



Tompkins County Administration
125 East Court Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone: (607) 274-5551
Fax: (607) 274-5558
www.tompkinscountyny.gov

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
Jason Molino

DEPUTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS
Lisa Holmes and Amie Hendrix

*Inclusion Through
Diversity*

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the September 29th, 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 budgets from the County's public safety departments. Those departments include the District Attorney's Office, Assigned Counsel, Probation and Community Justice, Emergency Response, the Sheriff's Office, and the County Jail. Due to financial impacts from COVID-19, County departments were required to submit budgets that reflect a 12% reduction.

District Attorney's Office

Tompkins County District Attorney Matt Van Houten presented the office's proposed budget (\$1.9 million), explaining that 95% of current expenses are personnel related. The proposed budget includes eliminating one full-time administrative assistant position and over-target-requests — one of which is to continue a confidential investigator position. The investigator position was added last year to comply with discovery reform (requires prosecutors to disclose their evidence to the defense earlier in case proceedings) and involves significant time collecting and downloading data and evidence for cases.

Van Houten cited the major budget influences of compliance with reforms (including policing, discovery, and bail), the addition of a third County Court judge that will increase the number of court dates and trials, and wellness and recovery court operations to divert individuals with non-violent felonies toward recovery rather than incarceration. Van Houten also shared that his office is involved in ongoing plans to implement a LEAD program (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion), and that the department is seeking a diverse candidate pool for an assistant district attorney position.

The District Attorney spoke to the efficacy of alternative to incarceration programs (ATIs), stating that "the jail population is consistently in the low to mid 30s, meaning that our ATIs are working, and we're spending less money incarcerating people."

The full presentation from the District Attorney can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/es2SZiVPNAo?t=205>

Assigned Counsel

Tompkins County Assigned Counsel Lance Salisbury presented the office's proposed budget of \$1.8 million. Salisbury reported that there have been ongoing reductions in criminal court proceedings over the past year and expects that trend to continue through 2021.

The full presentation from the Assigned Counsel can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/es2SZiVPNAo?t=1926>

Sheriff's Office and Tompkins County Jail

Tompkins County Sheriff Derek Osborne and Undersheriff Jennifer Olin presented the proposed budgets for the Sheriff's Office and the County jail. The jail budget (\$5.4 million) recommends the elimination of one position in part due to the ongoing reduction in the jail population.

The office's civil and road patrol functions constitute a recommended \$5.7 million budget. The recommended budget includes the elimination of one full-time position and equipment budget reductions including a \$6,000 (50%) reduction in the SWAT budget.

Over-target-requests recommended in the budget included restored funding for two road patrol deputies, vehicle fleet investments, and equipment upgrades and contracts. One request is for an \$82,000 per year contract for body

camera upgrades and replacements. Sheriff Osborne relayed that there has been an increase in needed equipment repairs and an opportunity to use more advanced cameras. The body camera contract includes unlimited data storage and an increased ability to record the back seats of all cars when any suspects are in the vehicle.

Sheriff Osborne stated that community outreach has been a successful strategy for the office, reporting a good relationship with community members that the office plans to continue to improve upon moving forward.

The full presentation from the Sheriff's Office (including the Tompkins County Jail budget) can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/es2SZiVPNAo?t=5237>

Probation and Community Justice

The proposed budget for the Probation and Community Justice Department (\$2.8 million) includes the elimination of four positions, reducing staffing to 28 full-time equivalent employees. Department Director Dan Cornell relayed that one position proposed to be cut is a workforce development specialist (following a retirement). Cornell cited that workforce opportunities and training are offered elsewhere in the community, including with the County's Workforce NY office.

Cornell shared that there has been an overall caseload reduction for probation, and that the number of cases per officer has been in the low 40s or below on average.

The full presentation from Probation and Community Justice can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/es2SZiVPNAo?t=4582>

Emergency Response

The Tompkins County Department of Emergency Response presented their proposed \$3 million budget, outlining challenges and opportunities faced by the department. Department Director Brian Robison shared that the recommended budget eliminates four positions including one position shifting to the Information Technology Services Department under the proposed GIS (Geographic Information System) consolidation. Robison additionally shared that the planned backup dispatch center project is making headway and detailed to Legislators the nature of the 24/7 dispatch operations managed by the department's 16 (15 proposed in 2020) dispatch staff.

The full presentation from Emergency Response can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/es2SZiVPNAo?t=2701>

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](#).

Contact, Jason Molino, Tompkins County Administrator, 607-274-5551, Martha Robertson, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 607-592-3119