

Tompkins County Shared Services Panel
Meeting #2
June 5, 2017
Tompkins County Legislature Chambers

- I. Introductions
- II. Minutes Approval
- III. Update—Joe Mareane
 - a. Training Group
 - b. Letter to Bargaining Unit Presidents
 - c. Discussion about utilizing banks to assist with cash management/investment strategy
 - d. Contact with State about Additions to Health Consortium
- IV. Special Topic: Central Business Office Concept/TST BOCES—Dr. Jeffrey Matteson and David Parsons
- V. Discussion
- VI. Next Steps
- VII. Adjourn

Draft Minutes
Tompkins County Shared Services Panel
May 22, 2017
Tompkins County Legislative Chambers

In attendance: J.Mareane, R.Dietrich, A.Rider, C.Rankin, D.Scheffler, D.Fogel, L.Woodard, M.Witmer, D.Hartill

Attending by phone: M.Petrovic, E.LaVigne
Staff: P. Younger

Mr. Mareane called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. He reviewed the materials provided to members, including the meeting agenda, a powerpoint overview of the law and the role of the Panel, guidance material that has been provided by the State, a copy of the law pertaining to the Property Tax Shared Services Initiative, and a matrix of potential shared service initiatives that were discussed at an April 5 meeting of mayors and supervisors.

Members introduced themselves.

Mr. Mareane presented an overview of the Property Tax Savings Shared Services Initiative through the attached Powerpoint. The presentation included the basic outline of the process, deadlines set by the State, details of the process, and next steps. Major points made in the presentation were:

- The law requires the establishment of a Shared Service Panel that must include all mayors and supervisors and may include school and special district officials
 - Mr. Mareane has invited schools to participate
- The Panel's initial role is to help identify potential shared services that the County Administrator, in turn, can use to prepare a Shared Services Plan. The Panel must subsequently approve or reject the final Shared Service Plan;
- The process must include input by all collective bargaining units of all members and the public;
 - A total of three public hearings are required
- The County Administrator must submit a Plan to the County Legislature by August 1;
- The County Legislature may modify the Plan or submit its recommendations to the County Administrator for consideration in developing a final plan;
- The Panel must approve (or reject) the final plan by September 15.

Mr. Mareane reviewed the list of potential shared services that had been discussed by the mayors and supervisors in an April 5 meeting (see attached powerpoint), and invited Panel members to discuss their thoughts about these, or other, potential areas to pursue.

Mr. Rankin noted that a report by the State Comptroller a few years ago had indicated that savings were possible through shared IT operations/systems, and that this may be an area that should be reviewed.

Mr. Dietrich asked Mr. Mareane about his opinion regarding possible candidates. Mr. Mareane said some counties are looking for small things that could be put in place easily and quickly to accommodate the State's demand for a Plan. He said Training might fall into that category, and noted prior discussions about creating a TCCOG training academy to provide training available at an affordable price to all municipalities. He said the concept envisions the County serving as something of a mother ship to provide enough funding to establish a class, which then allows others to join in at a low cost. He said he's also interested in the idea of centralizing back office services similar to what BOCES does for its school districts. He noted that local government expert Dr. Mildred Warner at Cornell has suggested that counties could have a future role similar to BOCES in being a provider of back office services to other units of government. He also said he was intrigued by ideas that had come out of the earlier mayors and supervisors meeting about pooling municipal buying power for Purchasing Cards (that might result in lower costs/higher discounts) and truck and heavy equipment leasing.

Mr. Dietrich talked about the potential benefits of pooling investments, or of taking advantage of banks or financial experts to help advise smaller governments about how to maximize their investment earnings. He said that Danby is working with Tompkins Trust to more effectively managing its funds, and that this may be a template for others.

Ms. Woodard described a current situation that lends itself to a shared service approach. The Village of Cayuga Heights Wastewater treatment facility is exceeding its DEC discharge limits, largely because the volume of stormwater coming into the plant. Increasing the plant's capacity to handle the excess would cost about \$5 million. A 2003 agreement among the five participating municipalities and the City had anticipated building a second bypass pipe to divert excess flow to the City's treatment facility—a project that would likely cost less than the \$5 million to expand the treatment plant. The Mayor suggested that this be looked at as a shared services possibility, but wondered whether the fact that the costs supported by user fees rather than property taxes would make this project ineligible for the State's Shared Services program. Mr. Mareane said he'd follow-up to get an answer to that question.

