

BUDGET COMMITTEE
August 21, 2019

Committee Members Present: P. Curran, P. Stockin, J. Burdick, D. Fanton, B. Harris, J. Ricci, C. Crandall

Others Present: G. Barnes, B. Budinger, J. Budinger, R. Christman, W. Dibble, K. Dirlam, K. Geffers, G. Green, M. Hennessy, K. Hooker, J. Hopkins, C. Knapp, A. Mattison, D. McDonnell, B. Perkins, B. Riehle, T. Ross, M. Washer

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m. by Budget Committee Chairman Phil Curran.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Legislator Fanton, seconded by Legislator Stockin, and carried to approve the Budget Committee minutes of July 17, 2019.

Sales Tax Report

Ms. Ross distributed the 2019 Allegany County Sales Tax Report reflecting receipts totaling \$12,753,998.94 through August 21, 2019. The year-to-date figures show an increase of \$45,619.82 or 0.359 percent more compared to last year at this time. Ms. Ross stated that we have recovered from our previous loss, and we are stable.

2020 BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

County Attorney – 2020 Budget Review

County Attorney Carissa Knapp attended the meeting to discuss her 2020 Budget requests for the County Attorney's Office (A1420). Committee Chairman Curran began by stating that as things progress, the nation as a whole is not in a good position. While the County is actually doing quite well according to many NYSAC reports, we need a plan in place for every department as state and federal monies start decreasing, adding it has to be started as soon as possible and remain a live document for changes. Attorney Knapp stated she has always been a competitive budgeter, noting she brought in \$49,000 that was returned to the general fund, while also increasing their hourly billable rate and cutting their budget last year. Attorney Knapp continued that she can't cut legal services; however, she can look into cutting mileage, conferences, as well as some equipment, but also runs on an already tight budget. Attorney Knapp went on to say that not filling vacant positions puts them in a position where they don't provide services that bring in revenue. Committee Chairman Curran indicated that his concern lies with funding going away that currently comes from the federal and state government that is allowing Ms. Knapp to return \$49,000 to the general fund. Legislator Harris referred to the filling of a vacancy listed on Ms. Knapp's department survey and asked how long the position was vacant. Attorney Knapp stated it has been vacant since former County Attorney Tom Miner retired. Upon his retirement, everyone shifted up, and Ms. Knapp waited until she was appointed before looking at the process of filling vacancies within her department. Legislator Harris asked how payroll is only anticipated to increase by \$9,000. Attorney Knapp stated this position was fully budgeted in 2018 and 2019. Legislator Harris asked what services are provided to other agencies in the County, and if Ms. Knapp is aware of any legal services that are revenue driven and not funded through state or federal resources. Attorney Knapp stated they are all driven by law so every department has some sort of legal need, noting that the only departments she bills for services are Social Services and STOP-DWI. Legislator Harris asked if everything billed to Social Services is then reimbursed to them through the state and Ms. Knapp stated, yes.

Office for the Aging – 2020 Budget Review

Office for the Aging Director Anita Mattison and OFA Accountant Kimberly Geffers attended the meeting to discuss their 2020 Budget requests for the Office for the Aging (A6772, A6773, A6774, A6775, A6776, A6777, A6778, A6779, A6781, A6782, A6783, A6784, A6785, A6786, A6787, A6788, and A6789). Ms. Mattison distributed a sheet listing the description of the programs in her department. Legislator Harris questioned if the 0 percent increase in salaries that was referenced in Ms. Mattison's department survey is due to ongoing union negotiations. Ms. Ross stated, yes, if a department has non-unit or AFSCME employees they include a 2 percent raise, while anyone in PEF or the Sheriff's Union did not factor in a percentage. Legislator Harris stated that they can more than likely anticipate some sort of increase and asked what the rationale is for putting in zero. Ms. Ross stated you don't want to add in a percentage before the union is done negotiating.

Ms. Mattison stated they are actively reducing their waiting list which is down to 67, adding that if they gave all clients 4 hours a week of in-home care, the cost would be \$335,000 per year which does not include the additional personnel or overtime to handle the caseloads. Committee Chairman Curran asked how many active clients they currently have. Ms. Mattison stated they currently have 32, and they continue to tackle the waiting list to reduce that number. Ms. Mattison noted that it is also difficult to find home health aides. Committee Chairman Curran asked if there are other counties working with these same sort of numbers. Ms. Mattison stated that after receiving the Unmet Needs funds, their numbers are actually down, adding that some counties have waiting lists over 100 because not every county received the Unmet Needs funds grant. Legislator Hopkins questioned the struggle to find home health aides in the upper part of the County. Ms. Mattison stated it is primarily due to finding those willing to travel noting that Hume, Canaseraga, Swain, Houghton, and Granger are the most difficult. Legislator Harris asked if there are any anticipated increases in expenditures. Accountant Kim Geffers stated only those related to the Unmet Needs funds that were received. Chairman Crandall referenced the slight increase in contributions and asked if they are expanding services or filling in gaps to break even. Ms. Mattison stated they are filling in the gaps so they can continue to work at the level they are at now without having to ask for additional funds from the County. Chairman Crandall asked if contributions are rising compared to several years ago. Ms. Geffers stated that while she has only been working in the office since last year, she understands that contributions are in decline, noting that it is not just the County, it's everywhere. Ms. Geffers continued that a lot of people they serve are low income and don't have the ability to make contributions; however, they have seen an uptick in organizations wanting to help them. Legislator Hopkins asked if they find that contribution amounts received are far above or below what is projected in the budget. Ms. Mattison stated they are considerably lower than what they hope to get. County Administrator Deborah McDonnell referenced the handout and asked Ms. Mattison to discuss the information listed. Ms. Mattison briefly discussed the acronyms, grants, programs as well as what they provide. The committee also briefly discussed changes with the Senior Picnic budget. Committee Chairman Curran referenced his request again for developing a plan moving forward when outside money starts to diminish. Ms. Mattison stated they are currently enrolled in a 2-year course through NYSOFA that teaches them how to look for outside sources of revenue which will allow them to sustain services if these fund start to go away. Mr. Curran asked that they also take a step further and come up with a descaling plan as something in the department will have to go.

