

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **BUDGET**

DATE: February 6, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Caimano
Monroe
Belden
Gabriels
O'Connor
Champagne
Kenny

Others Present:

Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative &
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Hal Payne, Administrator, Westmount Health
Facility
Judy Harris, Auditor
Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent
Supervisor Merlino
Supervisor Kenny
Supervisor Girard
Supervisor Sheehan
Supervisor Geraghty
Maury Thompson, *The Post Star*
JoAnn McKinstry, Secretary to Commissioner of
Administrative & Fiscal Services
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist

Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Champagne, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Nicholas Caimano, Budget Officer and Chairman of the Budget Committee, briefly explained the 2007 Budget reflected a 10.8% increase in taxes. He said the full Board of Supervisors voted in favor of this Budget, recognizing that all union contracts were settled for 2007, 120 positions had been reallocated to reflect more accurately the responsibilities of the positions, and no services were cut from the Budget. In order to fulfill these obligations, he said, it necessitated keeping expenditures in line to reflect any savings that could be found.

In the 2007 Budget, Mr. Caimano stated travel was drastically reduced and in many cases eliminated. In 2006, he said, the County expended in excess of \$400,000 in travel expenses, including transportation for handicapped children and early intervention service programs.

Mr. Caimano indicated when he presented the Budget Message, he recommended the Board of Supervisors implement a policy to assure the stability of taxes and the replenishment of fund balances to the County in future years. Therefore, he said, he suggested the following:

- a) Each supervisory committee shall review and approve all in-state and out-of-state travel requests. Currently, he said, out-of-state travel requests required board resolution approval. He suggested that in-state travel requests that necessitated overnight accommodations receive approval by the Committee.

- b) Mr. Caimano stated committees should seek an explanation for those travel requests that require the transfer of funds.

Mr. Kenny asked the Budget Officer to take special note of the codes involved in the transfer of funds, as those codes were obviously overbudgeted.

- c) Mr. Caimano asked the maximum lodging, meals and incidental expenses be set by the Board of Supervisors and he suggested the Board adopt the U.S. General Services Administration Domestic Per Diem Rates ([www. gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)) as the County guide, as it became obvious some departmental expenditures were not within these guidelines.
- d) He stated if a particular conference or convention required attendance, it did not necessitate the approval of the entire department.
- e) Mr. Caimano stated the County would derive additional savings by encouraging all departments to utilize the Stockroom and/or Purchasing Department for necessary supplies, including specialty items.
- f) He asked that the Tables of Organization within each department be reviewed periodically to assist in consolidating some of the vacancies and asking the existing staff to assume some of the duties.

Mr. Caimano announced the amount to be raised by taxes, which was \$33 million in 2006, would be increased an additional \$2.5 million.

In summation, Mr. Caimano asked the Budget Committee to adopt the U.S. General Services Administration Domestic Per Diem Rate as a policy for Warren County.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Champagne that the Warren County Travel Policy be amended to include the U.S. General Services Administration Domestic Per Diem Rates.

Mr. Caimano suggested a significant savings would be derived by limiting the accommodations to a local hotel versus the convention hotel, even assuming the cost of transportation. Mr. Kenny stated if the convention included meals, those people seeking outside meals would bear the cost. Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, added the appropriate paperwork was not being submitted with the request to travel, making it difficult to prove whether the meals were inclusive. As part of the previous motion, Mr. Kenny added, that all appropriate paperwork must be submitted with the request to travel or it would not be voted upon.

Relative to a purchase order for a conference, Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent, apprised that prior approval to attend a conference was not part of the Purchasing Policy and asked if she was to assume the request had been approved. Mrs. Parsons suggested amending the Travel Policy, as well as developing a form requiring the appropriate signature. Mrs. Parsons clarified that any overnight out-of-state travel was approved by the Committee and Board of Supervisors; however, she said, any overnight or day travel was approved by the Chairman of the Board as well as herself but she recommended amending it to include Committee approval. In response to Mrs. Pacyna's question, Mr. Caimano replied upon Committee approval and execution by the Committee

Chairman, the request would be submitted for approval by the Purchasing Agent.

