasing the funds. He stated another source of funding is Formula Interoperable Grants, which is based on population. Typically, Tioga County receives around \$450,000 per year to upkeep the current system.

Tioga County met with numerous vendors and determined Motorola would be the best option to provide upgrades to the radio system. The expense for a new system and equipment from Motorola was \$9.6 million. Mr. Simmons explained a contract with Motorola was approved in 2019 and there was a caveat that if Tioga County did not receive grant funding, they could cancel the contract. Tioga County paid \$288,000 as a down payment, which is about 2% of the cost of the project. Mr. Simmons stated Motorola locked in the 2019 price for Tioga County.

As the project progressed, it became apparent there were areas where there was no coverage. Towers are placed on top of hills, which can cause a lapse in coverage for the valleys. As a result, it was determined two additional towers, for a total of eleven, are needed to increase coverage. Mr. Simmons reported additional equipment, like radios, is needed, which will increase the cost of the project. Resolution 23-22 was recently adopted, which allows for the upgrading of equipment and construction of two towers. The resolution stated the additional cost shall not exceed \$3.1 million. Mr. Simmons stated the cost per tower is around \$1 million.

Chair Sauerbrey explained that there was around \$900,000 from cell phone surcharges that was used to pay for upgrades. Mr. Simmons reported the CAD system was replaced and is expected to go into service by the end of February. Currently, staff is attending trainings on

how to operate and understand the system. Mr. Simmons stated the new CAD system includes a records management system that maintains the records for the Sheriff's Office and fire departments. He explained when a person calls the 911 center, a patrol officer reports back and makes a police report and if necessary, an arrest report. For areas with little coverage, car radios are used in police cars and fire departments. The first responder can flip a switch on their portable walkie talkie, which will then communicate with the vehicle, and re-transmit out of the vehicle at forty-five Watts. Mr. Simmons stated his hope is for increased Broadband coverage to fill in the gaps in more rural areas. He reported the previous CAD system and equipment covered only about 50% of Tioga County. The new system will increase coverage to about 90%.

Chair Sauerbrey stated the \$6 million grant application will hopefully be released by the end of March. Mr. Simmons explained grant money may be used for lease payments, but grant money cannot be used to pay off a bond. Chair Sauerbrey reported \$4 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding was set aside for the project. Mr. Simmons stated the 911 surcharge fund may also be used for future funding. Funding and project updates will be discussed in the future.

**Annual Transfer of Tioga Downs Funds:** Chair Sauerbrey reported the previous Legislature agreed that Tioga Downs Casino Revenue would not be used in the General Operating Fund. The revenue was intended to be a savings account and not to be used in the yearly budget. However, Resolution 33-20 transferred the revenue into an account designated for the Capital Land, Equipment, & Infrastructure Reserve Account. The resolution was loosely written and as a result, there are expenses earmarked from the Casino Revenue fund in this year's Capital Equipment budget.

Chair Sauerbrey proposed amending resolution 33-20 to keep the revenue in a savings account. She doesn't want the casino funds to be part of the regular budget as the revenue is considered State Aid, which can be taken away at any time. Legislator Monell inquired how much was currently in the account. Chief Accountant, Stephanie Jerzak, replied about \$2.4 million, with roughly \$1.5 million already allocated for 2022 Capital expenses. Chair Sauerbrey stated a resolution is needed to transfer the Casino Revenue, but this year it was done during the budget process. She suggested amending the resolution and bringing it back for Legislature consideration.

Chair Sauerbrey reported Tioga County has a Fund Balance Policy that states unexpended surplus funds must stay between 12% and 28%. Currently, Tioga County is over the policy by around \$4 million, not including ARPA funds. Chair Sauerbrey suggested using the excess fund balance to pay for the radio communications project.

Ms. Jerzak reported she did not want to make changes to the Capital Reserve. She suggested using the excess fund balance in a Reserve for Capital, but specifically for radio communications. Ms. Jerzak explained that the Fund Balance Policy states the money can be transferred into the Capital Reserve for a specific purpose.

Chair Sauerbrey suggested taking a closer look at the language within the Fund Balance Policy as it currently states, "In the event that unexpended surplus funds exceed 28% of adopted budget appropriations, the excess may be utilized for any lawful purpose approved

by the Legislature. In order to minimize the long-term effect of such use, the excess should be appropriated to fund one-time expenditures, which do not result in recurring operating costs, and/or be used to establish or increase reserves." Chair Sauerbrey stated that the radio project could be an acceptable one-time expenditure. The matter will be looked into and discussed at a later date.

**Approval of Worksession Minutes:** On motion of Legislator Monell, seconded by Legislator Hollenbeck, the January 6, 2022 minutes were unanimously approved by the Legislators in attendance.

**Action Items:** Currently, we have none.

**Other:**

- ***Legislator Orientation:*** Chair Sauerbrey reported the three new Legislators will need to complete an Orientation. The Orientation will be scheduled at the conclusion of Worksession.
- ***Administrative 101 Training:*** Ms. Haskell reported she conducted an Administrative training with all departments in attendance. County Attorney presented an overview of the Open Meetings Law. Ms. Haskell reviewed the process for agendas, minutes, resolutions, and proclamations. By February, all standing committee agendas should be concise and consistent. The agendas are to be in a bullet style format with specific headings as previously recommended by the Legislature in 2017.

**Executive Session:** With no confidential topics of discussion, an Executive Session was not necessary.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Amy Eiklor*

Deputy Legislative Clerk