



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Annual Budget Forum Comments Focus on Three Community Services Programs

The Legislature tonight held its annual Community Budget Forum, inviting residents to learn about and comment on the County's recommended 2020 budget currently under review by the Legislature.

About 25 people attended, and 14 of them spoke during the more than hour-long session. Most comments focused on three community services programs, all over-target requests not currently included in the County Administrator's Recommended Budget.

Four speakers urged continued funding of Continuum of Care efforts to end homelessness, \$50,000 in ongoing Target funding had been requested, to succeed three years of one-time allocations that have supported a range of homelessness prevention programs. Deborah Dietrich, executive director of the agency OAR (Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources) and Advocacy Center Director Heather Campbell were among those speaking of the positive impact the past COC allocations have had on those they serve. Human Services Coalition executive director Kathy Schlather told Legislators that the various local programs dedicated to homelessness can seem like a confusing array of programs, but that it will be not one position or one fund but a whole suite of programs (such as those funded through the Continuum of Care allocation) that will be needed to combat the difficult problem of homelessness in this community.

Four people each also urged that over-target funding be approved for two programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. \$18,000 in one-time funding is sought as "bridge funding" for Extension's Urban Outreach program, an after-school support and mentoring program, which has served children in Ithaca's West Village and Northside low-income complexes for decades, and speakers talked about the impact the program has had on children's lives.

Several members of the Food Policy Council spoke in support of a \$20,000 one-time allocation, for the next two years, to develop a local Food System Plan, as has been done successfully in other communities, which would identify resources that exist in the community to achieve food security for all, uncover gaps that put residents and risk, and address a wide range of food-related vulnerabilities. "We don't understand how our food system works and we're all vulnerable," said Council member Don Barber, noting that a comprehensive approach for guidance is currently lacking. "There are challenges now and more coming in the future...having a good plan is step one," he said.

Legislators meeting as an Expanded Budget Committee will begin to recommend modifications to the administrator's budget Thursday, October 3, the first of as many as three voting meetings before the budget formally advances to the Legislature.

Administrator Jason Molino'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.

The 2020 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/2020budget.

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 29, prior to scheduled adoption of the budget November 7. All budget meetings, including the hearing, take place at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Tompkins Building.

Contact: Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 607-844-8440.

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