Real Property Tax – 2020 Budget Review

Real Property Tax Director Joe Budinger attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests for the Real Property Tax Department (A1355). Legislator Ricci asked why nothing about the PILOT programs is included in his budget. Ms. Ross stated PILOT revenue is listed in A1340 which will be discussed at another scheduled Budget meeting. Legislator Harris referred to the question on the departmental survey regarding how the needs of the community have changed

in relation to services provided. Mr. Budinger stated that the community's needs are the same; however, the state's role continues to diminish every year, and his department has been increasingly filling their role. Mr. Budinger continued that when they came about in 1971, the state had a big role in assessing as well as overseeing assessors. Since 2016, they did away with the Real Property Tax Department, and the state washed their hands of real property and put it on the County. With all of it now coming through us, they have taken over the oversight of the assessors which has taken up a lot of Mr. Budinger's time. Legislator Fanton asked if they closed the Batavia office. Mr. Budinger stated they haven't; however, they did lose a lot of staff, and their newest employee has 12 years in. Legislator Harris asked for the reasoning in budgeting a small drop in revenues. Mr. Budinger indicated it has been trending that way over the last five years, and while they are trying to make everything accessible online to be more convenient for the public, they are no longer coming into the office to get a copy of a map and incurring that fee. Committee Chairman Curran stated that it appears his department's workload is increasing. Mr. Budinger stated correct and noted that they are trying to avoid taking the assessors in-house and continue contracting them which is a savings. Mr. Curran asked how many towns in the County a single assessor can handle. Mr. Budinger approximated 2,500 to 3,000 parcels; however, they do have one assessor who is excellent and handles 11 towns which equates to 15,000 parcels which is roughly 55 percent of the County. Committee Chairman Curran referenced his statement in regards to developing a plan for when state and federal monies diminish. Legislator Fanton asked if they can incorporate a user fee into some of the things they are doing. Mr. Budinger stated they may be able to charge the abstract companies, surveyors, etc., but primarily their data is public information. Legislator Fanton suggested they explore the option of user fees to bring some more money into his budget.

County Clerk – 2020 Budget Review

County Clerk Rob Christman attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests for the County Clerk's Office (A1410). Mr. Christman began by stating that he is always very careful about fee based systems because fees are pretty steep, and he thinks it's hard to hit our taxpayers who already pay to live here a fee. Committee Chairman Curran questioned Mr. Christman's budgeted revenues being down. Mr. Christman stated it is systematic to the economy. When transactions aren't taking place, it will be reflected in the fees that are charged. Mr. Christman indicated he has reflected that in his projections which he likes to be very conservative with. Mr. Curran asked what Mr. Christman thinks about the license plate issue. Mr. Christman stated it's just a money grab that will end up being a \$75 to \$100 million bonus for the government. The County will see a little bit of that, so it will be a windfall for us as well; however, not enough for everyone to have to go through that. Legislator Stockin stated that in the past there was legislative pushback that slowed it down, but this time it appears they have no say. Mr. Christman stated the County Clerk Association is pushing back; however, he does not think they will succeed. Mr. Christman added that the state does understand they cannot drain the County dry, so they are sharing some of the computer generated revenues which will equate to \$10,000 in revenue this year.

Break

The committee took a five-minute break at 10:29 a.m. and reconvened at 10:34 a.m.

Human Resources – 2020 Budget Review

Personnel Officer Bobby Budinger attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests for the Human Resources Office (A1430). Mr. Budinger indicated that they have done a good job holding the line. Committee Chairman Curran asked where their revenue comes from. Mr. Budinger stated civil service application fees which are approximately \$3,000. They also receive reimbursement from the Retiree Drug Subsidy (RDS) Program which is for retirees who

