

Highlights of the September 20, 2021 Meeting of the Expanded Budget Committee of the Tompkins County Legislature

Tompkins County Historian Presents Budget & Priorities

The Tompkins County Historian, who is appointed by the County Legislature presented on their 2021 activities and 2022 recommended budget. Historian Carol Kammen shared that she is “Hoping to show that people here have come together to make a difference and make the community a better place.”

The \$7,500 recommended stipend for the historian is drawn room tax dollars paid by hotel stays in the county. An additional \$5,000 program expense for Historical Commission programming would be funded with ongoing target local funding.

In 2021 the commission published various pamphlets including histories of local people and the Gayogohó:nq’ in the Cayuga Lake Region with an accompanying children’s version. There are also plans to install signs on Cayuga Street in the indigenous language. In 2022 there are plans for a publication on Diversity in Tompkins County and interpretive signage for signage in indigenous language. County historian Carol Kammen talked about the diversity work, sharing “it’s not about firsts, it’s how we’ve gotten together in spite of our differences.”

Tompkins County History Center Presents 2022 Budget

History Center Director Ben Sandberg presented their 2022, budget, outlining the recommended \$46,590 in support from Tompkins County totaling 12% of the History Center’s total annual revenue. The support from the County makes long-term preservation and care of archival and object collections possible in addition to a professional bookkeeper. Sandberg reported a 40% loss in projected income due to the pandemic that had to be made up through the Paycheck Protection Program, fundraising and support from the community and grantmaking agencies, and other federal relief programs. Sandberg reported that more local visitors have made use of the History Center space as a safe learning environment during the pandemic as tourism and travel has declined.

The History Center shared two new archival initiatives, a COVID-19 collection, and a Black Lives Matter collection - each featuring various record types from the community. Sandberg shared that these initiatives seek to “Preserve and steward a historical record for future generations,” remarking that the History Center acts as that bridge for people now looking to the past and that the Center wants to ensure the historical record is set up for this activity in the future as generations to come look back at this time.

The History Center is a tenant of the Tompkins Center for History and Culture, a collaborative space on the Ithaca Commons housing several not-for-profits supported by Tompkins County. Following an inquiry on the success of the Tompkins Center from Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden), Sandberg share that it has "...spurred a lot of cross-institution collaboration, including one with the Dorothy Cotton Institute and exciting stuff coming with Discover Cayuga Lake. This (center) has helped spur creative programming, and being in the building with other leaders has also made a difference."

Ithaca Area Economic Development

Heather McDaniel, Executive Director of the Ithaca Area Economic Development agency shared their \$265,737 supported through the 2022 recommended budget, of which \$224,768 is target funding with a \$40,969 over-target-request to restore funding that the County had pledged as part of a previous MOU. The County's commitment supports 22% of IAED's annual budget.

IAED reported offering direct services including business retention and expansion programming, strategic planning and economic development leadership, and community awareness of those activities. IAED administers the local Industrial Development Agency, development corporation, and revolving loan funds. McDaniel reported goals of supporting businesses and increasing the local tax base.

Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden) inquired as to the levels of support for IAED received from other municipalities, in response to which McDaniel indicated that the City of Ithaca, Town of Dryden, and Town of Lansing provide support, though not as significant as what is invested by the County.

Workforce Departments Present Budgets

Director of the Office of Employment and Training and Workforce New York, Jackie Mouillesseaux presented the recommended \$1.24 million budget, with no over-target requests. This budget represents an 11.5% increase over 2021, which would make use of unspent 2020 and 2021 funds. Mouillesseaux shared an expanded goal of more support for local employers seeking, hiring, and retaining qualified job candidates while continuing and enhancing support for local job seekers.

Mouillesseaux further reported that the summer youth employment program served over 80 youth in Tompkins County, and while other in-person services continue to be restricted by the State Department of Labor, the staff continues to be creative in connecting with jobseekers and employers through different avenues and in different spaces. The office continues to work to respond to the pandemic's impact on workers, and to decrease systemic barriers to people who are seeking gainful employment. In response to an inquiry from Legislator Henry Granison (D-Ithaca), Mouillesseaux added,

“We have a role to play in educating employers in supporting people facing systemic barriers to employment.”

Local dollars make up 10% of the Office of Employment and Training budget, while State and Federal funds make up the rest.

Interim Director of the Workforce Development Board, Rosemary Avila presented the Workforce Development Board’s \$603,651 budget and \$34,183 over-target request to cover losses through grants no longer received by the board.

Recycling and Materials Management

Recycling and Materials Management Director Barb Eckstrom presented the department’s \$8 million budget and the state of the department and its activities. The budget includes the continuation of the previously approved plan to increase the annual fee for homeowners by \$5 per year for five years – it would rise to \$75 in 2022, the second year of the five-year plan. Disposal fees and punch card costs will stay the same from 2021 to 2022.

Eckstrom shared a pie chart breaking down the \$75 annual fee’s breakdown, of which \$30 goes to recycling collection activities, \$27 to recycling operations, \$9 to organics processing, and of the miscellaneous smaller amounts \$1.50 goes to administration. The total fees collected equal \$4.39 million.

Eckstrom reported that several waste-reduction initiatives in partnership with organizations including Fingerlakes ReUse continued to be on hold through the planned 2022 budget.

Highway Department & Highway Machinery Budget

Highway Department Director Jeff Smith presented the department’s \$7.7 million budget, explaining that it is still 10% below 2019 levels before COVID-19. The budget recommends increasing staffing by one front-office administration position who will also take over responsibility for inter-office mail at the County from the County Clerk’s office and assist with communication with the community on highway projects and construction.

The Highway Machinery budget is recommended at \$2.35 million, with \$898,000 in over-target requests for machinery. The requests are for an excavator (used daily for ditching and drainage work, would replace the oldest of four), a boom lift that would replace rentals occurring frequently with increased costs, and a snow and ice tandem truck for plowing and myriad other uses.

There was discussion on the Highway Department’s workforce training internship program in partnership with other local municipalities. The program has been on-hold due to several recruiting difficulties and pandemic-related disruptions.

Interim County Administrator Lisa Holmes indicated that changes would also have to be made to the program to allow for full CDL training for applicants.

Tompkins County Facilities Department & Bureau of Weights and Measures

The Tompkins County Facilities department presented their recommended \$4.26 million budget, which includes 33 full time equivalent employees and several over-target requests. The over-target requests are for restoration of building repair funding essential to maintaining facilities (was lower during 2020 & 2021), maintenance vehicles, a plow truck, and engineering support. The engineering support was presented as being critical for planning and execution of the County's Capital Plan.

Bureau Weights & Measures director Aaron Becker presented the \$104,000 budget. \$12,000 would be an over-target ask for a 150-gallon prover that would allow for larger-volume measurements of heating fuels which would allow for more accuracy. The Bureau is a consumer-protection department ensuring accuracy of commercial products and scales in the County.

Ithaca / Tompkins International Airport

Deputy Airport Director Roxan Noble presented the recommended \$4.09 million budget, which holds steady in amount from 2021. The airport reports many recent successes including recent notification of increased air service by United and American airlines and just over \$5 million received in federal relief funding.

2022 goals for the Airport include working toward regaining pre-pandemic service levels, enhancing airline agreements and the rental car operator agreement, and working with the Upstate Airport Initiative Grant through New York State.

For more information on the previous budget presentations, visit: <https://www2.tompkinscountyny.gov/news/highlights-september-14-2021-meeting-expanded-budget-committee-tompkins-county-legislature>