



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Committee Begins to Advance Amendments to Recommended 2020 Budget

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee have begun to recommend changes to County Administrator Jason Molino's Recommended Budget delivered to them last month, marking the start of a new phase of the County's 2020 budget process.

At their initial voting meeting, Legislators recommended the following changes to the budget. Those recommendations may be reconsidered at later expanded committee meetings and will require approval by the full Legislature to become final.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

The committee, by unanimous vote, approved a budget adjustment to remove \$8,300 in over-target funding for a Security Risk Assessment at the Human Services Building. On October 1, the Legislature approved a Contingent Fund request to fund the assessment during 2019.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT:

Legislators, by a vote of 13-1, restored \$130,000 in ongoing Target funding to support a Water Resource Engineer for the District, a position District Manager Jon Negley said would provide much-needed engineering capacity for the District and facilitate its grant-funded projects. Legislators, however, did not restore \$35,000 for an Agriculture Technician/Outreach Coordinator, which failed to win support by a 4-10 margin.

LEGISLATURE:

Legislators, after a half-hour of discussion, voted 12-2 to add to the budget \$3,000 in one-year funding, administered through the Community Arts Partnership, to support the work of the County's Poet Laureate in serving and enhancing the community. After 2020, it was suggested that CAP include the amount in its annual Tourism Fund request through the Strategic Tourism Planning Board.

TOMPKINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY:

By unanimous vote, Legislators approved a legislator-initiated request to add \$5,000 in one-time funding to support the Library's Jail Outreach program—funding to support such functions as staff implementation of the program: workshops, book clubs, other literary pursuits, staff development and expanding the program's collection.

YOUTH SERVICES:

\$39,490 in Target funding was added to support salary adjustments (a 10% increase) for Rural Youth Managers (eight youth service workers and two program managers) serving towns and villages, approved by an 11-3 vote. A proposed amendment to reduce the increase to 5% failed by a vote of 4-10.

CONTINGENT FUND:

After considerable discussion, Legislators, by a 12-2 vote, approved \$6,116 in ongoing Target support for the van for Cooperative Extension's Rural Youth Services program (+10% administration). Initially proposed for funding as part of the Youth Services budget, it was amended to be held in the Contingent Fund while details are finalized.

PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY:

By unanimous vote, Legislators restored to the budget \$10,000 in one-time funding to support advisory board priorities. Such priorities include public education work of the Environmental Management Council's Climate Action Committee and the Water Resource Council's Clean Boating Map initiative.

\$50,000 was added to the budget to once again fund a Parks Grants program for municipalities, initiated in 2019, which was approved by a vote of 13-1. For 2020, the City, as well as the county's towns and villages, would be eligible to apply, and it was indicated that preference should be given to those municipalities not receiving funding in 2019.

Other actions:

-A proposal to remove \$2,300 from the Legislature's budget to fund County membership in the National Association of Counties (NACO) failed by a vote of 3-11.

Legislator Mike Sigler advanced, but later withdrew, the proposed removal of \$134,500 in three-year funding from the County Administration budget supporting a new position of Chief Equity and Diversity Officer. The position has been recommended by the employee group examining diversity and inclusion issues related to findings from the County's 2018 Workplace Climate Survey. Three members of the team were on hand to elaborate on the position, to be focused on building trust within the organization and in the community, and providing equal access to all employees and residents.

Several Legislators voiced strong support for the position and recognized and expressed thanks to the employees who brought it forward. Among them, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Chair Leslyn McBean-Clairborne. "I am particularly happy to see this come forward," Legislator McBean-Clairborne said. "We have been talking in WDIC for years of building an organization that is not only diverse but one that is inclusive... This recommendation is not coming from our Department Heads or subject matter experts, it is coming from our employees.... This is a way we can create an environment that is inclusive, that people want to work for, and that sets an example." This position would be critical in enabling all the work that has been done over the years to move forward in a meaningful way, she said. Although he withdrew his proposal, Legislator Sigler said he remains confused about what the position entails, and is not overly optimistic about it.

Potential Tax Impact of Recommendations to Date

In its first actions, the committee increased target spending over that in the County Administrator's recommended budget by \$175,606 and the use of reserves by \$59,700. If tonight's committee recommendations were approved, the county's total 2020 tax levy would increase by 3.11% (up by 0.35% from the 2.76% increase in the Administrator's budget), and the county tax rate would stand at \$6.34 per thousand dollars assessed property value, an increase of \$12.04 for the owner of a median-valued \$190,000 home.

The Expanded Budget Committee will reconvene Monday, October 7, to consider further potential recommended amendments to the Administrator's budget. 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), Ithaca.

The 2020 Recommended Budget, with schedules and other budget-related information, is posted at the budget page of the County web site at www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2020budget.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 607-844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551.

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