Eugene Merlino, Supervisor, Town of Lake Luzerne, stated while the Warren County Budget increased 10.8%, the Budget for the Town of Lake Luzerne increased 17.1%. Mr. Caimano said he concurred with Mr. Merlino, but reminded everyone when they voted to transfer funds during Committee Meetings, they were hurting themselves. If there were zero funds in the Budget, Mr. Champagne stated the decision had already been made. Mr. Caimano emphasized the importance of not going beyond the department budgets in finding a way to transfer funds in order to attend. However, he said, if the travel request necessitated a transfer of funds, that department acknowledged that code was over budget. Mr. Champagne added that each department head must prioritize the request to travel as it related to other expenditures within their department.

Mr. Monroe asked the Budget Officer whether he reviewed the travel expenses as a whole or department by department. Mr. Caimano responded travel for some departments was a necessity; on the other hand, he said, they asked the departments for their recommendations as it related to travel. While there were departments that cut some travel expenses, he said there were a few departments that never responded, assuming they would come to their Committee in January and have their requests approved. While it was important that Warren County not isolate themselves from the outside world, Mr. Monroe emphasized it was equally important for each department head to sacrifice funds from another code.

Mr. Kenny stated when he voted on the 2007 Budget, he voted on the "whole" Budget, including travel for individual departments. Furthermore, he said, they were not asking a department for zero travel forever, just 2007. Mr. Caimano stated he understood a wealth of knowledge would be gained by attending conferences/seminars with people in the same business, but they were not asking them to abandon travel altogether. Mr. Geraghty indicated changing the thinking of the department heads would generate an increased savings to the County.

After discussion, Mr. Caimano called the question and the motion was carried unanimously amending the Warren County Travel Policy to include the following:

- ✓ Each supervisory committee would review and approve ***all*** in-state and out-of-state travel requests, with out-of-state travel requiring approval by a board resolution, and in-state travel that necessitated overnight accommodations, requiring committee approval only.
- ✓ If payment of travel expenses required the transfer of funds, the department head must provide the code from which the funds were derived.
- ✓ The U.S. General Services Administration Domestic Per Diem Rates would be the guide to determine the maximum reimbursement for lodging, meals and incidental expenses. Please see: www.gsa.gov on the internet.
- ✓ The number of people traveling to an event from one department would be limited and set by the supervisory committee. Department Heads would be required to submit all paperwork describing travel and expenses for review by the committee. A Travel Form (Schedule "A") must be signed by the supervisory committee chairman if travel is approved and attached to any Purchase Order or Voucher submitted for reimbursement.

The necessary resolution was authorized for the February 16, 2007 Board Meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Gabriels and seconded by Mr. Belden requiring all departments to utilize the Stockroom and/or Purchasing Department for the purchase of supplies, including specialty items.

Mrs. Parsons added this had created an enormous amount of responsibility for Julie Pacyna, Purchasing Agent, and Judith Harris, Auditor. By implementing these rules, she said, they had received repercussions and she asked the supervisors to support these individuals when approached by the department heads.

Mr. Geraghty exited the meeting at 11:42 a.m.

Mr. Champagned asked each supervisor to sign the policy requiring all department heads to purchase supplies from the Stockroom and/or Purchasing Department.

Mrs. Harris apprised that many towns ordered their supplies from the Stockroom; likewise the department heads could do the same.

After discussion, Mr. Caimano called the question and the motion as outlined above was carried unanimously. The necessary resolution was authorized for the February 16, 2007 Board Meeting.

Upon the recommendation of Mr. Champagne, Mr. Caimano asked that a notice be sent to the full Board of Supervisors requiring these two policies be executed by all supervisors and forwarded to every department within the County.

Mrs. Pacyna stated the department heads were familiar with the bid items for purchase, thereby eliminating the need for purchase of specialty items.

A brief discussion ensued.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Gabriels, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber
Legislative Office Specialist