



## **Sullivan County Charter Review Commission Meeting**

**May 18, 2016 at 6:00 PM**

**Present:** Steve Altman, Paul Burckard, Bruce Ferguson, Sandra Johnson Fields, Peg Harrison, Michael Levinson, Bill Liblick, Brian McPhillips, Larry Richardson, Sara Sprague, Ken Walter

**Absent:** Norman Sutherland

**Others Present:** Luis Alvarez, Cheryl McCausland, George L. Cooke, Hal Smith

The Sullivan County Charter Review Commission Meeting was called to order by Co-Chairperson Paul Burckard at 6:02 pm.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **Commissioner of Jurors, George L. Cooke –**

Co-Chairperson Burckard introduced Mr. George L. Cooke, Commissioner of Jurors and thanked her for attending the meeting. He stated that Mr. Cooke was the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors from January of 1988 to December 1992, from November 1992 to January 2007 was the elected Sullivan County Clerk, from March of 2007 to March of 2009 he was with the State of New York, Office of Court Administration, records management, March of 2009 to November of 2010 he was the Deputy Supervisor for the Town of Thompson, and November of 2010 to present Mr. Cooke is the Commissioner of Jurors.

Mr. Cooke stated that he was appointed as the Commissioner of Jurors from the Jury Board, it is the County Judge, Supreme Court Judge and someone from the Legislature designated by the Legislature. Some of things that he considers very important is one of the things that they do now is they bring in schools to the cases; Ms. Johnson Fields whom he has dealt with for the past six years has been very cooperative. They first talk to the students and show them a film, the lower grades do not go into the courtroom but the higher grades they do bring into the courtroom, particularly for drug cases and DWI's. They will have Monticello High School at the Drug Court graduation. When someone is arrested for drugs, they can either go to jail or they can go to what is called Drug Court, these are people that are arrested for the first or second time. People think that it is much easier to go to Drug Court but it is not, they are tested regularly, they take hair samples and if you test positive for any of the drugs you go right back into jail. You are given more than one chance but eventually you may have to go to jail for the full term. They have had Roscoe, Eldred, Monticello, Fallsburg, and some other students. When Fallsburg was there, they had one of the students that just graduated five years before, the teachers knew the kid and it was somewhat embarrassing. With drugs, there is no time for embarrassment, what they call it is "scared straight" for them to see a drug dealer get ten years in jail it makes a tremendous impact

on them. If they just help one kid out it is well worth it. They are trying to be a lot easier with Drug Courts, they feel that they have the best judicial system in the world but they are far from perfect. When you read in the newspaper that someone is arrested on a Monday, convicted on a Wednesday and executed on a Friday thank God they never come to that. The State of New York takes security exceptionally seriously, when you first come in you go through a magnetometer, it is not as invasive as the magnetometer at the airports but it can detect where someone brings in an instrument to harm themselves or someone else. Sometimes they think they go too far because they have court officers all through the building carrying arms but then a year and a half ago in Middletown, NY a gentleman came in with a long rifle and pointed it at a certain public official and came seconds from pulling the trigger until a one of the court officers pulled out their weapon and shot him. They feel that they are one of the safest buildings in Sullivan County and it is terrible that they have come to this but they have to let the jurors be able to concentrate on the case and nothing else, that should be the most important thing. To be a qualified juror in Sullivan County, you first must be a resident, never been convicted of a Felony, must be able to communicate in English. One of the things that they have is naturalization; he has gotten quite involved with naturalization in Newburgh. Ms. Johnson Fields and he went a few times with Bill Kaplan in the Newburgh Unity Armory, he bought the Armory there and he has put millions of dollars into it. Newburgh is 53% Latino now. He put an indoor soccer field, an indoor gymnasium, the kids come on a Saturday morning, about a 1,000, no charge for anything, and most of it is volunteer. After they play basketball and soccer, they go upstairs and do computer labs. Mr. Kaplan got the graduate students from Mount Saint Mary, Orange County Community College and SUNY New Paltz and they read to the kids one on one. The biggest thing with these kids is reading they have to have reading, particularly in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. They had a meeting at the George L. Cooke school where Ms. Johnson Fields is the principal and the Dean of Students, Dean Rosenberg helped out there. Some of these students will never see a college, they will never have an opportunity to go visit a college, what they did was put those kids on a bus, the brought two busloads the first time, and they went to visit a college. They were the most appreciative, well-behaved kids you ever saw, they went to the planetarium and the cafeteria. They are trying to expand, they are State employees, but they have other responsibilities. They used to be defined with blinders, which mean the Commissioner of Jurors brings in jurors and that is it. Those days are gone. It is just like the Legislative body; they have to reach out to other concerns because everything is affected. The first thing that he would talk about outside the Juror office is school taxes. Schools can no longer be funded by real property it is impossible and not going to work. They have houses in Monticello that are selling for \$45,000 and they probably have \$4,500 in taxes on that house how can someone that can only afford a \$45,000 house afford \$4,500 in taxes, it just does not match. A friend of his lives in Westchester, a nice house but not such a big house, and he pays \$50,000 a year in taxes. That means he has to gross \$75,000 to make the \$50,000. There has to be a statewide solution to the school problem. The Legislatures charge is not school taxes but when you are talking about the residents of Sullivan County, they want to leave because of the taxes. They are a tax county they are no worse off than other counties. When he worked for the Office of Court Administration, he traveled all over and counties are hurting big time. The tax-exempt areas are worse off than they are because the State brought all the properties up there. There are other areas that have a higher percentage of tax exempt than Sullivan does. First, they have to address it, the way they address it is the form of government. To decide if it is a Legislative form of government or Supervisors with a County Manager or a County Executive is questionable. The one-man one vote rule, which was just approved in the Supreme Court on August 16 in Texas, has been holding for about 70 years it would be almost impossible to break that. That is something that the Legislature or the Supervisors will have to decide. He does not think that it does not make much difference in that there has to be some courageous

charges. There has to be people coming out of the norm. He thinks that the Medicaid problem is still the same from when he was here. So what do you do, you are told that every Senator and Assemblyman is against the counties paying it. Everything has been tried, Dr. King said to break the law, what he did to change some laws that he felt were unjust, he brought it to the front. Something courageous has to be done; they are hurting in Sullivan County and many people that work hard and many people that deserve better. The County has been in existence for this long and they have had the same problems, look at the jail. In 1988 when he was the Clerk to the Board, he remembers being in Executive Sessions the price on the jail was \$22 million for probably the same facility that they are doing now. Mr. Harvey Smith told Mr. Cooke that he would come in at \$21 million and what they needed was a year or two so they went to Joe Wasser who was a good friend of all of us and he had connections in the Commission of Corrections in the City of Albany, he got them a year he got them until today. It is now \$122 million today for a lessor facility. It is not the fault of the Legislature today, it was inherited and the problem is when you inherit something like this it makes it twice as hard to solve.