are eligible for prescription coverage. Mr. Budinger indicated they budget around \$45,000 in revenue for this program. The committee briefly discussed Mr. Budinger's office moving to an electronic filing system. Legislator Harris asked if there is an increase in mandates coming from health insurance. Mr. Budinger stated there are constant changes, and they have a benefits consultant that they rely on heavily to keep them abreast of different mandates. Legislator Harris referenced employees who are allowed time off to vote and asked how much it has cost the County. Mr. Budinger stated there is a requirement that the employee ask for the time off. They haven't had anyone make that request yet so it remains to be seen what the cost will be. Mr. Budinger stated it hasn't been a problem at this time; however, he did express his concern about having a lot of employees off at one time. Legislator Harris asked if advertising for positions falls under legal advertising. Mr. Budinger stated, yes, about 4 to 5 years ago, they changed it and moved it under his budget. The last two years, the County has seen a lot of vacancies, and because advertising is expensive, it's a line item that can go either way depending on how many vacancies there are in one year. Mr. Budinger continued that they have taken measures to mitigate some of the costs such as no longer advertising in the newspaper, as well as creating a Facebook page that lists all job postings. Legislator Harris asked if the County is doing the best we can with advertising our bigger positions. Mr. Budinger indicated that there is always room for improvement.

STOP-DWI / Youth Bureau – 2020 Budget Review

Youth Bureau/STOP-DWI Director Brian Perkins attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests for the Youth Bureau (A7310) and STOP-DWI (A3141) cost centers. Mr. Perkins stated that things are going well, and he doesn't have a lot of changes to his 2020 Budget because he would like to go a full year as Director and see how things go before he makes any big changes. Mr. Perkins continued that former Director Linda Edwards had a lot more travel than he does, so he did adjust that line item. Committee Chairman Curran referenced his request for developing a plan when federal and state monies start to go away. Mr. Perkins stated he only has two employees, including himself, but he can try to cut some expenses; however, he is not sure that will make a big difference. Mr. Perkins indicated he would need to look into other ways to supplement income for their programs.

Information Technology – 2020 Budget Review

IT Director Keith Hooker attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests for Information Technology (A1680) and Central Service Telephone (A1610). Mr. Hooker stated they are doing well and have more or less remained flat. Committee Chairman Curran asked how Office 365 will affect our revenues and expenses. Mr. Hooker stated that with more expense, they charge it back to departments. If one increases, the other does as well, so it evens out in the end. Mr. Hooker stated that it costs us less to operate the new system so we did save some money with less power, less equipment to maintain, and less maintenance. Mr. Curran asked what the lifespan is on the current system. Mr. Hooker indicated the two physical servers that house the software will need to be replaced in 3 years and will cost approximately \$5,000 per server. Legislator Harris asked where they are with the Office 365 change. Mr. Hooker stated they have requested it as a 2020 Capital Project in the amount of \$175,000. The committee briefly discussed the details of the systems and changeover. Legislator Harris referenced the department survey question of changes they would like seen in the budget process and asked for detail on Mr. Hooker's response that the understanding of the process has been lost. Mr. Hooker explained that when the department heads go over the budget, they initially have a meeting to go over everything that the County Treasurer's Office plays a huge role in which allows the department heads to have a good idea of what's going on. Mr. Hooker feels that when the Board turned over last term, the process wasn't communicated to the new members. Committee Chairman Curran stated that they are lacking in information, and at this point, the process is still a complete mystery to most of them, and they are going to try and remedy that.

Veterans Service Agency – 2020 Budget Review

Veterans' Service Agency Director Michael Hennessy attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests (A6510). Mr. Hennessy distributed the FY2018 Geographic Distribution of Veteran Agency Expenditures to the committee for review. Mr. Hennessy stated that the veteran population dropped by 81; however, he is not convinced they have an accurate number of veterans that are alive in our County as there are many young veterans who do not utilize their services. Mr. Hennessy continued that expenditures for veterans in the County have increased by \$1.8 million. Legislator Harris stated that it appears the County has a disproportionately large number of veterans. Mr. Hennessy stated that Allegany County is a very patriotic county, so they see a lot of veterans come back to live here. Chairman Crandall asked where the population numbers come from. Mr. Hennessy stated its veterans who are enrolled in the Veterans Agency System. Chairman Crandall asked if there are a lot of older veterans that are floating along unaccounted for because they haven't come across an issue to require services. Mr. Hennessy stated a lot of veterans nearing retirement age want to hook into the healthcare system; however, when you're 23 years old and just coming out of the service, your aches and pains may seem like nothing, but as they get older they turn into bigger issues. Mr. Hennessy briefly discussed two veterans he recently advocated for and noted that he has approximately 400 widows they are keeping an eye on. Legislator Hopkins stated that they hear a lot about the lack of quality in veteran's medical services and asked if they are finding the treatment to be sufficient in the County. Mr. Hennessy stated that in our region, he always gets great reports on treatments; however, the Wellsville Veterans Agency Center is a revolving door of doctors and some of our veteran's don't like that.

Consumer Affairs (Weights & Measures) – 2020 Budget Review

Weights & Measures Director Gilbert Green attended the meeting to discuss his 2020 Budget requests (A6610). Committee Chairman Curran asked if there are any highlights for 2020. Mr. Green stated, no, other than repairs are increasing slightly.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:51 a.m. following a motion by Legislator Stockin, seconded by Legislator Fanton, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghan Washer, Confidential Secretary to the Clerk of the Board
Allegany County Board of Legislators