




**SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE**

SULLIVAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER  
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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE  
FROM: DAVID P FANSLAU, COUNTY MANAGER   
DATE: MAY 16, 2012  
RE: STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

As you are aware, the Strategic Plan Review Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee commenced meetings on April 10, 2012. The attached report is an update or summary of the presentations that have been made over the last six weeks.

The Sub-Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday morning, May 22<sup>nd</sup> to review the departments and presentations that were made between April 10, 2012 and May 15, 2012. There will be a draft report made to the Executive Committee on June 14, 2012. Depending on the progress of the Sub-Committee and the input from the full Executive Committee, the Strategic Plan would be in a position to be acted upon on June 21, 2012, or in the discretion of the Executive Committee, final action could be scheduled for the Executive Committee meeting that will be held on July 12, 2012, with final action on July 19, 2012.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

CC: Annmarie Martin, Clerk to the Legislature

## Strategic Plan Update: May 17, 2012

### Week 1

**General Discussion:** Mandates will be a major discussion point as we move through this process. Departments are required to submit the following information 1 week prior to their scheduled review:

1. Describe your programs, services, and functional areas of responsibility
2. Please prioritize your programs, services, and functions. If any of these are mandated specifically, cite the statute or regulation mandating the program. Please also include mandated levels of service and/or staffing, if applicable.
3. What issues and or programs do you feel that you need to devote more time to?
4. How can you make your programs and services be more cost effective?
5. What recommendations would you make to the Legislature regarding your future programs, services, and functional areas of responsibility?

There was a brief overview of the budget timeline. It was also mentioned that this will be the first Strategic Plan developed since New York State's adoption of the 2% property tax cap.

Committee members agreed that the departments' goals must be in line with their mission statements.

**Real Property Tax Services:** Real Property is a State mandated office. GIS functions and 911 addressing are the only non-mandated services performed by Real Property staff. Their budget is primarily driven by staff costs, and there is little revenue to be collected under the programs they administer. It was mentioned that there may be grants available for GIS initiatives, and the County should seek out not only grants but also other potential sources of revenue, such as charge-backs for 911 addressing services via the 911 surcharge.

There was a discussion about assessments and the need for more regular re-assessments (every 3-5 years). The problem is funding, and the State does not want to finance these reassessments. There was also a discussion about the potential for County-wide assessing. An initiative such as this will require buy in from all towns and villages (political will), in addition to the County. State aid is available for this type of initiative but only at a fraction of the total estimated cost.

There was a significant discussion of the need to reform the State property tax code (420a) to limit tax exemptions. The interpretation of the current law is too broad. The State Legislature must be lobbied to reform the property tax code.

**County Clerk/DMV/Records Retention:** The County Clerk's Office is a Constitutional Office as per the NYS Constitution. The Main Unit and the DMV bring in significant revenue through the fees collected for services rendered. The Main Unit continues to seek funding that will aid the office in its efforts to become a virtual office, with more resources being available online.

DMV does not have goals under the Strategic Plan. In the post 9/11 era, there is virtually no latitude allowed by the State for local control over programs. The number of windows open directly correlates to the amount of revenue being generated. Discussion about DMV circulated primarily around the mobile van unit, and whether or not the County should continue providing this service to more rural areas.

There was a significant discussion about Records Management, as the County is quickly running out of space in which important documents can be safely stored. The County is required to keep certain documents for varying amounts of time, in some cases permanently. This is an issue that must be addressed in a timely fashion. The list of properties up for auction is searched for potential storage locations each year.

## Week 2

### *Sheriff's Department*

**Jail:** Correctional operations are mandated by the NYS Commission of Corrections and there are requirements for minimum staffing levels. There are 102 Correction Officers which is the mandated minimum number of staff. There are also 4 nurses, 1 doctor, 2 cooks, and 2 administrative positions, all of whom have mandated duties but do not have a minimum staffing requirement. Operations at the Jail have been examined efficiencies have been implemented to reduce costs:

1. Eliminated evening snack for inmates
2. Internal laundry and dishwashing
3. Eliminated use of Styrofoam and utilize plastic reusable trays
4. Cut down on trash bags
5. Contracted with onsite dentist to eliminate transportation costs
6. Implemented a Jail Management System

**Civil:** The Sheriff's Civil Unit is mandated under NYS County Law but has no minimum staffing requirements. There are 3 sworn officers and 4 administrative positions allocated for Civil operations.