Mr. McPhillips entered the meeting at this time, 14:05.

Mr. Cooke continued by stating in the County Clerk's Office, he used to be very involved with the state associations. They have what is called a vehicle use tax, when someone comes from Sullivan County; to help offset the cost of Motor Vehicle you pay a \$4.00 use tax. He thinks that is totally wrong, what he thinks should happen is the citizen of Sullivan County should not have to pay that \$4.00, the visitor to Sullivan County who does not have to pay anything to come up here should have to pay \$10.00. You have people from New York City traveling through three counties to come up here to do a transaction in Sullivan County because it is much easier to get things done. One of the things that they did start-up was transactions of New York City motor vehicles. When you buy a car in New York City it takes six months to register a vehicle, we made a deal along with other counties. They send them their transaction and they send it back to them within a day. It has to be a radical idea from the counties to change these things. They should not be punished for being such a good Motor Vehicle office, why should they have extra people here for that. They put the TV in and they have a Spanish-speaking person, not only in DMV but also in the County Clerk's Office, he hired both of them. The most money generated by any office here is probably the Clerk's Office or DMV; they have the biggest traffic flow. The Clerk's Office get paid for the use of the computers as well and nothing that you get in the Clerk's Office will not have a fee and the county gets a piece of that fee. Sometimes there are fees and the county gets nothing for instance in motor vehicle the enforcement fees the counties get nothing. The registrations and driver's license, the county gets 12.7%, the State tried to take away the registration by using their central office to take registrations, it takes an awful long time to get them back but we used to get them back in two or three days and Mr. Daniel Briggs still does that. When you send your renewal in it puts that Utica address on the envelope but they did outreach and asked people to send them directly to Sullivan County and most people will if they realize it. Of the 62 counties in New York, all of the counties have a Motor Vehicle run by a County Clerk except for Nassau, Suffolk, Rockland, Albany and Onondaga. At one point, he threatened to close the DMV, as far as they were concerned it was costing the county money, it was a debit, he wanted a State office. The eight or 9 counties that have state run offices they are not the most centrally located but they were the ones that had the most political influence at that time. Now, we are making money on the vehicle transactions. One thing might be to privatize the transactions, in other words go into business, go into private industry. There are people that do that for a living. It is easy to get the dealers to come up here, it is not a problem, and they do not want to wait six months they want to wait three days. Mr. Briggs and he speak about it all the time and the important this is, he knows when Mr. Burckard was here, they had these associations. He got most of his ideas from the

associations. When someone was standing at his front counter, they would be asking a legal question and he did not know the answer and he would never give a legal answer, he is not an attorney, so he would call upstairs and they would say give them some time and they would get back to him. He could not have the guy screaming at him at the front counter so he would have four counties that he would call, one was Schenectady, Orange and two others, he had them on the computer and he would email them tell them what the guy at the counter wanted to do and he would ask them what they think. They would send him their answer back and what would happen would be if he knew that he was going down the tube wrong, he knew he had four or five other counties doing the same thing, and it made sense. He thinks that there has to be communication. In his office, they are all statewide employees; the only county employee in the courthouse is the District Attorney and all his employees.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that Mr. Cooke's whole staff is state employees, so the county's contribution is to maintain the building, heat it, clean it and provide the infrastructure for the operation.

Mr. Cooke stated yes and it is expensive because that building and the jail of course are old. That building has its problems but it is a good courthouse. There actually was a tunnel from the courthouse to the jail in the back of the grand jury room that is where they used to bring the prisoners back and forth was through the tunnel. He does not know what happened to it and why they closed it. When someone was elected Sheriff, the house where Legal Aid is now, used to be the Sheriff's house.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that when he was with the county there were some difficulties with the Office of Court Administration mandating that they provide space, courtrooms, etc. He inquired if that was still going on today, that they could actually tell the County that they are going to do this, to make this happen.

Mr. Cooke stated yes they can, in fact, they store their criminal records. The County Clerk has a formula, there is so much per square foot and they send them a bill once a year for their criminal records. The Chief Clerk for the operating courts keeps the records for ten years and after that, they send them to the County Clerk and they store them and the County Clerk yearly sends a bill to the State of New York. Another problem that they have here is records retention. What they were going to do is, when the county built the new jail, they were going to do records retention in the old jail. Whenever a municipality builds a new building, they never build anything for records retention; it is just not on the front burner. You have records that are being stored on tractor trailers and the State saying that it needs to be taken care of but they are not, and it is no one's fault they just have no place else to put them. Records are being destroyed for a lot of different reasons, climate and things of that nature; they are doing the best job they can. They do not have the money now to build a records retention building. They do records retention for the college, they took that on and they should not have had to but they have to work together. They are limited by statute of what they can and cannot do but they have to expand on that. They have to impress upon the people in Albany in particular that things have to change dramatically.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that to do that they have to have a presence.

Mr. Altman stated that Mr. Cooke talks about all these things but it does boil down to what he just mentioned that they do not have someone lobbying Albany, correct.

Mr. Cooke stated that there are different things that they can do. One of the reasons that he was County Clerk is you make no enemies you do favors for people all day long. It is almost impossible to become a County Clerk for that reason, he forgot just how many Senators used to be a County Clerk because it is a tremendous place to run from to be elected and then run for State Senator. To hire a lobbyist is not the answer, it is not working.

Mr. Altman stated that he was thinking about it being in someone's job description.

Mr. Cooke stated that it is a tough thing, lobbyists make a lot of money but he also thinks that part of the answer is dealing with other people that have the same positions that they do in other counties. For instance, the Sheriff at a jail, they would all love to have the state come up and give them some money. It is not going to happen it did not happen in Orange or Ulster County that had to build a new jail. If they give to Sullivan, then they would have to go back and give all the other ones money and that is the biggest bullet that they have now is the jail. They have had many lawsuits there and most of the lawsuits are based on the facility not on the manpower, they are based on the facility. They could get into the fact where they could go punitively on them meaning every person that had something to do with it could be held personally responsible. You can sue anyone for anything. When you go punitively, he believes you have to pay for your own council.

Mr. Liblick stated that Mr. Cooke has been around the county for a long time and he has seen the way their government has changed, he has seen the Board of Supervisors and seen the Legislature, County Managers, Supervisors and everyone come and go.

