



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislators Recommend 2020 Amended Budget

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee have recommended that the Legislature amend County Administrator Jason Molino's 2020 Recommended Budget and the Capital Program for the next five years. At the end of the committee's October 7 meeting, the recommendation came by unanimous vote. The recommended Tentative Budget includes an amendment, advanced by Legislator Dan Klein, which increases projected revenue (from sales tax and legal settlements) by \$100,000 to reduce the tax levy.

The amended budget, to be presented to the Legislature October 15, would increase the County tax levy by 2.75%, just under the initial 2.76% in the Administrator's budget. The recommended county-wide average tax rate of \$6.31 per thousand is 10 cents less than 2019 (a decrease of 1.59%). The amended budget would represent an increase of \$12.69 in the tax bill for the median-valued \$190,000 home. A \$2 increase in the County's annual Solid Waste Fee, to \$60, is also recommended. The amended budget, as proposed, increases use of reserves by \$324,402.

More on the approved amendments to the Recommended Budget:

UNALLOCATED REVENUE: SALES TAX & LEGAL SETTLEMENTS:

Legislator Klein's amendment to increase the revenue projections by \$100,000 was approved by a 12-2 vote. Mr. Klein said such an amendment was in order in part due to the County's sold sales tax receipts to date and strong fund balance. Both he and Legislature Chair Martha Robertson equated it to a slight "gamble to benefit the taxpayer." Budget chair Michael Lane said he didn't like the practice and instead supports reliance on the best estimates of the County Administrator and Finance Director to guide budget development. Legislator Mike Sigler said he would prefer such adjustments to be made at the beginning of the budget process, instead of the end. While he said he does not consider this "best practice," Administrator Jason Molino advised the adjustment was acceptable to him. Mr. Klein had initially proposed making the adjustment solely by increasing the Sales Tax revenue projection; Administrator Molino recommended increasing the sales tax estimate by \$76,000 and that for legal settlements by \$24,000 to reach the \$100,000 figure.

HUMAN SERVICES COALITION:

-\$18,000 in one-time funding was added to support a part-time case management position at OAR's Endeavor House, approved by unanimous vote. Endeavor House houses men returning to the community after prison or jail. OAR Director Deborah Dietrich said the position will provide needed additional support and will enable expanded in-house programming.

-By unanimous vote, \$50,000 in multi-year funding (one-time funding for three years) was restored to provide continued funding for Continuum of Care efforts to end homelessness. Citing the program's success over the past three years in supporting multiple initiatives to support housing and prevent homelessness, the allocation was first advanced to move from one-time to target. Legislators discussed that option but ultimately voted 12-2 to continue through three-year one-time funding.

CONTINGENT FUND:

-Legislators, by a vote of 11-3, restored \$50,000 in multi-year funding (one-time funding for 3 years), moved to the Contingent Fund, to support a Landlord Liaison, requested by the Human Services Coalition on behalf of the

Continuum of Care. The allocation supports a person for landlords to contact regarding housing issues, with the hopes that landlords would be more likely to accept renters with housing choice vouchers.

-In a new addition to the budget, Legislators approved, by an 11-1 vote, \$25,000 in one-time funding to support the City of Ithaca's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, placed into the Contingent Fund until the City presents a plan for the program, including funding.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION:

Two amendments related to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County were approved:

- Urban Outreach program: Without dissent, Legislators approved \$18,000 in one-time funds to provide "bridge" funding for the program, which provides after-school and mentoring support. The allocation is to help bridge the gap between program revenue and expenses while new sources of revenue are being developed.

- Food System Planning: By a 12-2 vote, Legislators approved \$20,000 in multi-year funding (one-time funding for two years) for coordinated food system planning, development of a local Food System Plan, as advanced by the Food Policy Council, in which Extension participates. An amendment to move the funding into Contingency, pending further program development, failed by a vote of 5-9.

- A third Cooperative Extension funding proposal, which would have allocated \$12,000 in one-time funding to support design of CCE's Strategic Plan, failed by a vote of 5-9.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

By unanimous vote, the source of funding for the Confidential Investigator in the D.A.'s office (\$83,702) was changed from target to three-year one-time funds.

Other actions:

-A proposal to change the one-time funding source of \$110,000 for the successful College Initiative Upstate program, operated by OAR (Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources), was not approved. First proposed to be shifted to ongoing target funding, an amendment was approved by a 9-5 vote to support through half-target/half-one-time funds, then the change ultimately failed to win support by a tie vote of 7-7. County Administrator Jason Molino indicated that he supported continued multi-year funding as part of his Recommended Budget to keep a focus on the program in view of the impending leadership turnover for both OAR and the CIU program.

-A proposal to remove from the budget \$53,063 in target funding to add a Deputy Director of Workforce Development (upgrading an existing part-time administrative coordinator position) failed by a vote of 3-11. A proposal to move the funding to three-year one-time funding failed to win support by a vote of 7-7.

-The proposed removal from the budget of \$96,232 in target funding for one of two additional Deputy Sheriff positions was rejected by a vote of 2-12.

-A proposed addition to the budget to allocate \$10,000 for the City of Ithaca's Cass Park renovation project failed to win support by a vote of 6-7.

-Legislator Henry Granison once again this year advanced a proposal to provide \$10,000 in one-time financial support to provide subsidized transit service for people living at the poverty line. That proposal was withdrawn, pending further discussion about the issue, expected to begin before the Legislature's Housing and Economic Development Committee.

At its October 15 meeting, the Legislature will consider the recommended amended budget. Once the Legislature formally adopts recommended amendments, the amended package becomes the Tentative Budget and the basis of deliberations, including the Legislature's public hearing on the budget October 29.

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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