**Patrol:** The Sheriff's Patrol Unit is mandated by the County Charter. There are currently 38 sworn officers and 1 civilian assigned to this unit. There are no mandates for minimum staffing or for which roads are patrolled. Responsibilities are shared with local police departments including Monticello, Liberty and Fallsburg, as well as local constabularies in Highland, Lumberland and Bethel. Ideally patrol staff would be increased as crime rates have raised and burglary rates are at epidemic levels. Committee members requested to see recent crime trends.

The County Manager suggested that the Legislature needs to set up a process to analyze the long term global needs of Public Safety and determine how to meet those needs with available resources. The Sheriff indicated that sharing is occurring between local, County and State resources, however, Sullivan

County is a rural County with a low tax base and 1000+ square miles to patrol which creates difficulties in meeting all needs. Taxpayers in Fremont expect to receive a comparable level of services to taxpayers in Thompson. When asked about the NYC DEP, the Sheriff indicated that coordination with that agency is limited as their role is specifically to protect the reservoirs. However, they do answer some 911 calls.

There was a discussion about the Sheriff Patrol's operations as they relate to Bethel Woods during the concert season. Their role is shared with the State Police. Local roads were never built to handle thousands of vehicles in a short span of time. The goal is to bring traffic in and out safely and keep roads open for emergencies. Extra staff is brought in to handle the increased work and they supplement with overtime. The anticipated size of the crowd dictates how many deputies are dispatched to cover the concerts.

There was a discussion about finding comparable Counties and analyzing how patrol operations are handled elsewhere. The difficulty in this analysis is that Sullivan County is unique in its rural nature, being only 90 miles from New York City, and having population triple in the summertime. Other NYS Counties have spikes in traffic during the summer months due to tourism, but do not necessarily have large groups of people relocating and staying for a full 3 months. The County Manager's Office will search for potentially comparable counties.

**Security:** Security is not mandated and includes 6 guards who provide security at the Government Center in Monticello and the Human Services Complex in Liberty.

**911 Control:** 911 operations are not mandated. There are currently 18 positions including 2 administrative positions, 14 full time dispatchers, 1 part time and 1 per diem. There was a discussion about consolidating County operations with local Police Department dispatching operations. This is not something that is currently being done as the County will incur new costs as a result of taking on added workload. The County dispatches for local constabularies. If consolidation were to occur, would it become part of the tax levy or would it be a fee for service model? There would also have to be an analysis of the combination of entities and the saturation level (maximum workload) for different levels of staff. Also, the Towns/Villages would have to buy in as this is a home rule issue. There has been cost avoidance by combining dispatch services for fire and sheriff.

The County will be upgrading its radio communications infrastructure over the next 3 years at a cost of \$10 million. This will increase the efficiency of our Public Safety communications network. The Capital Plan will take a hard look at this.

There was a discussion about increasing the local 911 surcharge, which would require State approval. The conversation turned to the basis on which the State distributes funds collected through the surcharge. It should be argued that funds must be distributed based on the number of "full time equivalent" residents as opposed to the full time year round population, given the summer spike in population. Sullivan County's FTE population is around 125,000 to 130,000 as opposed to a year round population of 76,000.

There was a brief discussion about how to gain revenue from non-taxpaying entities that benefit from public safety services, potentially through special districts and user fees. Where would State Law permit this?

### Week 3

**Probation:** The Probation Department is a mandated office but has no minimum staffing requirements. There are recommendations with regard to maximum caseloads for probation officers. The County is currently not operating within those recommendations. Caseloads have increased and staffing levels have decreased. The Director of Probation emphasized the need for additional staff in Probation. There is a new supervision rule in New York State which requires more home visits and more interaction with the probationers. Sullivan County currently has around 1000 probationers, compared with 24 total staff members. Also, training must be provided to employees who currently do not have all required training.

**District Attorney:** The District Attorney's Office is mandated, but the only two mandated positions are the District Attorney and the Confidential Secretary. Trends have shown that crime is increasing locally, but statewide crime is decreasing. Felony trials have trended up, with 7 in 2010, 13 in 2011, and 4 so far in 2012. Overall cases were flat from 2010 to 2011, but the workload of the DA's office is increasing steadily. The County has a Family Violence Response Team; however, without the participation of the Sheriff this organization is limited. Also, the DA's Office would like to search for grants that would assist with scanning files, as recent changes to records retention laws have required certain documents to be maintained permanently, and this is creating a storage problem.