Mr. Fogel asked whether court consolidation is on the table for discussion. Mr. Mareane said the TCCOG task force did not recommend a district court system, but did recommend certain reforms that would reduce the volume of activity heard by the courts, making it easier for consolidations to happen in the future. He explained that under current law, if two towns consolidated their courts, one judge from each town must remain on the bench in the combined court, meaning there would not necessarily be a savings if two towns, each having one judge, were to combine. However, if one or more towns had multiple judges, there could be a reduction in the total number of judges if the courts consolidated.

Mr. Mareane also said that TCCOG's Task Force had recommended a centralized after-hours arraignment process, something the State has now sanctioned. While law enforcement, the DA, and Assigned Counsel all favor the change, local magistrates oppose the plan, believing the current system works well. Mr. Mareane said the inefficiencies in the current system impact law enforcement, as officers must take time to shop for a judge to arraign an arrested person. A panel member noted that some judges routinely avoid hearing after-hours arraignments, leaving the burden to others who do answer the call. Ms. Rider suggested that an effort be made to cost-out the savings.

Mr. Dietrich said the financial savings documentation presented in the State's guidance document leads him to think that the best course forward is to find something we're doing now, and then find a way to do it better. He has met with the County Highway Department, and was impressed by the way they analyze their costs and try to bring them down. He said a plan that duplicates the way the County purchases vehicles (resulting in a quick turnover of vehicles and reduction of maintenance costs) could result in money savings to the towns. He felt this might also apply to school buses. However, while the accelerated replacement strategy saves money for maintenance and, ultimately, acquisition, it also requires up-front money to get started. Mr. Mareane described this as a self-funded model, and explained that the County has also been pitched on a leasing model by Enterprise Rental that might not require such a large upfront investment and that might produce greater savings if more municipalities participated.

Ms. Woodard asked whether the County's IT support, including LaserFische, can be counted as new for the purpose of the State's program. She noted the value of the support that has been provided. She also said the current financial software used by most municipalities is very clunky and hard to use. Most present use Williamson software. Mr. Rankin said that it is clunky, but functional. Ms. Woodard said the system takes a lot of effort and takes a lot of time to use. Ms. Rider said her clerk likes the Williamson system and that it integrates into the forms the Comptroller requires. Mr. Rankin said the system may be DOS-based. He said he talks to a lot of financial people around the state, and most have some kind of complaints with their software. All agreed the Williamson software isn't cheap. Ms. Woodard suggested that a single contract covering all interested municipalities might result in savings. Mr. Mareane said that if all were on a common platform, other back office opportunities could arise.

Mr. Mareane asked about whether centralized tax collection should be on the table. Most agreed that the idea would be strongly opposed by the clerks and others. Mr. Mareane said he believes there could be savings from centralized collections, and that concerns about the municipalities losing interest earnings could be easily addressed. He said the strongest argument against it seems to be that the time saved by clerks would not result in fewer clerks or less hours paid to clerks. Mr. Petrovic said he would be open to the idea. Mr. Dietrich said clerks feel that the personal interaction with taxpayers is important. Mr. Scheffler estimated that about 25% of the volume of work comes from walk-ups, and that we need to be careful about alienating ourselves from the public.

Mr. Lavigne said that centralizing functions can leave people out and result in governments growing distant from constituents. He suggested we should push back on the State to reduce mandates and

expand broadband, and focus on infrastructure, such as Ms. Woodard's suggestion, in order to grow the economy.

Mr. Scheffler said that we should look at providing central training for municipalities and boards, and that savings might result.

Mr. Mareane referred to the matrix of shared services candidates and asked for members to "vote" for the items that reflected their preference, and those that they thought would save the most money. The results will be reported at the next meeting.

The discussion turned to the strategy the group should follow. One approach would be to continue with the process and develop a plan for this year; one would be to concede that there's not enough time to come up with a strong plan this year, so we will start to work on a 2018 Plan now; one would be to say that we will not be participating.

Mr. Hartill said that we already purchase items off state contracts, share equipment, and engage in a number of other shared services. He sees some possible benefit in shared training, but feels that we should push back.

Mr. Fogel said he prefers to see what we can put together, and even if it is small, it would be preferable to get something in place this year rather than to do it over again next year.

Ms. Rider said we should have a public hearing soon, and share this with the residents with the stipulation that we explain what's already been done. She said some creative thoughts may result from this listening exercise.

