



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Begins 2016 Budget Review

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee tonight began review of County Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended 2016 County Budget, hearing their first eight presentations from County departments, beginning a committee review process that will run through most of October.

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.

Tonight Legislators heard presentations from Workforce Development, Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD), the County Clerk, the County Historian, Office for the Aging, Soil and Water Conservation District, and Transportation Planning.

Highlights from tonight's presentations:

Both Workforce Development and TCAD reported that their priorities for the year ahead include manufacturing skills assessment and training—TCAD coordinating the study, funded by the County Industrial Development Agency, and Workforce implementing the recommendations, the project addressing what both organizations see as a critical need to match local employers offering advanced manufacturing jobs with trained employees needed to fill those positions. TCAD president Mike Stamm noted that the five-year funding plan for TCAD approved by the Legislature in 2013 has served as the basis for the economic development agency to rebalance its revenue, with roughly equal shares of County support, fee-based income, and revenue from private sources.

A \$50,000 over-target request in the County Clerk's budget, recommended by the County Administrator, would provide one-time funding to scan remaining pockets of County records as part of its digitization initiative. County Clerk Maureen Reynolds said more than \$1.6 million in shared services funding has been received so far from the New York State Archives, to share this technology with all other municipalities and courts in the County.

The County Historian's budget includes a \$25,000 over-target request, recommended by the Administrator, to develop materials and activities to commemorate the County's Bicentennial in 2017, anticipated as the first of two annual requests. Historian Carol Kammen said it's hoped that the celebration will "educate, explain, and entertain people, all at the same time."

For the Soil and Water Conservation District, the Administrator's budget recommends \$40,000 in

over-target, one-time funding to support continuation of the full-time Hydrilla manager position for the second half of 2016, after State grant funding ends at mid-year. Director Jon Negley said discussions will begin next year with the City of Ithaca and other entities to help fully fund the position for 2017 and beyond.

An over-target request of just over \$22,000, advanced as part of the Office for the Aging budget, would enable FoodNet to maintain the living wage standard for its employees, in light of the 9% increase in the AFCU Living Wage standard in 2015. An initial mid-year allocation for FoodNet had been approved by the Legislature as target funding, with the request to support the increase not included in the Administrator's budget. Administrator Joe Mareane said that reflects the issue of resources at the initial stage of his recommendation, suggesting critical attention is needed by the Legislature. He noted this request was the only one received as part of the 2016 budget process that reflects the issue of the living wage.

Transportation Planner Dwight Mengel submitted an over-target request of more than \$17,000, not included in the Administrator's budget, to offset reductions in federal and state support for the Gadabout paratransit service and the related New Freedom transportation program, which primarily enables rural residents who use wheelchairs to commute to work in Ithaca. Administrator Mareane stressed that the County is not withdrawing its commitment, but is dealing with a backing off of commitment from federal and state governments. Legislature Chair Mike Lane noted, "The matter of Gadabout is pretty concerning for us all."

Legislators will hear seven more budget presentations when the committee reconvenes Thursday, September 10. 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, with schedules and other budget-related information, is posted on the budget page of the County web site at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/2016budget.

Contact: Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

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