



Highlights of the October 4, 2021 meeting of the Expanded Budget Committee of the Tompkins County Legislature

Tompkins County Departments & Libraries Present Recommended 2022 Budgets

Tompkins County Assessment

Director of the Department Jay Franklin and Assistant Director Irene Kehoe presented the department's recommended \$1.3 million budget, which includes 13.7 full time equivalent employees. An over-target request was made to hire project assistants to assist with informal assessment reviews and grievances in the spring.

Franklin shared that the department has made nearly 17,000 assessment changes so far this year and will be soon to address the commercial properties which will increase the number of changes to 20,000+. This is the largest number of changes since the early 2000's.

Tompkins County Clerk & Department of Motor Vehicles

Tompkins County Clerk Maureen Reynolds presented her department's \$1.6 million budget, of which over \$1 million is revenue from services. Reynolds shared that she has never seen the real estate market in the condition it has been these past few years, referencing the transfer tax amount being abnormally high (transfer tax being the tax paid for property transfers), and the mortgage tax being up over previous years as well.

Reynolds also added details about how the Department of Motor Vehicles has handled reopening, sharing that appointments made online have been going well and that the department has been fully staffed since August 2021. She indicated that the Enhanced or REAL ID process for travel documentation has been delayed due to the pandemic so there is anticipated future work related to those processes.

Tompkins County Clerk of the Legislature

Tompkins County Clerk of the Legislature Cathy Covert presented her recommended \$957,736 budget, which includes the Legislature's budget. Four over-target requests were presented including continued support for a deputy clerk position and computer equipment for Legislators and the Legislature chambers.

Tompkins County Information Technology Services

Department Director Greg Potter presented his department's \$2.1 million budget. The department has 14 full-time equivalent employees, having recently grown by two Geographical Information Systems employees when that service was consolidated across the County. Potter and Deputy Director Loren Cottrell reported that the County is actively preparing and planning related to cybersecurity concerns and is collaborating with other agencies as well.

Over-target requests presented included funding for increased costs of service contracts and updates to the existing tax mapping tool and aerial photography in conjunction with the Department of Emergency Response.



Rural Library Services

Several rural library directors presented their 2022, \$190,000 recommended budget. Directors indicated that they are working to increase hourly wages of employees in 2022, impacting their budget. The presentation included updates on the services and programs provided by libraries and challenges being faced in recent years.

Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden) thanked libraries for all that they provided communities during the pandemic, and Lansing Library Director Susie Gutenberger detailed the extensive work done by staff and the innovative programming and compassionate work to meet those most isolated and in need during the pandemic. Sarah Glogowski, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Library System shared her reflections on the services and resiliency of the libraries in Tompkins County.

Tompkins County Public Library

Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL) Acting Director Teresa Vadakin presented the library's recommended \$3.6 million budget supported by the County. The County's support makes up 83.7% of TCPL's revenues. Vadakin shared updates on the library including that there has been a reduction in staffing exacerbated during the pandemic (proposed at 40 full time equivalents in 2022, down from 49.4 in 2009). Over-target requests were presented, including partial restoration for staffing and contractual services and equipment maintenance. The library's vision for the future is to continue to upgrade technology, expand programs and outreach, and build the digital collection.

Vadakin thanked the Legislators for their support during the 2021 budget, including an increase for access in rural areas such as the Enfield Elementary School and the *Literacy Inside and Out* initiative through the Tompkins County Jail.



Tompkins County Attorney

Tompkins County Attorney Jonathan Wood presented his department's \$478,000 budget that is recommended for 2022. Wood is planning to retire, and a new County Attorney will soon be named by the Legislature.

Tompkins County Board of Elections

Democratic Election Commissioner Steve DeWitt and Republican Commissioner Tamara Scott presented their \$1.09 million 2022 recommended budget. DeWitt shared that 2022 is a redistricting year impacting State and Congressional districts, as well as it is a Gubernatorial election year where primaries will also occur. Absentee ballots may also be tabulated on or before election day if a state law goes into effect, as well as same-day voter registration.

A new full time equivalent position to handle some technical aspects of the board's operations is being requested, as are around \$100,000 of increased program expenses related to anticipated increased operational complexities and needs.

Legislator Leslie Schill (D-Ithaca) asked about the health of voting machines, and Steve DeWitt responded that they are nearly 10 years old and are performing well at this point, though the purchase of new machines may come in future years following the State's review of other available models.

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>