



Inclusion Through Diversity

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Legislators Continue Review of 2017 Recommended Budget**

In their third week of deliberations toward next year's Tompkins County Budget, Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee tonight heard eight more budget presentations, as they continue to review County Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended 2017 budget.

Presenting tonight were the Assigned Counsel Office, Planning Department, Department of Emergency Response, Facilities Division, the Board of Elections, the Airport, the Human Services Coalition, and Coalition agencies.

Among highlights from tonight's presentations:

Assigned Counsel Supervising Attorney Lance Salisbury noted that the State-mandated eligibility guideline increase for indigent representation is expected to increase the office's caseload by 300-400 cases in 2017, and has requested an additional half-time administrative assistant due to that volume. The nearly \$33,000 in funding, recommended by the Administrator, is expected to be offset by grant funding received as part of the State's regionalization program. The Assigned Counsel budget has been increased by \$100,000, in anticipation of the added case demand.

Among over-target requests submitted by the Planning Department was a \$100,000 request for target funding to implement recommendations of the Energy and Economic Development Task Force, including a navigator program to provide independent, expert advice and assistance for businesses in planning, evaluating, and financing energy improvements. While that request was not included in the Recommended Budget, Commissioner Ed Marx said he and the County Administrator have since discussed a potential alternate approach, whereby the Legislature could set aside \$50,000 in one-time contingency funding, to be released after the program and a full funding package was developed, in cooperation with community partners. Marx suggested such a program could be tested as a three-year pilot, funded at \$50,000 each year.

Director of Emergency Response Lee Shurtleff identified ongoing investments in technology as among the major influences on his department's operations, among the necessary technological advancements to provide the foundation to advance to "next-generation 9-1-1," which in part would provide text-to-9-1-1 capability. The administrator's budget recommends nearly \$63,000 in over-target funding to support service contracts for new and upgraded communications and phone systems, and \$6,000 for AED maintenance, training, and replacement. Funding to return the department's Administrative Assistant position to full-time is not included in the Recommended Budget, but Shurtleff told Legislators that position hours need to be restored, as a new staff member must be hired to succeed the existing employee, who will retire in 2017 after 40 years of service.

Facilities Director Arel LeMaro noted that highlights for his division this year have included

completing improvements at the Public Safety Building Jail and Mental Health Building, and roof projects at the Old Jail, County Building C. Challenges identified included allocating limited resources in the most cost-effective and efficient manner, while enhancing customer satisfaction; as well as increasing preventive maintenance efforts. Among Facilities over target funding included in the Recommended Budget is \$50,000 in one-time funding to rebalance heating/ventilation systems for all County facilities.

Human Services Coalition Director Kathy Schlather said increased regionalization for agencies and funding are among the major influences for both the Coalition and its community agencies, with staff turnover also identified—six long-time Coalition staff have left over the past year, and for agencies, there are three new directors this year and half of the agency leadership is new within the past five years. Four requests for one-time agency funds were recommended as part of the budget; a more than \$12,000 request for increased staff funding at the Multi-Cultural Resources Center was recommended by the Coalition’s review committee, but not included in the administrator’s budget.

The Expanded Budget Committee will resume its review Tuesday, September 27. 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), Ithaca.

The 2017 Recommended Budget, with schedules and other budget-related information, is posted on the budget page of the County web site at [www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2017budget](http://www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2017budget).

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