Ms. Harrison entered the meeting at this time, 30:28.

Mr. Liblick continued by stating that obviously Mr. Cooke has seen the crisis that they are in, they are one of the poorest counties and one of the unhealthiest counties and what Mr. Burckard and Mr. Altman touched on in Albany. Sullivan County used to have a presence in Albany, he is not talking about lobbyist presence, and he is talking about a presence. Some of their research that they have discovered is that Sullivan County has lost that presence and not from the elected officials but from people who work for the county. They have changed elected officials and they want to get things done and whoever that is, democrat, republican, man or woman, they come in with great ideas and then they find themselves banging their head against the walls because they have to deal with nine people. They have to use these terms that they are using now like micromanagement and you are not allowed to do that, you are hired to be professional and do their job. They are serious right now about recommendations whether it is giving the County Manager more power, the Legislature more power or whether it be looking at a County Executive form of government. He inquired how Mr. Cooke felt about the way their government is being operated.

Mr. Cooke stated that the loss of influence in Albany has definitely happened but it is not anyone's fault. When the hotels were here every one of those Assemblymen and Senators used to come up here. Strong powerful leaders, they were all there and used to stay at the Grossingers, they were friends of theirs and used to be in here all the time and they could do nothing but help them because they got to be on a personal level with them, they do not have that connection anymore. For some reason they did not have that with present leaders, mostly because they do not have a reason to come. When he was a young man, he can remember everyone that ran for the Mayor of New York had to come to the Concord, Grossingers and Kutshers and they got to know those people. They had Hillary Clinton here twice, once at Kutshers and once at Mr. Willys so you do make somewhat of a contact with them. They do not have that anymore.

Mr. Altman inquired if the casino would be a draw for them.

Mr. Cooke stated definitely, they would pick up influence there.

Mr. Altman stated that it is more instead of someone going to Albany they can get Albany here.

Mr. Cooke stated that the problem is that there are so many other counties that are in dire straits as we are, if they were the only county that had these dire strengths then they would have more ears to listen.

Mr. Walters stated that they do have a lobbying arm, every county has one, called NYSAC. He inquired if Mr. Cooke would explain that more to everyone.

Mr. Cooke stated that New York State Association of Counties represents all counties and what he just said was that so many counties are in bad shape that it is hard to be individualistic with them. They are good, they are needed and it is well worth the money. One of the things that Sullivan County always had was they have had kids that have gone through here that have become giants in industries somehow they should feed off of these people. He actually thinks that anyone born and raised in Sullivan County has fondness in their heart and would do anything they could even though they moved away years ago. He always thought that they should try to get them involved.

Mr. Burckard stated that in addition to what Mr. Cooke just said they also had staff that spent a lot of time up there, not only through their own associations but also through NYSAC. They counted their wins most of the time from what they kept them from doing not what they got them to do.

Mr. Cooke stated that he brought Mr. Burckard and Mr. Ira Cohen to County Clerk seminars because they all worked hand in glove. You have the obvious problems, the tax exempt, he will only talk about the Catholic Church because he is Catholic but he thinks that the Catholic Church should be taxed, he goes to mass every day and has for a long time but that does not mean that they should not pay taxes to have that building. He thinks that more people would be more dedicated to the churches if they did. Some people say just the church and one house but that is another thing, he knows in New York City one of the biggest landowners is the Catholic Church. Gary Greenwald years ago had an idea for a use tax, if you use the road you pay the tax, you use the fire department you pay a tax, the police you pay a tax, no exceptions. Would that work, he does not think it would.

Mr. Altman stated that people like him who dedicates their lives to government, they have a passion for it and pay is secondary. He inquired what Mr. Cooke thought of the pay scales for the Legislature.

Mr. Cooke stated that he could compare when it comes to the courts and the State makes about a third more than the county does but the county makes a lot more than the average person when you take the benefits and hospitalization. It is a pretty good job working for the county, working for Sullivan County is a pretty good job.

Mr. Altman stated that he is only talking about the Legislators.

Mr. Cooke stated that he always feels that something as dramatic as going to a full-time Legislator or changing to a County Executive or a different form of government should be on the people of the county, it should be a referendum. He does not feel that seven or eight people can speak for 75,000. You cannot go referendum every time a hard vote comes up and it is somewhat unfair sometimes but it has to be done.

Mr. Altman stated that it is called a part-time job but in a lot of cases, it is not a part-time job.

Mr. Cooke stated that he has known a lot of Legislators that it was not a part-time job.

Mr. Altman stated that it is like \$23,000 and a bunch of benefits but he thinks the value of the benefits far exceeds the salary. So, you get a smaller pool of people for these jobs because they are not getting the money to do it.

Mr. Cooke stated that he is not saying that Mr. Altman is wrong; he would look at other counties that pay like that. The closer you get to New York City the higher a Legislator makes the further the less they make. When he was County Clerk, he was making \$65,000 a year, the Orange County Clerk was making \$125,000 and the Rockland County Clerk was making \$130,000, but the person upstate was making \$35,000 or \$40,000.

Mr. Levinson stated because of the cost of living.

Mr. Cooke state that the cost of living is pretty high here now it never used to be as high proportionately and the taxes were not as high proportionately but because of the demand and unfunded mandates. It is the most used word in this room unfunded mandates.

Mr. Altman inquired if Mr. Cooke has seen both forms of government.

Mr. Cooke stated that he was the Clerk to the Supervisors and he was County Clerk with the Legislature.

Mr. Altman stated that now we have a Legislature and a County Manager and he inquired if Mr. Cooke sees that working.

Mr. Cooke stated that he saw more when he was the Clerk to the Supervisors than he did with the Legislature. There were a lot of positives to the Supervisors and they had more of an identity with the towns as a Supervisor, the problem was with the weighted voting and Thompson and Liberty carried everything. There were 15 towns and those 2 towns whatever they decided the other 13 towns would go along with. When he was County Clerk, the county has the right to control the elected officials budget, if they say that you are getting three less employees, there is nothing that they can do. You try to have a working relationship and at that time the Legislature never bothered him but he was smart enough to stay away. The more you get involved it is just going to hurt yourself or your office. Every time you make a decision, you make a third of the people mad at you particularly if you have to make dramatic decisions.

Mr. Altman stated that they are all talking about if they want an elected head or a stronger County Manager.