Mr. Scheffler agreed that we should do something this year, even if the result is small.

Mr. Mareane agreed that we should follow the process and see what comes of it. We could do something small this year and, if we find something major and complex that deserves more study, we can take more time later to look at that.

Mr. Dietrich said he doesn't budget much for training, so he didn't have much hope for savings.

Ms. Woodard asked whether we can include things we are already doing. Mr. Mareane said that Sen. Helming has suggested doing that, but that he was concerned about how we could claim savings if we are already performing the task.

Ms. Younger asked whether the expansion of LETTS could be counted. Mr. Mareane said that deserves a look.

Ms. Woodard asked about expansions of LaserFische. Mr. Mareane said that expansions already underway (or receiving State grant funding) could not be included. Ms. Woodard discussed new LaserFische apps that are new, and asked whether those kinds of new uses could be counted. Mr. Mareane agreed that this would be a good area to consider.

Mr. Mareane asked whether the group is prepared to meet every two weeks at 5:30 PM. There was agreement on the time of day, and that the group should meet every two week. County Administration will send out a Doodle Poll to look for specific dates.

The meeting adjourned at 7 PM.

County-Wide Shared Service Initiative

Meeting of Shared Services Panel
May 22, 2017

The Final Version

The Chief Executive Officer of every county must develop and submit a shared services plan, approved by a Shared Services Panel, by September 15

Or explain why they didn't

The Basics

- County Administrator given responsibility to develop the plan
- A panel of public officials provides input, recommendations, and ultimately approval
- Public employees unions are formally recognized in the input process
- The public is encouraged to contribute ideas through three public hearings

The Basics

- The County Legislature has a limited role
 - By majority vote, can issue Advisory Report or make modifications
- Ultimately, Panel reconvenes to approve or reject the Plan
- Items must result in new property tax savings if State funds are
- State pledges to match first year savings

The Hard Deadlines

- By August 1, the County Administrator must submit a Plan to the County Legislature (and savings estimates to State)
- By September 15, following County Legislature review, Panel must reconvene to vote on the final plan

The Details

- County Administrator chairs the panel, writes the Plan, and coordinates the process, however.....
- Final approve of the Plan rests with the Panel
- The Panel must include all mayors and supervisors, and may include representatives of school and special districts
 - We've invited the schools
- Every bargaining unit of every Panel member must be invited to provide input

The Details

- There must be at least three public hearings (no guidance as to when) to solicit input
- The plan submitted to the Legislature by August 1 does not require a Panel vote
 - (My goal will be to reach consensus on a Plan)
- The County Legislature can modify the Plan, and issue recommendations, but cannot reject it
 - (My goal will be to have a plan that is supported by the Legislature)

The Details

- After legislative review, Plan returns to the Panel
- At that time, an individual member(s) can choose not to participate in the recommended shared service
 - A decision to withdraw from the shared service only affects that municipality; it does not represent a veto of the Plan

The Details

- The Panel must decide to approve or reject the Plan by September 15
- If approved by majority vote, the Plan is to be implemented the following year
- If rejected, a report is issued that identified the reason for each Panel member's vote
 - The process then repeats in 2018
- The State has represented that it will match the amount of the certified savings associated with the Plan

What Now?

- Between now and August 1, we need to:
 - Identify potential shared service opportunities
 - Extend invitations to bargaining units to provide input
 - Conduct at least one public hearing (not a requirement, but at least one opportunity for ideas vs. reactions seems right)
 - Estimate potential savings
- Goal—plan to Legislature well before deadline

Schedule

- Suggested schedule
 - Panel meets the week of
 - June 5 (invite Jeff Matteson from BOCES)
 - June 19
 - June 26 (public hearing)
 - July 3 (recommendations)
 - July 17 (draft report)
 - To Legislature by July 24
 - Returned to Panel week of August 22
 - Panel approval by September 15

Refresher—Ideas from April 5

- Grants management
- Personnel
- IT Support
- Joint purchasing or leasing of trucks and heavy equipment
- Credit cards (pool the buying power of all)
- Tax collection
- Investments
- Compliance
- Financial software
- Sharing heavy equipment
- Central Business Office concept (like BOCES)
- Training
- Consortium (identifying new members as shared service)

Discussion

- Strategy
- Shared Services Candidates
 - Poll
- Schedule