



Onondaga County Legislature

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401 Montgomery Street • Court House • Room 407 • Syracuse, New York 13202
Phone: 315.435.2070 Fax: 315.435.8434
www.ongov.net

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES DECEMBER 15, 2016 KATHLEEN A. RAPP, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Knapp, ¹Mr. Plochocki

ALSO ATTENDING: See attached list

Chair Rapp called the meeting to order at 10:38 A.M. ***A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. Ryan, to waive the reading of the proceedings of the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED. A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. Jordan, to approve the minutes from the previous committee. MOTION CARRIED.***

1. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Mary Beth Primo, Deputy County Executive/Physical Services, Martin Skahen,

a. **Confirming the Appointment of Martin Skahen as the Director of the Onondaga County Division of Community Development**

Ms. Primo:

- Mr. Skahen has a Masters from Maxwell School; past 10 years has served Onondaga County for in a number of roles, lastly chief of staff, performed well in all positions, prior to chief of staff was deputy commissioner for County Parks, responsible for much of personnel, budget, and overseeing various Park's projects

¹Mr. Plochocki arrived at the meeting.

- Prior to working for Onondaga County severed almost 5 years in Washington for the Department of HUD in a number of different capacities; HUD controls many programs and a lot of the funds that support and serve the County's Community Development office
- Doesn't believe there is a better person for this job – hard working, smart, integrity; asking for appointment support

Mr. Skahen:

- Thanked the committee for their time; interest in Community Development stems from time in Washington working with HUD, started in Community Planning and Development, worked with many programs he'd be working with now, i.e. Homeless Task Force, Community Development Block Grants
- Moved up to Office of Deputy Secretary, provided opportunity to work on additional programs, i.e. Lead Hazard Reduction Program
- Moved back to Onondaga County to raise family; County Executive has afforded him many opportunities over the past decade and he has enjoyed them all, looking forward to this position because of its valued work
- Served on Home Headquarters Board of Directors for the past year, great organization, well run – looking forward to working with them further as well as other community organizations; important work that he will take seriously, asks for support

Chair Rapp asked what best prepares him for this job. Mr. Skahen said that there are two things. Working in the County he has had a lot of interaction with other departments and has a good understanding of how things operate internally. Also the Deputy Secretary's Office was the operational arm of HUD, therefore he interacted with all the departments and still knows people there. It is a real strength to still have those relationships. Working in Community, Planning and Development gave him exposure to many programs he will use now, but moving up allowed him to understand how the whole agency works both inside and out.

Chair Rapp said that running a department also requires managing a group of people. She read his resume carefully, but did not see much management experience to date. Mr. Skahen said that when he worked for the Deputy Assistant Secretary at HUD he was the internal person between two others. At Park's he handled all the personnel, focusing on the items learned at Maxwell, i.e. budgeting and program items. Mrs. Rapp said that she meant hiring, firing as opposed to HR, and motivation. Mr. Skahen said that Mr. Stevens was the administrative person, but they worked closely together.

Mr. Knapp said that this was all about Mr. Skahen, but he wanted to give a quick shout out to Mr. DeMore who did a great job, and came in at a time when the department needed a new focus and leadership. This is a very important area for the County. The lead grant is especially key with the problems the City has had, and Mr. Skahen's experience in that area is good.

Mr. Knapp asked if the Home Headquarters Board would be a conflict, assuming the resolution is passed. Mr. Skahen said that it shouldn't be, he will ask Law to make a determination. He talked with Kerry Quaglia who was excited about him getting this position, and asked that he stay on the board. Chair Rapp said that there is a lot in play, it would be good. Mr. Knapp agreed that it would be good, but wants to make sure that there is no conflict.

Mr. Knapp asked if Mr. Skahen had any clue as to where HUD was going under the new administration. Mr. Skahen said that HUD was not one of the hot-button agencies and when Obama came in they didn't do anything drastic. With everything that the new administration wants to focus on, he would guess that this would be one of the operations which keeps chugging along.

Mr. Knapp said that a few years ago the rules changed in the way in which they look at census tracts for block grants. Huge areas of the County were eliminated, including his entire district. With his contacts in Washington, asked if he had any thoughts on this. Mr. Skahen said that when he was at HUD they were trying to tear down Cherry Hill and HUD had a rule that public housing could not be torn down without replacing the exact same number of units. The rule was outdated as mixed use was necessary so that low income people could see the next step. Via the Deputy Secretary's office he was involved with the push that demonstrated how this would affect the local community. It was the first time HUD approved tearing down public housing without replacing with the same number of units and now there is a housing development for low income people and 10 units dedicated to veterans. The local community can push back and win and he would attempt it.

In answer to Mr. Jordan, Mr. Skahen said that the position was not advertised, and it would be a lateral move for him. Mr. Jordan asked the grade and step. Mr. Skahen said that it was a grade 37, the same as Mr. DeMore, and his step might be an i.

Mr. Plochocki echoed Mr. Knapp's comments, saying Mr. DeMore did a great job. Mr. Skahen brings a lot to the table, in particular, he's work for HUD. He is more than qualified, he is eminently qualified for this position. Out of curiosity, he asked what got him started at HUD. Mr. Skahen said he graduated from Le Moyne, was in the private sector for 10 years and decided he wanted to change his path. He focused on getting into the Maxwell School for public administration. Though older, he did not want to take the executive program, choose to go full time and worked nights for two years at New Venture Gear to get the money. After graduation he knew he wanted to go to Washington, and his focus was health services and management policy. He talked with local people in the community asking for connections in Washington and was advised by Mr. Weiss to contact Mr. Ferranti. Mr. Ferranti passed his resume onto Mayor Bernardi, who asked that he come work for him at HUD and the rest is history. It was a great experience and he really enjoyed his time in Washington.

Mr. Ryan said that he was happy to see Mr. Skahen on the Home Headquarters Board as they are doing a lot of good work in the City. Recognizing that the City is part of the County is a good part of a well-rounded experience. Mr. Skahen will own this going forward, but he suggests working with Mr. DeMore on an ongoing basis.

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. Ryan to approve this item. AYES: 4 (Knapp, Ryan, Plochocki, Knapp); NOES: 1 (Jordan); MOTION CARRIED.

2. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION ASSOCIATION:

a. Confirming Appointment and Reappointment to the Cooperative Extension Association of Onondaga County Board of Directors (Tim Burtis, Michael Plochocki)

Mr. Knapp said that this was an important organization and people don't realize all the things they are involved in until they are on the board.

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. Ryan, to approve this item. AYES: 4 (Knapp, Ryan, Plochocki, Rapp); ABSTAIN: 1 (Plochocki); MOTION CARRIED

3. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:

a. Confirming Reappointment to the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency (Janice Herzog)

Mrs. Rapp said that Ms. Herzog has been present at every IDA meeting she has ever attended, and is a fine appointment.

A motion was made by Mrs. Rapp, seconded by Mr. Knapp to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Rapp noted that this was her last committee meeting. The committee gave her a round of applause.

The meeting adjourned at 10:56 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



KATHERINE M. FRENCH, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

DATE: **December 15, 2016**

NAME	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
PLEASE PRINT	
BILL KINNE	LEG
Mary Beth Primo	Dep. County Executive
Martin Skahan	County Executive Office
Nick Paro	LEG