



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislators Recommend 2017 Amended Budget

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee tonight recommended that the Legislature amend County Administrator Joe Mareane's 2017 Recommended Budget and the Capital Program for the next five years. The recommendation came by a unanimous vote of 14-0.

The amended budget, to be presented to the Legislature tomorrow, would increase the County tax levy by 2.93%. The recommended tax rate of \$6.62 per thousand is down by 11 cents (1.53%) from 2016 and is a penny less than the Administrator's budget, representing an increase of \$15.64 in the tax bill for the median-valued \$175,000 home.

In actions during the three voting sessions, the committee decreased the County Administrator's budget by \$32,093 in target spending and increased the use of reserves by \$228,375. The recommended levy increase of 2.93% compares to a 3% increase contained in the County Administrator's budget.

Among changes made before the amended budget was approved were two adjustments in the budget:

- Legislators, by a 13-1 vote, reduced the Contingent Fund allocation by \$230,000—that decrease reflecting the reduction in the pension rate to the 15.3% the County will pay next year, from the 15.5% estimate contained in the administrator's budget.

- Legislators increased the sales tax revenue estimate in the budget by \$100,000 (a reduction of 0.3%), approved by a 9-5 vote. (Legislature Chair Michael Lane proposed an amendment to increase the estimate by \$75,000, which failed by a 5-9 margin.) County Administrator Joe Mareane reported that third-quarter sales tax revenue has come in 1.3% higher than a year ago, a bit better than what he had projected; and while he cautioned that sales tax is still a risk-filled environment, he said it would be reasonable for Legislators to consider revising the estimate.

Other amendments:

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION:

By a 12-2 vote, Legislators added \$30,000 in target funding to support 35% of a technician's salary that has been paid through New York State grant funds. District Manager Jon Negley said the grant funding is best allocated to support soil and water programs and projects.

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

Legislators added \$27,651 to the administrator's budget to transition the department's Administrative Assistant back to full-time. The more than 40-year incumbent in the position, who has been working on a reduced schedule, will retire in 2017. Director Lee Shurtleff said the return to full-time restores the administrative capacity needed in his department.

CONTINGENT FUND:

- By a 12-2 vote, Legislators approved setting aside \$30,000 in one-time funding to support targeted projects in the Planning Department to implement the County's Housing Strategy, addressing the critical issue of the County's housing needs. Planning Commissioner Ed Marx said such initiatives could include engaging municipalities, potential developers, and residents in a collaborative process to identify potential opportunities for more housing in the community, working proactively to overcome potential barriers to housing development before specific development proposals are submitted.
- \$50,000 in multi-year funding (over three years) was set aside in the Contingent Fund to support development and implementation of a plan for transitional housing for the homeless, reentry, and recovery, approved by a unanimous 14-0 vote. The plan would be prepared through the Human Services Coalition and presented to the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee for review. Coalition director Kathy Schlather said such transitional housing provides temporary, supportive housing at a critical time for vulnerable people who are "getting back on their feet."

Other actions:

For a third time, the Technology Librarian position at Tompkins County Library was brought up for a vote, Legislator Dooley Kiefer proposing a revisit to allocate \$41,207 to increase the position from half-time to full-time status. The proposal failed to win support, by a 5-9 margin.

At its October 18 meeting, the Legislature will consider the recommended amended budget. Once the Legislature formally adopts recommended amendments to the County Administrator's budget, the amended package becomes the basis of deliberations, including the Legislature's November public hearing on the budget. The public hearing date will be set by the Legislature at tomorrow's meeting.

The 2017 Recommended Budget, along with amendments to date and other budget-related information, is posted at the budget page of the County web site at www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2017budget.

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

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