Mr. Cooke stated that he was under three managers; Paul Rouis who was the longest serving County Administrator in the State of New York, then Linda Green, she had some good points but she burned too many bridges. If you are elected you are much more independent, if you are appointed it is the question on who makes the ideology; does the board make the ideology or does the Manager make the ideology. He says it is the Board and the manager has to implement it. If you are looking at an elected, there are faults in both. You can have a very popular guy be elected that you know is out the window when it comes to hard decision. An election is a popularity contest.

Mr. Liblick inquired if Mr. Cooke thinks that the people of Sullivan County should decide by a referendum if we should have a County Executive form of government.

Mr. Cooke stated yes definitely.

Mr. Altman inquired if he thinks if we did that would we need to educate them.

Mr. Cooke stated yes.

Co-Chairperson Burckard that just like, we did the last time and we changed it from what it was to what it is.

Mr. Cooke stated that there were some great people on it last time, Walter Rhuelen, Gene Blabey, and business people that were hotel people. One of the hardest meetings they ever had, at one time was when Dennis Greenwald when they put on the room tax and that was a dramatic blow to the hotels here. When we go to Saratoga or wherever you go now, the room tax is usually 10% and we only had like a \$4.00 fee or something like that.

Mr. Altman inquired what Mr. Cooke thought of term limits.

Mr. Cooke stated that he has often thought that if you are a Legislator and you have to do the hard decisions, the real hard decisions then, if you really did those hard decisions then you would never get re-elected.

Mr. Altman stated that he is talking about term limits though.

Mr. Levinson stated if they do not like them, they would not re-elect them.

Mr. Liblick stated that when he analyzes it and you get to law enforcement, Sheriff, District Attorney, County Court Judge, he does not think that they look at that politically, they look at who is doing a good job at protecting the people. If you look at the last election, for example, Kathy LaBuda, Nadia Rajsiz won the election, she was there for how many years, Jonathan Rouis was there for so many years, and he lost. At the end of the day, he thinks if the people want change they will come out and deliver change. The term limit argument is a very hard argument if someone is doing their job and they are a good elected official.

Mr. Cooke stated that as far as term limits go, he honestly feels that he would hate to think that someone doing a good job would not be able to come back but is it a popularity contest sometimes, yes. It takes more than one person to make decisions in this room though.

Co-Chairperson Burckard thanked Mr. Cooke for coming.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Altman made a motion to approve the April 20, 2016 minutes, seconded by Mr. Levinson, put to a vote and unanimously carried 11-0, with Mr. Sutherland absent.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **May 3, 2016 Letter from the County Legislature-**

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated each one of them received a letter from four members of the Legislature it was signed by the four members that they are all aware of. Some of them took real exception to this letter and he will be the first one to say that he did, he was really upset and some of the things that were said he was really angry. They discussed it among themselves, Mr. Liblick sent out an email on it, and they were able to set up a meeting with both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Legislature and the County Attorney. That meeting was on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 1pm. He thinks it was a good meeting, he thinks that they were receptive to what their comments were. He can tell them that the three of them were very blunt in their conversation with them on some of the



issues. In the first part of the letter, they talked about reports as of certain dates, coming to Executive Committee meetings to give reports and they said the best report that they can get would be for them to look at an agenda and read the minutes. Ms. Huck does an excellent job, they are verbatim and if they want to know what is going on look at the agendas and read the minutes. Secondly, they made the point that this was premature; Mr. Richardson made the point that they will hopefully be going around and having meetings in both the eastern and western part of the county in order to get more input from the general public. The Commission cannot go out and recommend a major change to this government without at least asking for input from the people. Otherwise, they are going to come back and say that they never even bothered to ask them, so they want to at least make the attempt. If it does not work, it does not work. They explained that there is not a time limit in the Charter for them to do their job. For them to do it appropriately and accurately they need the time to do it thoroughly and to ask the questions that they need to ask and hopefully they will get answers to give them the ability to make an appropriate recommendation. There were comments in here about us being reminded of the process that their job is to look at the Charter and make suggestions to the Legislature but to not look at the Code. He was very upset with that, which is not the case that is not what they have been told by every single speaker that is conversant in this. County Attorney McCausland and himself have discussed this and they have a running discussion on this.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she did not say that they could not look at the Code; she said that the focus of the group should not be the Code because County staff is required to implement whatever changes the Legislature makes.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that the other part of that, so they clearly understand this, the Charter is 17 pages, the Code is 43 and it implements the Charter. If they make a major recommendation whatever that happens to be, they are going to look at Charter language and look at Code language so when they make the recommendation to the Legislature, they will also include that. Specifics in regards to the implementation of it and what they would like to achieve. The Legislature may agree or not agree. County Attorney McCausland will also look, dot the I's, and cross the T's and if they all agree of going down a particular road, they will be doing this together. The Vice-Chair was very adamant and several different times said that the Code is part of it and he thinks that they have that issue resolved. Mr. Richardson at the beginning of the meeting made a short presentation but he thought that it was excellent and he asked if he would not mind doing it again. He thinks what he said is good for all of them to listen too again especially for Ms. Sprague who is a new member.

Mr. Richardson gave a short presentation (see attached). He continued by stating he thinks that they came away from the meeting with a pretty good understanding of what they are doing here. Mr. Burckard had suggested some different wording.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that he will come back to that in just a minute but before he would like to go to Ms. Harrison to address some things that people apparently thought they were doing which was to be intimidating and interrogating that certainly never occurred that he saw. The minutes do not reflect it and he thinks that they were asking what they needed to ask but doing it in a manner that was appropriate for them to get the information that they needed.

Ms. Harrison stated that they did have a very frank discussion about the questions that they have asked every speaker about who is in charge. Apparently, there has been some miscommunication or some concerns about that. They talked about how the Charter is clear that the County Manager is the CEO and they talked about how

