



Inclusion Through Diversity

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October 13, 2015
THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jail Reentry, Youth Services Funding Among Recommended Changes to Administrator's Budget

The County's 2016 budget process entered a new phase tonight, as Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee began to recommend changes to County Administrator Joe Mareane's Recommended Budget, delivered to them six weeks ago.

Legislators recommended the following changes to the budget. Tonight's decisions may be reconsidered at later expanded committee meetings and will require approval by the full Legislature to become final.

PENSION RATE ADJUSTMENT:

In the first action of the night, Legislators, by a 12-0 vote, reduced by \$582,792 the unallocated Fringe Benefits amount contained in the budget, an adjustment that recognizes savings from decline in the pension rate to 15.5%, from the higher rate anticipated at the time the Administrator's budget was developed. This change alone reduced the potential tax levy increase by 1.26%.

JAIL REENTRY PROGRAM:

In a new addition to the budget, Legislators after a series of votes, approved \$100,000 in target Contingent Funding to fund a Reentry Program for inmates released from Tompkins County Jail, to be developed, approved, and initiated in 2016, with input from the County's Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration Board (CJATI). Last week, CJATI's Reentry Subcommittee presented to the Legislature its report and recommendations regarding such a program following several months of intensive study.

Legislator Martha Robertson initially proposed a \$200,000 Contingent Fund allocation, saying the Contingent Fund approach would demonstrate the County's commitment to the program, while providing time and flexibility to develop and agree upon program details. Some Legislators said they were reluctant to support that level of funding at this stage. OAR Director Deb Dietrich, co-chair of the Reentry Subcommittee, acknowledged the magnitude of the request, but added that money won't be spent until the proposed program is fully developed. The Legislature must approve any allocations from Contingency to support the program.

An amendment proposed by Legislature Chair Lane to fund at \$100,000 initially failed by a 5-6 vote, a proposal to fund at \$150,000 failed by a 4-7 vote, and the original proposal to fund at \$200,000 was defeated, also by a vote of 4-7. Legislator Will Burbank then reintroduced the proposal to allocate \$100,000, which on reconsideration passed by a vote of 7-4.

A companion proposal from Legislator Robertson to set aside \$25,000 in one-time Contingent Funding to support cost of one-time expenses, such as equipment and furnishings, failed by a 3-8 vote. A proposal, which had been requested earlier as part of the OAR budget to fund an OAR case manager to perform reentry services, at a cost of \$43,200, failed to win support by a 4-7 margin.

MUNICIPAL YOUTH SERVICES SYSTEM:

Legislators, by an 11-0 vote, approved \$75,000 in target funding to support the Municipal Youth Services System, an over-target request that had been initiated by the County Administrator, but then not recommended due to lack of capacity at the time the budget was presented to the Legislature. The allocation is intended to stabilize the level and quality of services provided by the program, reducing reductions made several years ago, at the time of the recession. Legislature Chair Mike Lane inquired whether it would be possible to fund at a lower level, but Youth Services Director Amie Hendrix responded that to do so might mean that some of the towns would be forced to reduce their youth services budgets. The funds go to all municipalities in Tompkins County, which then contract to provide youth programming.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT:

Legislators, by a vote of 7-4, restored \$94,469 to support an additional Community Health Nurse for the Early Intervention Program, as the department continues to work to increase its capacity to keep up with rising caseloads. Public Health Director Frank Kruppa said it has been a challenge to provide the necessary care coordination without excessive caseloads. Legislator Dan Klein abstained from the vote, since his wife is employed in the Early Intervention Program.

PLANNING:

Three modifications were approved in the Planning Department Budget:

- A proposal to change \$25,000 for the Stream Corridor Restoration Program from the one-time funding that it has had for many years, to target was approved by a vote of 10-2. A proposal to support the program with three years of multi-year funding, failed by a tie vote of 6-6.
- By a vote of 11-1, Legislators modified a \$50,000 allocation for the Capital Reserve for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection, which had been requested as target funding, but recommended as one-time, to three years of multi-year funding. Commissioner Ed Marx noted that the fund traditionally has been supported through rollover expense, but that source of funding has dwindled. A proposal to make the allocation target funding failed by a 3-9 vote.
- Legislators, by a 10-2 vote, reinstated \$4,680 in one-time funding to support expenses related to the Environmental Management Council's update of the Unique Natural Areas inventory.

RURAL LIBRARIES:

By a unanimous vote of 12-0, Legislators restored \$14,311 in requested funding to increase the libraries' staff compensation, a step that several librarians have told Legislators would help them begin to address the issue of a living wage for staff.

Other actions:

- A proposal to restore \$88,005 to support an additional librarian at the Tompkins County Public Library failed to win support by a vote of 5-7. Many Legislators voiced their ongoing support of the Library, but some expressed concern that, while \$150,000 in over-target funding included in the Administrator's budget will nearly close the Library's structural deficit, the additional position could eventually add to it, and that perhaps it would be better to wait another year before proposing the position.

- Recommendations to modify the County Administrator's approval of \$10,000 in staff training funds for Cooperative Extension (of \$40,000 requested) all failed to win support. A proposal to fully fund it failed 5-7; to eliminate it altogether was defeated 2-10; and to increase it by \$10,000 to a total of \$20,000 failed by a 4-7 vote.

- Legislators failed to modify funds to support energy program activities by the Planning Department from \$30,000 requested as target and recommended as one-time in the Administrator's budget. A proposal to include \$10,000 in target funding failed by a 3-9 vote; another to change it to multi-year (3 year) funding was defeated 5-7.

Potential Tax Impact of Recommendations to Date

In its first actions, the committee decreased target spending in the County Administrator's recommended budget by \$274,012 and the use of reserves by \$20,350. If tonight's committee recommendations were approved, the county's total 2016 tax levy would increase by 0.71% (down by 0.59% from the 1.3% increase in the Administrator's budget), and the average county tax rate would stand at \$6.71 per thousand dollars assessed property value, an increase of \$8.92 for the owner of the median-priced \$170,000 home.

The Expanded Budget Committee will next convene Thursday, October 15, to consider further potential recommended amendments to the Administrator's budget. 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, along with other budget-related information, 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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