



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Residents Speak to Legislators at Annual Budget Forum

The Legislature tonight held its annual Community Budget Forum, inviting residents to learn about and comment on the County's recommended 2019 budget currently under review by the Legislature.

About 14 people attended, and 7 of them spoke during the hour-long session.

Susan Holland, Executive Director of Historic Ithaca, and Laurel Southard, president of The History Center's Board of Directors, advocated continued funding of a History Center bookkeeper position, not included in the Administrator's budget. Holland said there's an "absolute need for this position," especially with the capital campaign for the new Tompkins Center for History and Culture underway and the necessary management of a large amount of grant funding.

Support was also voiced for a new Tompkins County Veterans Office, for which \$100,000 is allocated in the Recommended Budget. Both Ithacan Margaret O'Neal (part of an informal coalition of local veterans helping veterans in need) and former City of Ithaca Common Council member and veteran J.R. Clairborne said such an office would provide an important focus to better help local veterans in need and connect them with veterans services.

Three people spoke in support of the County's Office of Human Rights and expressed concern about elimination of the office's paralegal aide position, although overall funding for the office has not been reduced. Ithacan Ruth Yarrow said that, although New York State won't continue its memorandum of understanding with the County regarding investigation of complaints, the Office of Human Rights needs a strong advocacy piece to fulfill its mission and be a vibrant, effective organization. Both she and Ithacan Laura Branca expressed their continued support for adoption of a comprehensive local anti-discrimination law.

Legislators meeting as an Expanded Budget Committee will begin to recommend modifications to the administrator's budget on Tuesday, October 9, the first of as many as three voting meetings before the budget formally advances to the Legislature.

Administrator Jason Molino's \$186.5 million Recommended Budget would increase the County's property tax levy by 1.43%, (less than the Legislature's 2.2% levy goal for 2019) and would decrease the County tax rate for the fifth consecutive year, due to a substantial increase in the county's tax base. A \$3 increase in the County's Solid Waste Annual Fee is also recommended. Under the Recommended Budget, the County property tax bill for the owner of a median-valued \$185,000 home would increase by \$15.40.

The 2019 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/2019budget.

Residents may submit budget comments online through the County web site, by e-mailing the Legislature (legislature@tompkins-co.org), or through the *Tompkins County, NY* Facebook page. Written comments can be mailed to the Legislature Office at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

People may address legislators on the budget at the beginning of any County Legislature meeting, as well as at the Legislature's formal budget hearing on October 30, prior to scheduled adoption of the budget November 8. All budget meetings, including the hearing, take place at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Tompkins Building.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 844-8440.

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