she would have thought that when the Charter Commission was formed, the County Manager would have sat down with the department heads and given them the Charter and Code and discussed what recommendations should come from the individual departments. They had a very frank discussion about who is in charge and that the current Charter is written in a manner that the CEO of the County is the County Manager at this point. They did recognize that in changing the form of government, they are eliminating positions, so they knew that at some point as they were told at the very first meeting that they are going to get push back on some of the positions. It was a very helpful meeting and definitely, the Chairman and the Vice-Chair are on board. She thinks that they recognize it themselves; they understand that they are in a very critical time here in Sullivan County. Even if they go to a referendum, there is still a time where they need leadership and someone who will guide them through it. They also had to all digest what was said and probably meet again.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that the Chair was very clear that they would not allow any repercussions to any department head or anyone that made recommendations about what they feel should be changed to make things more efficient. He thinks that was very helpful for him to say that so that hopefully whomever else they speak to will be comfortable in answering the questions. As they remember some of both the elected officials and appointed officials after they asked and they asked the same question of everyone right from the beginning, including the County Manager, did express their opinions with regards to what they feel needed to get done. They were unanimous if they recall in what that recommendation was. In their discussion and what County Attorney recommended that they respond to the Legislature and explain why they took exception to what they were suggesting by the time frame, they did assure them that there was no hidden agenda although some of them thought that there was but it was not they were simply trying to be helpful in moving them along but he now realizes all that they have to get into before they can do this in a proper manner. He thinks that they can respond to this with the approval of this Commission, explaining to the Legislature that what they are requesting is completely premature at this point in time for them to do it and that the agenda and the minutes reflect what they are doing and where they are going. They are clear that the Commission will pass onto them any recommendations where they come to a conclusion exactly what they did with the staggered terms. When they make a decision, they will pass it onto them. They are not going to hold up things, they will provide suggestions in an appropriate manner to both the Charter language and the Code language, as it is appropriate for them to look at. He then stated that he gave the Vice-Chair and he believes she shared it with the Chair that if they came back to the Commission with one sentence he thinks it would be very effective, “the Sullivan County Legislature recognizes the independent nature of the Charter Commission and will wait for the Commission to do its due diligence and make its recommendations based thereon.” If they got a response from the Legislature that in essence does this in his mind, and he looks to the Commission for their response, that will negate this letter and he thinks will clear the air.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she wants to repeat to everyone here because she was asked to go to that meeting, that in looking at the letter, she thinks that there might have been a misunderstanding behind the intent. She knows that the three Chairs are angry at the request of having one of them attend the Executive Committee meeting three times, and then in parenthesis it says “no more than fifteen minutes.” She stated that she could tell them that in dealing with some of the Legislators that lead to this letter the intent was not to harass them or diminish anything that they do and let them know that they are not there to put them through the ringer, they understand that they are all volunteers. So when they said can you come to the Executive Committee, the intent was to have public discussion and she knows that the Charter meetings are public, but to have a public discussion to not only keep the Legislators abreast of what they are doing but you have members of the media

attend the committee meeting. So, as they know out of sight out of mind sometimes, but if they are present and it is picked up in the media, there is some ongoing interest in the issues that they address. She made this clear to them at the meeting and she wanted to make that clear here tonight. The other thing was to not to try to unilaterally prevent them from attending the issues that they chose to attend but to perhaps assist in getting all of the issues addressed in a timely manner. She knows that they got this addressed before her time from other attorneys or others. If you make recommendations and she will use County Executive because it is the most extreme recommendation, they have to back into the referendum. First, you have to make the recommendations, which are going to take time, the Legislature has to chew on it and discuss it, decide whether they are going to approve it and recommend it going forward. There is then the Public Hearings, referendum, etc. and they have to do it in a manner to back in so individuals who want to run, think about running have sufficient time to comply with the election law and to get other things in place. She is not familiar enough with the election process to tell them the dates for backing into that. That was another one of the motivations there. She understands how the letter could have been read one way but she can tell them from the conversations with those whom spoke to her before the letter went out that it was not the intent to diminish or try to shortcut your research and discussions. Ms. Harrison did mention something in the meeting that was eye opening to her about “we were warned about the pushback that you are touching on people’s jobs or lives or friends and there is pushback” she said it to the Chairs and she will say it again publicly, that never once came up in her presence. The motivation behind that letter, she thinks, seems to be somewhat separate than the way it was read. So, that was the background from the committee requesting the attendance. She still recommends, and she is not their lawyer but if you have a discussion that you want to get more public feedback on a committee meeting is a good place for them to bring it up you are not only dealing with one or two Legislators at that point, you have nine. Body language is important, open communication is important just like she learned at that meeting certain aspects, others can learn, and there are members of the public at the meetings. The Commission said that they want to travel around the county, people come to meetings, sometimes it is the person in the corner that does not say anything but then during public comment they say, did you ever consider this. She just wanted to make that clear from the county’s perspective; there was never intent to insult or rush but intent to keep it moving with the understanding that there is work to be done. With that being said, she wanted to let them know what her and her office have been doing, they are not only trying to come up with language for a staggered term local law but as she had explained in the meeting it does not make sense for them to prepare three or four local laws for the Legislature to adopt and possibly go to a referendum, etc. Our preference is to have whatever recommendations the Commission makes that the Legislature adopts to have an ominous of a local law to go together if they can, they will see what the timing is. They have looked at the staggered terms and just last week, she hired a new Assistant County Attorney, they were very short staffed, she has been looking into term limits generally to see what other counties have done and to the extent that there is anything interesting, she will be happy to share that with them. She is also looking into the Executive form of government, she is not trying to sidetrack anything that they are doing, she is just trying to be up to speed with anything, if they ask their Legislature to look at they know a little bit more tomorrow than they did yesterday. They are doing things behind the scenes so that if the situation arises they want to work with them to get this out there as quickly as possible but everything in government takes time as they know. Lastly, she was at a County Attorney’s conference and she had the opportunity to speak with the Ulster County Attorney, she was enthusiastic with the opportunity to speak with you and she believes that is set for next month. She repeated her request, as to the extent that they have questions for her, she really would appreciate the opportunity to get those questions to her to help her prepare her time with you to make it a little more fruitful. She also asked for a copy of the Charter. As you know

speaking to this group, she cannot give you legal advice but it will be more fact finding on the Commissions part to see how it all works.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that he has that on his agenda to go over. He continued by stating that County Attorney McCausland touched on something and like he said that this was a very frank and sometimes blunt conversation, he thought it was good. Would the things that they made a very important point to the Chair and Vice-Chair, Sullivan County right now this minute is going through some very serious issues because of the construction with the casino and what is going on with economic development, and business retention, they touched on those subjects. He made the point very strongly that the Charter Commissions job takes time. If they chose to make a suggestion in doing something substantial in changing it not only work up how that would work and all of the interconnections in how that would work including Charter and Code language changes, etc., it will take time and by then it will be way too late. What needs to be done to address the issues that have come up at this table and what have been brought to them by other people in the county, needs to be done now. The people who have the power to get that done now is the County Legislature and the County Manager. The Charter is crystal clear that the County Manager is the Chief Executive Officer of this county; it says it repeatedly and clearly. He then stated that he wants to hear from all the members since the letter was addressed to all of the Commission.

Mr. Altman stated that his understanding was that this Commission by law or mandate had to be formed every certain amount of years.

