COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Office of the County Legislature

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Chairman

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2007 COUNTY BUDGET
OCTOBER 4, 2006
CHAIRMAN WILLIAM H. MEYER

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Meyer, Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Kraft, Mr. Farrell, Mrs. Rapp, Mr. Corbett, Mr. Stanczyk, Mrs. Warner, Mr. Ryan
ALSO PRESENT: Mrs. Rhinehart, Mr. DiBlasi, Mr. Holmquist, Ms. Mulroy, Mr. Whelan, Mr. Kinne, Mr. Laguzza, Mrs. Chaplin, Mrs. Winslow, Chairman Sweetland

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.   Chairman Meyer asked that all prepared statements be submitted to the Clerk.

ROBERT BUGNASKI, Van Duyn (statement attached)

FRAN NICHOLS, Syracuse Symphony (statement attached)

MARILYN SCOTT, NYS Nurses Association (statement attached)

RAGING GRANNIES, Peggy Boyd – sang **(lyrics attached**

BARBARA TAYLOR, CSEA, Van Duyn (statement attached)

MARTIN SAGE, Iroquois Group, Sierra Club (statement attached)

MARGARET RUSK, Raging Grannies – stated that she is electronically challenged--gave an example of a situation that occurred at a place she volunteers. Has to ask staff people if something needs to be photocopied. There are problems with DREs for everybody, but the only person she knows about is herself. She is concerned about something going wrong when she casts her vote. She will vote no matter what system it is, but hopes it is not a DRE because of her challenges with electronic devices.

RAE KRAMER, Green Party, Syracuse Peace Council, but is here representing herself. Lived here since 1972, she and her husband have raised 2 sons here; feels it is a fine place to live. She has voted every year that she lived here. The experience of voting is pleasant and serious. The lever machine is the only type she has ever used, and will face the challenges and will nevertheless vote regardless of what machine is chosen. She referred to voting controversies that occurred in 2000 and 2004 on the national level. To have that situation again and not have a sense of confidence that the vote is being counted properly is a dismaying thought. Voting is the key proponent to democracy. We all know there are many reasons why a shameful portion of the citizens of this country are eligible to vote and choose not to. Some reasons are apathy, cynicism. It seems self evident to that those that make decisions about which voting machines will be used, should seek an approach that is as reliable and tamper-proof as possible. Must be able to provide accurate recounting capability if needed. Follow the direction of the League of Women Voters, and other non-partisan organizations, in support of optical scanners with paper ballots.

MARY CUNNINGHAM – She is a long-term resident of the City of Syracuse and a regular voter. It is known that the DREs are hackable, there is barely any organization that does not recognize that they are hackable in many different situations and places. It can be done in the programming; it can be done later on. We need to have a voting system that is reliable; need to have a system that allows us to go back and accurately look. It is part of our democracy that our votes should count. The cost of voting machines are millions, but the cost of a fair, verifiable vote is priceless. We cannot afford to allow our voting systems to be degraded. It is up to the legislature to make that commitment.

WALTER RATH– Opposed DRE systems; urged support of democracy. If there is no democracy, there is no faith in the integrity of the voting system. He encouraged legislators to vote against DREs and vote of optical scanners with paper votes to ensure the integrity of system. He said it comes down to if you support DREs, you are voting against democracy and no one will ever receive his vote that votes against democracy. We are fortunate to have people in this county who are honest, hard working, and diligent to oversee the mechanism for voting right now. We don't know what tomorrow might bring. It could take only one person to undermine the integrity of the voting system. Urged voting against DREs.

TOM CAMPBELL – He is bothered by the amount of poll closings for consolidation. He is a member of a group that supplied the facility for holding elections in our area. At no time did the Elections Board notify them of the deficiencies in their facility. Without notification they couldn't make any progress as far as making the buildings or facilities ADA complaint and more advantageous to the people of the community. He researched the consolidations – looked at 2003-2004 budgets of BOE. Looked at proposed budget of for 2007 – maint., utilities, rents, went from $8,300 to $139,000 – would like explanations; other expenses 410 – from $79,000 to $724,000; numbers going up and down throughout the whole budget. Maint., utilities, and rents dropped back to $52,000. He referred to page 3-118, in 2004 there were 14 employees; 2005 there were 16 employees, the modified 2006 had 18 employees; and in 2007 BOE has put in for 22 employees. Has a hard time understanding when we are closing polling places, consolidating. He called 16 other counties in the state; none of them decided to cut their polling places 22% –25%. We cut our polling places in numbers but the requested budget doubled. He would like to talk to BOE in the future to get answers; we are getting less service and costing twice as much. There are people in the community 70 – 80 years old and it us a chore for them to go 7 or 8 miles instead of across the street to vote

LENORE RAPALSKI, The League of Women Voters (statement and file attached).

THOMAS LAW, AAA Government – 1st "A" – a government; 2nd "A" is that we have a quality government; 3rd "A" room for improvement. We don't have A+. Challenges that government is too big. Who is changing that; assumes that county government today is 200% of what it was 15 years ago, or even 10 or 11 years ago. His theory is that every 3rd year, one quarter of a year for every department would have an austerity budget. One out of 12 years every department has an austerity budget; suggestion minus 7% for one quarter of the year. To make it practical, have departments volunteer to see if they can actually work with it. If it can work, someone will look proud and really be doing something on the dollar side. This does not withstand the question of efficiency. Some departments can buy better machines and get efficiency with 7% less budget one quarter every 3 years. A lot of people are cynical of our government. This would be a step.

HELEN DRUCE – Support for Van Duyn funding; husband has been a resident of Van Duyn for the past year. The facility and level of care given there are critically important to many in the county – those that reside, family and friends of residents, and those that work there. Financial support to provide appropriate levels of care with a vision of optimum care for each resident must be our goal. The staff and families need support.

DONNA OPPEDISANO, Jamesville Dewitt High School – Issue of electronic voting vs. optical scan technology. She is a high school Social Studies teacher; teaches participation and democracy at Jamesville Dewitt. She is proud of what she does and of her students. She is here as a participant of this democracy of Onondaga County, NYS, USA. Raises her voice to optical scan technology. She teaches students daily that they have a voice in government, that their voice counts, and that their vote counts. As they approach the cusp of being able to vote and becoming citizens of this society that their votes will be counted. That is why she fully supports optical scan technology and a paper trail.

GLORIA SAGE (statement attached)

JOHN LANGAN, retired software test engineer with Xerox and IBM. Also was a coordinator of Electrical and Computer Engineering Graduate Division as Syracuse University. DREs are a disaster; there are lawsuits galore; long lines, machines rebooting. As a software technician, it is clear to him that we are just not ready – maybe 30 years down the road we can figure out how to get all the bugs out of the systems. If you double the size of a software system, you quadruple the amount of bugs. If you triple the size, you multiple by nine the number of defects. It is the nature of huge software system and many coming together by many diverse groups. It is the way it is. Software systems are subject to all kinds of errors; there is also possible fraud; hacking; machines that are rebooting while people that are trying to vote; machines coming up with the same wrong name over and over again. He wants a piece of paper, an optical scan devise that will give him a paper trail; want to fill bubbles in and have it read. He would like to get a receipt like at an ATM machine.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

DEBORAH L. MATURO, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature