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*Inclusion Through
Diversity*

"Promoting excellence in County operations while respecting the needs of the people we serve."

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the September 24th, 2020 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature Expanded Budget Committee

The expanded Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee of the Tompkins County Legislature met to review the proposed 2021 departmental budgets from human services departments. Those departments include Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health, Office for the Aging, Youth Services, Veterans Services, and Office of Human Rights. Due to financial impacts from COVID-19, County departments were required to submit budgets that reflect a 12% reduction.

Increased Need for Social Services

The Tompkins County Department of Social Services (DSS) presented their proposed 2021 budget alongside details on the challenges faced by the department and the clients that they serve. Director of DSS, Kit Kephart shared that "one of the greater challenges is what we know we don't know," outlining the increase in public assistance caseloads and impending reductions shifts in funding from New York State.

Kephart shared that social service caseloads have been shifting from family assistance programs to safety net programs, reflecting pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are increased needs in the areas of housing, nutrition and food (SNAP), utilities (HEAP), and keeping families supported through other ongoing services.

The department's recommended budget reduces staffing by two full time equivalent positions. Various over-target-requests for legislature consideration were presented, recommending reconstitution funding for certain programs and other investments in the department. Kephart explained that the programs supported by the over-target-requests help to get supports and increase stability to those in need early to reduce the need for crisis services. The department reported an increase in calls from individuals who are seeking social services for the first time.

The full presentation from Social Services can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=733

Public and Mental Health

Public Health Director Frank Kruppa presented the recommended 2021 Health Department budget. The \$13.3 million budget (with a \$5.8 million local cost) proposes eliminating four full time equivalent positions, one of which is currently filled, that individual will be offered another open position in the Health Department. Kruppa spoke to the work of the Health Department responding to COVID-19 in Tompkins County, highlighting nurses and other department employees who have stepped up to manage contact investigations and tracing during the pandemic.

An over-target-request was presented to restore 2.5 hours per week for the department's Children with Special Care Needs division. Kruppa additionally reported that the division's nurses have supported community health services on COVID-19 response and contact tracing.

Kruppa also serves as Mental Health Commissioner and presented the Mental Health Department recommended budget, totaling \$11.9 million with a \$2.3 million local cost. The recommended budget proposes eliminating the Health Homes program. The program is a case management model and represents services that New York State would contract with another entity – services from the program will still be available in the community and other agencies have expressed interest in picking up that contract work. Employees from the program will be offered other open positions at the County.

Kruppa reported that the Mental Health Department will hold steady its Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) programming and clinical services. PROS is a comprehensive recovery-oriented program for adult individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. An over-target-request was presented to keep a Wellness Court

Coordinator, which Kruppa reported as having been critical to cost savings related to mental health court. Kruppa also gave an update on telehealth services as an ongoing strategy – meeting the needs of clients and patients virtually.

The full presentation from Public Health can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=4005

The full presentation from Mental Health can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=4874

Office for the Aging, Youth Services, Veterans Services, and Office of Human Rights Present Proposed Budgets

Directors from each human services department presented their recommended budget and over-target-requests, and answered questions from Legislators.

County Administrator Jason Molino and Legislators thanked departments for reassigning certain employees to the local COVID-19 response

The full presentation from the Office for the Aging can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=6584

The full presentation from Youth Services can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=7583

The full presentation from Veterans Services can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=8706

The full presentation from the Office of Human Rights can be found here: https://youtu.be/2PwJlm_RwX8?t=10160

Past 2021 budget presentations and discussion can be viewed on the County's [YouTube page](#).

The County's budget process and documents can be found on the County Administration [Website](#).

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