Mr. Liblick stated every ten years.

Mr. Altman stated and the job of appointed this group is placed in the hands of Legislature but he did not know that they worked through the Legislature he thought they worked for the people.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that this commission is independent and he thinks that the County Attorney can address that, they are an independent entity and they go forward as an independent entity.

Mr. Altman stated many of them got insulted by the letter, the letter smelled. It smelled of micromanaging them, rushing their judgment, come up with things with no quality and he thinks that they are still being marginalized.

Mr. Richardson stated he was not quite as offended as some people were by the letter but he saw it as a push to get this job done and get out of here kind of a thing. So he did make it a point at the meeting that they had that they are volunteer and they meet once a month and you can see that the presenters run long and they did early on try to see if they could meet more than once a month, it just did not work. It is a long process to hear from all these people. They had the discussion early on about putting all these things in one basket and there was a difference in opinion many months ago on this topic whether they should go and lay all this to the public to vote in one bill to be voted up or down. Some may not be happy if the recommendation is a County Executive but they might be happy with staggered terms or some other part of their recommendation. He would hope that when it gets to the choice of the public that people do have a choice to pick and choose what they like.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she did not mean one local law. Some are permissive referendum and some will probably be mandatory referendum.

Mr. Ferguson stated that staggered terms, he feels that most people in the county are in favor of but term limits and County Executive are going to be a very big deal. They do not want to see staggered terms defeated because they did not want the others. So the big-ticket items would be separate initiatives.

Mr. Liblick stated that he got the letter and he was equally upset and he did not even discuss anything with anyone on the committee. He made some phone calls on his own the very day that Ms. Harrison called him to tell him that Mr. Burckard was ready to resign and he thinks other people were going to follow through. Maybe part of the problem is that they have a new Legislature, and the only person from the new Legislature that has been here has been Luis. He was here at our last meeting and made a passionate plea to them to please work with them, he supports them and then all of a sudden out of nowhere they receive this communication with time frames and presentations. He will tell them something, maybe some speakers feel that they are intimidating and asking too many questions but they are taking this job very seriously. You have a microcosm of Sullivan County here and some people left and other people were appointed and they have a very, very good commission here. He thinks that everyone is taking their role very seriously for Sullivan County's future, there is nothing political on here, and he can tell them that. The situation is that Ms. Harrison and Mr. Richardson went to the Legislature and they made a presentation about the permissive referendum to discuss the staggered terms. They invited them to the Charter Review for them to come see what they are doing and people know that they are talking about a County Executive, they know what we are talking about it is public. The press, they feel that it is a boring subject because when you look at history when Charter Review Commissions make recommendations very often the Legislature laughs it off and it goes away. That was the last Charter Review Commission when there was very important piece of Legislation, they said let us have a County Executive, they supported it and what happened, it just disappeared. They had Chris Cunningham and Leni Binder here at the time and no one remembers how it just suddenly disappeared but it just disappeared. They were appointed by the other Legislature and now they have the new Legislature and they know that they are doing but they do not know the Charter, many of them. They have not read the Charter, they do not know the interpretations of the Charter, they do not know what the codes are, and it is very complex. So, when you are looking at an independent Charter Review going to do research and make recommendations and some of them do not fully understand what it is because it is very technical, you have to be here for a very long time to understand that. So, then they get this letter, they want reports and this information, it gives the interpretation and the feeling that they want us or someone wants them to go away. That may not be the intent but they want to us to rush our report, give the report and forget it. He does not think from how Luis presented himself as Chairman of the Legislature does he in any way want that. Let us face reality, the reality is they are thinking about a County Executive possibly replacing a County Manager, they are bringing in department heads and asking them questions, last month they had Freda Eisenberg from the Planning department. They asked her why there is not a billboard for the Partnership and the IDA saying this is your one source to come here. He did not know that they had a newsletter that came out from the Planning department until something was in there from the Human Rights Commission. What they would like is of course the retraction of the letter, but the understanding that they are taking this seriously and it should not all be piled in together. They already went before the Legislature and they spoke about a permissive referendum to have staggered terms and at that meeting everyone in that room, the nine Legislators loved the concept, he thinks they only thing they were trying to figure out is how do you decide. That can be done, there could be a committee right now with some of the Legislators and some people from the Charter Review to say let us figure out the dynamics of this.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she was given the task to work on language and that is what her office is doing. That is, it, they did it, they listened, they voted and now it is her job to get the law in place. When she hears that they might be looking at term limits, she does not think that it is fair to have a local law on staggered terms and the next local law on term limits. That is why she explained to them that they are doing behind the scenes, their research so in the event that they come forward and say that is their next to do, they recommend it, and the Legislature wants it. She only wanted to explain to them that they are doing what they were told to do, they are looking at the next possibility, and those were the three things that she was aware of that they have been talking about. She would assume that if they do term limits and recommend that will take a shorter period of time than the discussion about the County Executive.

Mr. Altman inquired if Ms. McCausland wants them to rush to judgment.

County Attorney McCausland stated of course not. No one wants them to rush to judgment, there is a backing into some of these decisions to enable an individual who may be impacted by staggered terms and term limits to make an educated decision on if she wants to run again or at all. The conversations that she was involved in never was there a statement about rushing them or fear that the discussion about a County Executive might mean a County Manager is out of a job never once came out of the mouths of anyone that she spoke to.

Mr. Liblick stated that he respects that and obviously, they have discussed that they may have to eliminate an elected Treasurer and have an appointed Comptroller. These are things that they have not even entertained yet, so what they would like is the first proposal that they made is to move on with that and then they will discuss maybe term limits and proceed from there.

Mr. Cooke stated that there is no expiration for this committee, so they could go on forever. He inquired what would be the earliest possible time that the least controversial referendum could hit the electorate. If the Commission made a decision tonight for term limits, when would that go.

County Attorney McCausland stated that it does not work like that, the Commission makes the presentation to the board, and the board determines or not determines to pursue it or not to pursue it. They may come back and ask more questions so it is not the earliest possible time. If the Legislature likes something, like staggered terms, let us look into this and then her office looks at how that works.

Mr. Cooke inquired if everyone agreed on everything could it go on in November.

County Attorney McCausland stated no they do a local law subject to permissive referendum with a month notice with a public hearing, have a public hearing and if all goes well you can adopt the law.

Mr. McPhillips stated that a lot of his decisions moving forward are based on whether the staggered terms were accepted or not one of those being should they stay with nine Legislators or go to 11. There are things that need to be decided after that decision is made.

