

Highlights of the October 19th, 2020 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature Expanded Budget Committee

The expanded Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee of the Tompkins County Legislature met to vote on amendments to the proposed 2021 Tompkins County Budget. Amendments approved by the legislature added \$262,911 to the budget, increasing the tax levy by .51% yielding a proposed rate of 5.49% overall.

Amendment Supporting New Chief Sustainability Officer Position Vote Postponed to October 27th

Legislators Martha Robertson (D-Dryden) and Deborah Dawson (D-Lansing) proposed an amendment to support a Chief Sustainability Officer position in County Administration. The potential new position would be designed to divert work from the Department of Planning and Sustainability and increase their capacity to advise on emerging energy policy in New York State (including the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act) and on water resource planning. The position would lead the County's internal efforts to implement the Energy Strategy and work toward reducing carbon emissions from County vehicle fleets and facilities.

Legislator Dawson stated, "We need to be proactive in preparing ourselves to meet the challenges of the regulatory framework that will be put in place and mandated by the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act... I view this position as giving us capacity to be proactive and to prepare."

The amendment was postponed by a vote of 13-1 (Legislator Mike Lane dissenting), and will be considered in the next Expanded Budget Committee Meeting Tuesday, October 27th.

Additionally, an amendment to restore target funding for staff hours at the Department of Planning and Sustainability, totaling \$50,833, was passed unanimously (13-0, Legislator Sigler was excused).

Broadband Study Amendment Approved Unanimously

An amendment submitted by Legislator Anna Kelles (D-Ithaca) to support a broadband study passed unanimously (14-0). Kelles stated that the study will identify gaps in Tompkins County where people are underserved or unserved by broadband internet, and that it will provide information to a nonprofit (Southern Tier Network) that is working on a region-wide plan. The amendment was approved for up to \$59,000 as various municipalities across Tompkins County have put forth financial support in partnership with the County and others are actively considering contributions.

Among Other Business

An amendment to restore \$60,000 to the target budget supporting the Community Outreach Worker Program passed unanimously (13-0, Legislator Sigler was excused).

Amendments supporting the Tompkins County Health Department were approved, including the continuation of a contract with the Community Science Institute for stream monitoring (13-0), restoring hours to the Environmental Health unit (13-0) and funding for a public health technician (13-0), and one time funding for a traveling nurse to assist with COVID-19 contact investigations (14-0).

The proposal to create an Innovation Director position failed (2-11), with Legislators and staff committing to ongoing discussions supporting innovative approaches in County operations and service delivery.

The archived video of the meeting can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/9zp0cJPwL5E>

The next Expanded Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee meeting will be on October 27th at 4:30pm and can be found at this link: <https://youtu.be/H0gFBMmiPKc>

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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