



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Budget Presentation Summary – Week ending September 6, 2019

In their initial session this week, Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee heard their first budget presentations, as they began review of County Administrator Jason Molino's 2020 Recommended Budget.

The following presentations were heard on September 5:

- Administrator Molino on the Capital Plan; Department of Recycling and Materials Management; Department of Planning and Sustainability.

The administrator's \$191.8 million Recommended Budget would increase the County's property tax levy by 2.76%, (in line with the Legislature's 2020 levy goal) and would decrease the County tax rate for the sixth consecutive year, due to a continued substantial increase in the county's tax base. A \$2 increase in the County's Solid Waste Annual Fee is also recommended. Under the Recommended Budget, the County property tax bill (including the solid waste fee) for the owner of a median-valued \$190,000 home would increase by \$15.

Presentation highlights:

CAPITAL PLAN:

Administrator Molino provided an in-depth look at the proposed Capital Plan update, which includes approximately \$100 million of investment over the next 15 years, and recommends that the annual appropriation to support capital be increased to 1.00% of the property tax levy, up from the current 0.5%. Among its major elements: designating \$32 million for Green Facility improvements and \$2 million to electrify the County's passenger fleet—significant parts of a funding strategy to meet the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2035—\$22 million for a downtown County campus; \$30 million for public safety building improvements; \$7 million committed to airport improvements; and \$6.5 million for a back-up emergency dispatch center and system upgrades.

RECYCLING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT:

Recycling and Materials Management Director Barb Eckstrom described her proposed budget (which is not supported by property tax), and the challenges that have shaped it—including a \$500,000 increase in the 2018 Recycling collection contract, a \$200,000 increase in the new waste haul/disposal contract, and a significant decline in recycling revenue due to market conditions. The Department expects to end 2019 with a \$400,000 operating deficit; the 2020 budget would utilize \$310,000 in fund balance from the Solid Waste Fund, and would reflect \$97,000 in expense reductions. The proposed \$2 increase in the annual solid waste fee would cover only \$100,000 in shortfalls, Eckstrom noted. Administrator Molino told Legislators, "This was a challenging budget," and he credited Director Eckstrom and her staff for "doing a wonderful job in trying to make this work."

PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY:

Included in the Recommended Budget are three of four over-target requests (OTRs) from the Planning and Sustainability department: to begin to transition from one-time to target the Senior Planner position leading the department's successful Business Energy Advisors program; as well as one-time funding (\$30,000) to continue the department's Municipal Housing Affordability Infrastructure grant program (begun in 2019) and provide \$10,000 for the County's 2020 membership dues for the Southern Tier 8 regional planning organization. Commissioner Katie Borgella told Legislators major influences on her department include energy, climate change, and adaptation; affordable housing and focused development; water quality (including such elements as harmful algal blooms on Cayuga Lake); as well as tourism. As part of the department's presentation, Tourism Planner Nick Helmholdt also provided an overview of the Tourism Program Budget, supported wholly by County Room Occupancy Tax. The 2020 Tourism Budget was approved by the County's Strategy Tourism Planning Board in July.

The Expanded Budget Committee will resume work Monday, September 9.

The 2020 Recommended Budget, along with schedules and other budget-related information (including presentation documents from departments and agencies) is posted on the budget page of the County web site at www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2020budget.

Contact: Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

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