County Attorney McCausland stated that the Commission wanted staggered terms and the Legislature approved it, her office is looking at nine members and if in 3 months the commission comes back and recommends 12 members, she inquired why they would adopt a local law.

Mr. McPhillips stated that may not be the next thing, the next thing might be a County Executive and a month from now is 11 Legislators instead of nine.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she understands where they are coming from but she is telling them where she is coming from, she is looking at the variety and the mix of staggered term possibilities. Their only job is to bring it forward to the Legislature with the possibilities of the terms.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated just to be clear, they were very specific with 5/4, they did not recommend 3-3-3 and they have very good reasons for not doing that.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she appreciates that but she has her job to do as well.

Ms. Johnson Fields stated that she wants to just clarify what Ms. McCausland is saying in that when she is looking at staggered terms and you are looking at numbers for staggered terms, the two should look in tandem than let us say they made a recommendation that there be 11. She inquired if Ms. McCausland is stating that certain things should be recommended in tandem because it would make the most sense.

County Attorney McCausland stated that she does not want to tell them how to do their job but hearing that the next issue might be term limits. Her job would be to recommend the right law and what they think that the Legislature should do and they will have facts to support why they should do it. Then, they will yes or no but term limits it is kind of connected because let us say that they said 2 terms and you are out and if you pass a law that you are going to elect 4 people for a two-year term, it makes sense that people need to know those two things together.

Mr. Altman stated that those people already in the seats would be grandfathered and it would start on their next election. There are people in this room and in the public that think that this county is broken and the leadership is not leading. They take this very, very seriously. They had a County Attorney who was encouraging them and helping them and Ms. McCausland is taking the exact opposite position that he sees that the prior attorney took with them.

County Attorney McCausland stated that the prior attorney had the same mandate that she does. The Legislature tells her what to do and she does it.

Mr. Walters stated that the easiest way to solve that problem is to define a term as a 4-year date.

Mr. Ferguson stated that he thinks that Ms. McCausland made a really good point her and that when they sent their recommendation in it said explicitly that they were dealing with a Legislature of 9 and if they are not then they will be doing things out of order here. He thinks that what they need to do now is open up the shape of the Legislature, he thinks that their next order of business should be everything that pertains to that and if they have to go back and revise their recommendation or combine them so Ms. McCausland has all the elements in hand to make something coherent. If they are talking about different numbers than their recommendation made no sense.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that in regards to the recommendation that they made with the 5/4, they did talk about the nine and at least this point in time keeping the nine. Mr. Paul Rouis made a very good point but they had a determination made with keeping it at nine right now.

Mr. Richardson stated that he thinks that Mr. Ferguson is right and if they need to revisit that issue with how many Legislators do they think is appropriate than they should do that. The other thing that he thinks, they heard this early on that they make a determination to the Legislature, they accept it and give it to the Attorney to

deal with it, it is their ball now, they should not keep kicking this thing around the table they have other things to talk about. When they talked about staggered terms, they were talking about starting with the next election not before.

Mr. Walters stated that one of the things that they should all do before going forward is come in with their individual lists of things that they would like to have done, put them all of the table and start prioritizing them. Right now, they are talking about staggered terms and the number of Legislators; make a list and get it all out on the table. One of the things that he would strongly recommend is the Legislature has decided that they are going to have live streaming of their main meeting before they introduce it to the committee room. He thinks that they should ask them to bring live streaming in here now so they can have it out there for the public to see and have it backed up for anyone to see one of their meetings. If you want transparency and the public to be involved, you do not have to move the public or let the public come to them and bring them on the computer.

Ms. Harrison inquired what they gave to Ms. McCausland after the Commission gave them a resolution for staggered terms, did they give her a memo or a resolution.

Ms. McCausland stated that it is not that formal, what will happen is her office will come up with some potential language for a law and there will need to be discussion. Ultimately, there will be a resolution setting a public hearing for the staggered terms.

There was some further discussion on what the County Attorney's Office is working on in regards to staggered terms and the Legislature's formal process regarding staggered terms.

Co-Chairman Burckard inquired if all the Commission members agree with having the three Co-Chairs respond to the Legislature.

The Commission members agreed for the Co-Chairs to draft a response to the Legislature.

There was a brief further conversation regarding the Letter and the response to the Legislature and ultimately the Commission agreed for an acknowledgment letter to go out to the four members of the Legislature that sent the original letter.

#### **OTHER COMMITTEE BUSINESS:**

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that Ulster County Attorney, Beatrice Havranek has agreed to a video conference at their next meeting and the actual video conference will start at 6:15pm. He has spoken to her and she is really nice, she has done presentations like this for NYSAC. Lorne Greene is working with the MIS department in Ulster County to get it all situated so they are all set for that. He had a good discussion with Ms. Havranek about where they are at and what they are looking for and have her explain to them how they moved from Legislature and County Manager to Legislature and County Executive and the interrelated things that get involved with all of that. For example, they all understand you go to a strong Executive and the Treasurer is gone, do you enhance the Auditor or do something with the Comptroller or do you have both, etc. So, there are a lot of other things that are involved with all of this. As an example, what they took into consideration and if she can give them guidance with how they worked their way through it as a general question. He also told her as she speaks, obviously the Commission members are going to think of a question and she would be open to questions but she would like them to supply as many specific direct questions as they can so she can be prepared to address that in her remarks. He asked the Commission to please think about it and get their



questions to Ms. Harrison she is the next chair and she has not spoken to Ms. Havranek yet and this will give her an opportunity to converse with her. One of the interesting things that Ms. Havranek told him was that they changed their existing Charter to adjust the Finance Commissioner and Comptroller positions. They specifically want to know what they did and why they did it because that is changing the power structure within the County. The Treasurer is out, the Finance Commissioner works directly for the Executive, and the Comptroller has a separate job.

Mr. Liblick inquired if with all the counties that have a County Executive, none of them have an elected County Treasurer.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated he thinks only two and they are way upstate and you would never have that in a powerful County Executive form downstate. You cannot have a separate person with a four-year term handling all the money with an Executive; you will instantly start a battle. He continued by stating that he thinks that they are organized when it comes to next month's meeting and it should be extremely helpful. Please get your questions to Ms. Harrison. He left a message for JJ Hanson and hopefully he will be here.

### **Term Limits:**

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that he would like to go around the room to see if anyone is interested in pursuing the conversation of term limits and to whom would they apply.

Mr. Walters stated no.

Mr. Richardson stated he has been on both sides of this thing and he has listened to a lot of discussions outside of this committee. He comes back to the root of it is you take away the electorates right to choose, so he would say no.

