

Legislative Committee
October 1, 2025

Attendees

Committee: Allen Hinkley, Timothy Kelso, Art Merrill, Tina Molé

Absent: Lisa Driscoll, Eric Wilson

Staff: Haley Gransbury, Maria Kelso, Judith Garrison, Joe Ermeti, Shawn Smith, Rachael Collins, Amy Merklen, Penny Bishop

Guests:

Mr. Hinkley called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Upon a motion by Mr. Kelso, seconded by Mr. Merrill, the draft minutes of the September 3 committee meeting and September 16 budget review meeting were unanimously approved.

Mr. Hinkley invited the Delaware County Democratic Committee Chair Kathleen Hayek to address the Committee. Ms. Hayek brought a draft of a proposed resolution for committee consideration. The resolution would be for the approval of a new policy to allow public comments at monthly Board of Supervisors meetings. She noted there is a moment for public comment at just about every town board in the County. They would like to see the same for the Board of Supervisors meetings on a monthly basis. She said the draft resolution has broad support from both sides of the aisle. She said people want to be able to give their comments at the meetings. She believes the advantage of it is that the decisions made by the Board would get more public input and more public buy in because of the input. She asked for committee consideration for the proposed resolution. In reply to Mr. Merrill, Ms. Hayek stated the proposed resolution does not request a specific timeslot for public comments but towns allow comments either at the start or at the end of meetings. Delaware County Democratic Committee member Joseph Schoell stated that he would recommend allowing comments towards the end so the public can ask questions about issues that have been discussed. Mr. Hinkley stated the Committee would take the matter under advisement.

County Clerk Haley Gransbury reported she has received quotes for equipment she had requested in their budget. She expressed concerns about coverage in DMV offices.

Board of Elections Commissioner Maria Kelso reported ballots for uniformed and oversees citizens absentee voting apps and military ballots have been sent out. Early voting will begin on October 25 and run through November 2. The general election is November 4. October 20 is the last day for Board of Elections to receive an address change. October 25 is the last day for Board of Elections to receive an application to register to vote. She advised there is an amendment proposition on the back of the ballot. A broad explanation of the amendment to allow the Olympic Sports Complex in Essex County on the State Forest Preserve is available. She noted some towns have propositions as well. She said they are completing two grant applications for \$6,600 and \$12,000. She announced that they need election inspectors. They found that a lot of the current inspectors are aging out and there is a problem with older people receiving too much income that would put them over a threshold with Social Security. She has asked for some kind of a bill to be drafted to exempt election inspectors.

Board of Elections Commissioner Judith Garrison stated that people who are looking for applications for the election can be referred to their office. Staff will generate the ballot while they're in the office which can be filled out immediately.

District Attorney Shawn Smith introduced Assistant District Attorney Rachael Collins to speak about a pilot program proposal for DA outreach to middle and high school students. He explained that their office is working with the Sheriff's Office, County Attorney, NYS Police, village and town police, and Safe Against Violence (SAV) to speak with students and parents about sexual assault law and the criminal process.

Ms. Collins stated sexual abuse awareness is required only until Grade 8 in New York State. This proposal is to go into the schools with a team to explain to students what the law is, what their rights are, and what the criminal process would be. The object is for increased reporting, to deter further cases, and also to encourage self-advocacy. She presented the proposal with research statistics and data to back the pilot program.

County Attorney Amy Merklen agreed that there are many aspects of this criminal behavior and stated that her office is available for assistance on the team.

Mr. Hinkley said that schools have staff that would be available to participate as well.

Ms. Merklen stated she has an interview to fill an attorney position. Her office is busy and they are learning the new software system for FOIL. They have reached out to departments to gather data about social media accounts that the new software will track and archive whenever things are posted and comments are made.

Clerk of the Board Penny Bishop said she has received just about 400 FOIL requests so far this year. In reply to Ms. Kelso regarding a security grant opportunity, the Clerk said she sent that grant notice to all department heads for consideration. She reported that the legal aid fund to pay 18-B vouchers has been exhausted and asked if ILS has any surplus funds that could be used. Mr. Ermeti said he has asked to use ILS funds for this in the past but never has been able to.

Mr. Merrill made a motion to enter into executive session to discuss personnel matters concerning two particular employees and for attorney-client consultation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kelso and unanimously carried.

Committee reconvened in regular session.

Mr. Merrill made a motion to not move forward with the proposed resolution for public comment because town Supervisors represent constituents at the County Board level. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kelso and unanimously carried.

County Attorney Amy Merklen stated that people can reach out to a specific committee or talk to their Town Supervisor to bring issues to the Board. Mr. Merrill agreed and said public comments should be made at the town level.

Upon a motion by Mr. Merrill, seconded by Mr. Kelso, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.