



Inclusion Through Diversity

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September 10, 2015
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Budget Review Continues

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee heard seven more budget presentations in a second night of review of County Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended 2016 County budget.

The 2016 Recommended Budget supports total expenditures of \$171 million, with local dollar spending of \$85 million (an increase of 1.9%). The recommended 1.3% tax levy increase is below the projected 1.8% State-imposed property tax cap. Under the budget, the tax rate would decrease—from \$6.86 to \$6.74 per thousand, and the tax bill for the owner of a median-value \$170,000 county home would rise by \$15.36. The County Solid Waste Fee would increase by \$4.00, returning to its level of \$56 per household.

Legislators heard tonight from Weights and Measures, the Highway Division, Personnel and Planning Departments, Information Technology Services, the Tompkins County Public Library, and Animal Control (provided by the Tompkins County SPCA).

Among highlights from tonight's presentations:

The Highway Department has requested over-target funding to enable the department to purchase two 10-wheel dump trucks, equipped for snow and ice control--\$235,000 for one unit and \$46,000 in supplemental funding (beyond what can already be accommodated in the department's target budget) for the other. Both requests are included in the Administrator's recommended budget. Highway Director Jeff Smith told Legislators the trucks would replace two of four such units that had been purchased by the County in 2006 and are now coming of age at the same time. This approach, he said, would serve to bring his department's equipment replacement schedule closer into balance.

Included in the Personnel Department recommended budget is \$50,000 in one-time funding for workforce training. Personnel Commissioner Amy Guereri said a significant pool of employees at mid-career have expressed interest in leadership and career development training, and that she believes that such training would enhance employee retention and succession planning. Administrator Mareane noted that \$75,000 in target funding had been requested, and while he could not recommend it at that level now, in terms of available resources, he would hope that such ongoing funding could eventually be supported.

Planning Commissioner Ed Marx reported on the myriad of projects before his department this year, noting that the department is continually being asked to address critical community issues—such as climate change and energy; housing; and focused development and conservation. Over-target requests for ongoing funding for stream corridor restoration (\$25,000); energy program matching funds (\$30,000); and the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection (\$50,000 – which Commissioner Marx described as a highly successful but underfunded program) were all recommended by the Administrator as one-time funding. Some Legislators

inquired about the possibility of multi-year support for these recurring programs. Administrator Mareane said such funding has not been employed at all in his budget, but could be done should the Legislature direct it. Commissioner Marx said anything that would provide funding stability would be helpful.

The Information Technology Services budget includes a recommended \$50,000 in over-target spending to support ongoing costs associated with conversion to the Office 365 e-mail and office automation software systems, an expense that Director Greg Potter noted will be offset by savings in expense for current e-mail and archiving systems.

The recommended budget for the Tompkins County Public Library includes a \$150,000 over-target request, initiated by the County Administrator, to continue, and potentially conclude, the multi-year effort, begun in 2013, to close the Library's structural deficit. Expressing ongoing gratitude for the County's support, Library Director Susan Currie said the request reflects the collaborative approach to reduce the deficit at the library, noting that the Library is also continuing to draw upon its fund balance to balance the budget. Budget requests not recommended by the Administrator include funding for a Librarian position, and "smartboard" equipment for instruction and presentations—both potentially serving, in part, a planned future technology lab.

Director Currie reported that every dollar the County provides leverages \$5 in outside support, and she said, "I think we have a library that we can be very proud of, and I expect we can continue that excellence for a number of years ahead."

The Expanded Budget Committee will meet again Thursday, September 17. All Expanded Budget sessions begin at 5:30 p.m., and are held at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street (Second Floor).

The 2016 Recommended Budget, and other information related to the budget process, is posted on the budget page of the County web site at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/2016budget.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 592-3206; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

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