Mr. Ferguson stated he could be persuaded otherwise but he is inclined to say no.

Ms. Johnson Fields stated no.

Ms. Sprague stated no.

Mr. Liblick stated no.

Ms. Harrison stated no.

Mr. Altman stated yes.

Mr. McPhillips stated no.

Mr. Levinson stated no.

Co-Chairperson Burckard stated that if you impose a term limit how does he address a member of the electorate that says to him that it is their choice to decide when someone is doing the job or not, it is not up to them to take away their right and he was never able to answer that. Since they do have someone with a difference of opinion then it is something that they will have to continue to discuss down the road to be fair to Mr. Altman. If Ms. Harrison can squeeze it into the next meeting, if not, Mr. Richardson can pick it up from there.

Mr. Walters stated that he would like to make a motion to limit that discussion to no more than 15 minutes.

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTS:**

Ms. Sprague stated that she is from Liberty and she is the Deputy Town Clerk in the Town of Liberty, there was a vacancy and she is interested in government so she thought she would join the Committee.

Co-Chairperson Burckard welcomed her and asked that she try to read as many of the minutes as she can as fast as she can as well as the 2007 minutes.

Mr. Walters stated that he thinks that they should pursue a conversation about live streaming.

Mr. Richardson stated that he understood that the reason they wanted to start in the Hearing Room was to get the bugs out first.

Mr. McPhillips stated that if there is no statutory limit on what this Commission does then if the last Commission presented their report in the last Commission and the Executive was part of their report, he inquired why did it go away.

Mr. Liblick stated that a new Legislature came in and a new Chair came in.

Mr. Richardson stated that as the Commission knows that the Chairman of the Legislature invited a member of this Commission to attend the regular vision committees that he set up. He did get to that meeting and it was very interesting, the focus is on the whole health issue in Sullivan County, they are #61 out of #62 counties. There are a lot of very talented people at that table and Mr. Alvarez made the point that the reason that a representative from the Charter was there was for the idea that out of this discussion if something pops up that says we need a change in government to address this. He thanked Mr. Alvarez for inviting them.

Mr. Altman thanked Mr. Cooke for coming.

**OTHER COMMITTEE BUSINESS:**


**PUBLIC COMMENT: None**

**NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT:**

June 15, 2016 at 6:00 PM \*Legislative Hearing Room\*

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Walter made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Altman, meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

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**Michelle Huck, Secretary**

## **Charter Revision Commission**

### **Purpose:**

It is the legislative intent of this Charter to provide for the orderly government and management of the County of Sullivan. It is also the intent of this Charter to provide for a government that is efficient, effective, accountable, inclusive, open, and environmentally and fiscally responsible. Consistent with this intent, this Charter allocates duties and responsibilities in County Government. This Charter will:

- A. Secure all possible home rule.
- B. Separate legislative and administrative functions in county government.
- C. Increase communication with the public concerning management of the county and encourage public participation in county governance.
- D. Reduce conflicts and the potential for conflicts between the various branches and departments of government and between government employees and the private sector.
- E. Encourage flexibility in the organizational structures of county government

Resolution 448 of 2014

### **NAMES OF CURRENT CHARTER MEMBERS:**

Paul Burckard  
Norman Sutherland  
Brian McPhillips  
Bill Liblick  
Bruce Ferguson  
Steve Altman  
Ken Walter  
Sara Sprague  
Larry Richardson  
Peg Harrison  
Sandra Johnson Fields  
Michael Levinson

# **CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING**

The first meeting of the Charter Review Committee held on Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 6 p. m., in the Legislative Hearing Room, Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello, New York.

Scott Samuelson, Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature opened the meeting at 6.04 p.m. “ What you are going to be doing over the next couple of months is going to be extraordinarily important. We are going to be visiting our form of government. We are going to be visiting possibly staggered terms for Legislators, review the Charter and the Code, pick it apart, talk to people, find out what works, what doesn't work so well. It is going to be an exciting period of time for all of us. You do have one resource that worked on the first Charter, Paul Burckard, who did serve on the first Charter Commission. So he will have some institutional knowledge of the process in the last meeting”.

Others present: Steve Acquiro, Executive Director of NYSAC, Patrick Cummings, NYSAC Counsel.

Sam Yasgur “Our County's Administrative Code for the most part parrots Charter.”

Steve Acquiro said so, again, you are in the process of looking at your government right now, your Legislature, your Manager, your Department Heads, you should talk to the Department Heads. Understand what they do. Talk to the Real Property Tax Director. Talk a few minutes to talk to the County Attorney. Tell them "don't be bias”.

## **CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING**

The third meeting of the Charter Review Committee held on Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 5p. m., in the Legislative Hearing Room, Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello, New York.

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair Nadia Rajsz.

Pledge of allegiance.

Roll call is substituted with sign in sheet.

Members present: Steve Altman, Paul Burckard, Bruce Ferguson, David Forshay, Isaac Green Diebboll, Peg Harrison, Sandra Johnson Fields, Bill Liblick, Ray Nargizian, Nadia Rajsz, Larry Richardson, Kenneth Walter.

Members absent: JJ Hanson.

Others present: Gene Benson, Legislator, Alan Sorenson, Legislator, Sam Yasgur, County Attorney, Nancy Buck, County Treasurer .

Sam said if you go to Liberty, there are a lot of Departments that provide services to the general public, the Adult Care Facility, a nursing home, a Community Mental Health Program, Public Health Program, Social Services Program. There are a lot of those facilities up in Liberty. In this County, we do something I never understood. I just don't understand it. We have what we call a Division of Health and Family Services. In most jurisdictions, a department is larger than the division, a division is a smaller unit within a department. In Sullivan County, the department is the smaller unit within a division, which makes no sense. We have the Division of Health and Family Services, which includes Public Health, Community Mental Health, Nursing Home, Social Services, do we need all of them? That is going to be up to you. If you look at this County Charter, you will see something very interesting. Actually, it is quite small. There is not much in it. The only entities, or agencies or departments, call it what you will, that it refers to is the Board of Legislators, County Manager, County Clerk, County Attorney and County Treasurer. It doesn't refer to any of those other departments that I just referenced. All of those other departments you will find in the County Administrative Code, you won't find in the Charter. Does that make sense? I don't know. That is going to be up to you to decide. Is it logical to put them in the Code as opposed to the Charter? I don't know. It is something you are going to have to figure out and decide, which then gives you a totally different reference of being a member of this Commission then what you may have had forty minutes ago.