### Week 4

**Office for the Aging:** The NYCONNECTS Program is the only mandated service provided by OFA. OFA is limited in the level of homecare that they are able to provide to their clients. The maximum level is 4 hours per day. Services are provided up until 6pm. One of the biggest challenges OFA has is providing enough homecare aids especially to clients in the rural sections of the County. The County should look at establishing a satellite office for OFA in Western Sullivan County.

Training for home care is provided in Orange County and may be helpful to have local training. Are there enough instructors to train adequate amount of aides? Perhaps the Center for Workforce Development could be helpful in providing training. OFA should contact Laura Quigley to discuss.

Transportation is a major issue in Sullivan County. It affects aides' abilities to reach clients and clients' abilities to leave homes for simple errands. The "Blue Route" was discontinued due to lack of ridership, but there were several problems that may have contributed to this issue. One was a lack of advertising, and another was the use of central drop off/pick up locations which could be difficult to reach for our senior citizens. Door to door service gets very expensive in a rural community. Transportation as a whole must be addressed.

OFA provides meals to homebound seniors via the Meals on Wheels program and also provides meals at congregate meal sites. Homebound meals are 65% County share, while meals provided at congregate meal sites are 37% County funded. There is value in the social experience for seniors having lunch at the congregate sites and the State recognizes that value. Homebound meals are delivered through a network of dedicated volunteers.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program maintains a large network of senior volunteers who provide a wide range of services, including transportation to and from medical appointments. To maintain the conditions set forth in certain grants RSVP must maintain a minimum of 45 volunteers.

**Veteran Service Agency:** The Veteran Service Agency indicated that transportation is also a major issue for their clients as well. Public Works provides transportation under contract to Albany and Castle Point VA Hospitals, but are unable to provide transportation to the local VA clinic. As stated with OFA, transportation as a whole needs to be examined for the County.

Working with veterans requires constant outreach and gaining trust. The recent addition of a veteran's services officer will be a big help in the outreach process. Sullivan County is estimated to have approximately 7,500 veterans (some estimates are higher). They make up a significant portion of our population and many do not realize what benefits they are entitled to.

There was a discussion about the veterans' cemetery and the need for expansion to accommodate future burials. Property behind the existing cemetery should be able to accommodate those needs and will require prep work as only 9 years worth of space remains on current location.

**Adult Care Center:** The ACC has made significant progress. They are currently applying for a HEAL grant to make improvements to the facility and become more competitive and marketable. The lack of an admissions office does hinder their ability to conduct outreach. The ACC must maintain occupancy and maximize the reimbursements that it receives through Medicaid, Medicare and third party reimbursements. The County could push for higher Medicaid reimbursements to be on par with Medicare reimbursements. However, as a public nursing home the reality is that the ACC is not anticipated to ever be a revenue generator, and even to break even would be a tall order. The County facility is a safety net for those who cannot receive care elsewhere and other private facilities "cherry pick for clients who will provide the highest rate of reimbursement.

The County could look into the potential for a not-for-profit to run a portion of the non-medical nursing home programs but research would have to be conducted to determine whether or not state regulations would allow for it. Also, would it be possible for an agency to operate out of the ACC for rehabilitative services? The County should look into the possibility of setting up a pilot program.

Week 5

**Grants Administration:** Committee members indicated that Grants should determine if there are grant opportunities available for mandated programs, such as health and human services, probation, and public safety initiatives. The County will have to be cautious in how funding is utilized as many federal and state sources of reimbursement do not allow grant funding to be utilized as matching funds. It was recommended that the Office of Management and Budget and the Grants department do a quick charting of mandated programs and see what may be available.

Departments that need assistance and improvement with grant applications and administration of grant awards should be identified so the Grants department can focus on these departments. County personnel must keep sight of additional costs to the County in years beyond the initial grant period. For instance, a grant may pay the salary of a staff member for one year, but the requirements of the grant may state that the employee must be kept employed for five years, and the County would be on the hook for the final four years of salary. The County should ensure that all departments have the capacity for grant writing and administration and, to the extent practicable, the Towns as well.

**Purchasing:** There was a discussion about BidNet, which is a web based application that would assist the County in expanding its vendor pool. The difficulty with implementing BidNet is the time required for the initial set-up. Committee members suggested the potential use of an intern, which could be an option for many departments who are currently short on staff. The County will contact the College to see if some sort of an internship program could be established. Also, neighboring counties who currently use BidNet should be contacted to get some sense of the savings that can potentially be realized.

**Audit:** Audit is currently focusing on processing vouchers and auditing payments for the County. In a perfect world, surprise cash counts would be completed on a regular basis, but due to limited staff cash counts and departmental audits are only conducted on an as needed or requested basis. Committee members asked that the County Auditor submit some recommendations of how to increase accountability and generate cost savings.

**Management Information Systems:** MIS has generated significant cost savings through implementation of new technologies, such as the Voice Over IP Phone System and Multi-Functional Devices for printing, scanning, copying and faxing. The use of technology will continue to play an important role in achieving greater efficiency in County government. One of the biggest hurdles will be getting “buy-in” from all departments and a willingness of employees to work with and utilize new technology. MIS has been successful with keeping the County’s technology up to date without increasing its budget. The department must continue to find cost effective ways of keeping technology current.

## Week 6

**Public Works:** Public Works discussed the current state of the County’s infrastructure. Some non-critical tasks have either been delayed, reduced, or they are not occurring at all. One of the items that have been reduced is landscaping at our County parks. Committee members suggested a partnership with

local not-for-profits such as Renaissance, the Garden Club, master gardeners, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, etc. to take care of the landscaping on County properties. There was also a discussion about the potential to reduce County infrastructure by leasing the Sullivan County Airport. Committee members indicated that the perception of the airport is that it is used by very few people and provides little benefit to the County as a whole. It was questioned whether the airport is an asset and whether it presents opportunities to benefit the entire county. The airport perception needs a "face-lift." The County needs to analyze the potential impacts of privatizing the airport, and the lease agreement with Arcadia should be reviewed. It should also see if other counties have leased their airports and if so, were they successful? Also, with regard to the Airport Industrial Park, it is believed that the water issue (lack of water) will be resolved and this will be a big advantage. There needs to be a plan in place to move forward once water has been secured. The Partnership for Economic Development is supposed to market the industrial park and follow-up should be conducted to learn more about their efforts and future plans.

It must be noted that Public Works provides services to the entire population of Sullivan County, without qualifying factors. Infrastructure is getting to a critical state and it must be addressed. Perhaps the new grant writer position will assist with locating outside funding and enable the County to provide additional resources. DPW must also continue to search for opportunities to share services with other municipalities for cost savings. The Commissioner of Public Works was asked to come up with a list of shared services opportunities and circulate these ideas to the Legislature and County Manager.

#### *Human Resources*

**Risk Management:** There was a lengthy discussion about the inner workings of the County's insurance policies as well as Worker's Comp and 207c. Employees are covered by WC, and law enforcement employees of the Sheriff's Department/Jail are also entitled to 207c due to the nature of their job and the increased likelihood of injury. Reform of WC and 207c both would require State legislative action. WC is a self funded plan and is paid into by the County as well as the towns and villages. Non employees who submit claims for injury on County property are covered under the County's insurance policy, but the first \$75,000 is covered by a self insured plan. The deductible for property loss was increased to \$100,000 this year. Risk is also responsible for the administration of benefits as per the negotiated contracts with employee unions.

**Personnel:** The Office of Personnel provides 41 total jurisdictions with services related to Civil Service administration, and they cannot charge back for the services rendered. They are responsible for the certification of civil service exam lists. Individuals submitting an application for employment and civil service exam are required to pay a \$10.00 fee (\$15.00 for uniformed positions). This fee is waived if the individual is on public assistance, unemployment, and several other conditions. Sometimes people do not show up for the exams, which cost the County \$7.50 (\$12.50 for uniformed positions) to order. A new rule recently put into place for Sullivan County states that if an individual has a fee waiver and does not show up for the exam two times, they can no longer submit applications until the fees are paid. All titles are monitored and if a list of candidates begins to dwindle then exams are ordered to replenish the



list. The County has a residency requirement and first preference is given to Sullivan County residents who pass the civil service exam. Temporary positions can be filled for 3-18 months. The Personnel Officer request an Equal Employment Opportunities Specialist position for her office, either full or part time.