

# WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

## COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: OCTOBER 10, 2007

---

---

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS CAIMANO  
MONROE  
BELDEN  
GABRIELS  
O'CONNOR

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SUPERVISORS CHAMPAGNE  
KENNY

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

WILLIAM THOMAS, CHAIRMAN  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
JOAN SADY, CLERK  
SUPERVISORS BENTLEY  
MERLINO  
STEC  
TESSIER  
F. THOMAS  
VANNESS  
FRANK O'KEEFE, COUNTY TREASURER  
JUDY HARRIS, COUNTY AUDITOR  
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
RICK MURPHY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF FISCAL SERVICES  
TODD LUNT, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
WILLIAM LAMY, DPW SUPERINTENDENT  
ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
MICHAEL SWAN, DIRECTOR OF REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES  
DAVID CEDERSTROM - *THE CHRONICLE*  
AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

---

---

Mr. Caimano called the meeting of the Budget Committee meeting to order at 11:15 a.m.

Mr. Caimano explained that the meeting had been called to make the Committee aware of the progress that had been made on the 2008 Warren County Budget and also to give options to keep property taxes down while providing essential services to the residents of Warren County. He proceeded with a power point presentation entitled "Warren County State of the 2008 Budget", a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

During the presentation, a slide showing the use of County Surplus Funds for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 was shown. Mr. Monroe pointed out that while the slide reflected that \$3.5 million in County Surplus had been used to balance the Budget in 2007, the Moody's Investment Service Report had shown that \$6.5 million had been used. Mr. Caimano replied that they were currently awaiting correspondence explaining the figure and Rick Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of Fiscal Services, apprised that he had recently prepared this documentation; however, he said, he had not brought it to the meeting. Mr. Murphy explained that this figure was a comparison of excess expenditures over revenues for 2006. He further explained that expenditures had totaled approximately \$5.7 million, including appropriations and Surplus Fund usage, while excess expenditures were approximately \$1.8 million.

Mr. Caimano pointed out that in 2006 \$1.38 million in Surplus Funding had been used to fund DPW Capital Projects and shortfalls in Medicaid, Countryside Adult Home, Foster Child Care, District Attorney and Office

---

---

for the Aging Mealsite programs. He said that he felt the Moody's report was disingenuous because it indicated that over the past three years consecutive operating deficits were largely due to the appropriation of the General Fund balance and weak expenditure controls. Mr. Caimano stated that the report failed to indicate that Medicaid costs had increased by \$30 million, which was uncontrollable, and it also did not account for funds spent on natural disasters, such as the one that occurred in Bolton Landing to which the County had contributed approximately \$3 million that had not been reimbursed. He noted that Surplus Funds had also been used for expenses such as DPW Capital Projects to replace the County's infrastructure without causing the considerable increase in property taxes that would occur if Surplus Funds were not used. Mr. Caimano stated that the Surplus Fund balance required replenishing and they intended to do so once the current debt service reserve was retired, in approximately two years, allowing those extra funds to be earmarked for replenishment of the Surplus Fund balance.

The 2008 Departmental Budget requests had reflected a 26% increase over the 2007 amount to be raised by taxes, Mr. Caimano apprised. He said that by implementing the Budget Officers recommendations, this amount could be decreased to 6%, with both revenues and expenses increasing by 3%.

Mr. Caimano advised that several possible options had been suggested to help build the Surplus Fund balance for the future. The first of these suggestions, he stated, was to consider reducing or eliminating un-mandated and non-essential services; however, he said, it would be a struggle to eliminate some of them. Secondly, Mr. Caimano apprised, the filling of vacant positions should be questioned more thoroughly prior to authorizing them. He added that they should ask if the positions were necessary, if the public would suffer by not filling them and if other employees could reasonably absorb the workload of the vacant position by re-organizing the Department. Mr. Caimano said that this would not eliminate any existing staff but would question whether or not vacant positions could be eliminated, thereby reducing salary costs.

Mr. Caimano stated that a third option to assist in raising the Surplus Fund balance, would be to hire a Grant Writer. He noted that a large amount of grant funding was available and it was his opinion that the County had not even scratched the surface of what might be gained. Mr. Caimano added that although this new position would add to salary costs, they would realize a much greater return in grant funding. He noted that compensation for the position could be negotiated based on commissions for the amount of funding gained through the Grant Writer's efforts.

Discussion ensued with respect to the hiring of a Grant Writer.

Lastly, Mr. Caimano stated that combining shared services among County Departments was yet another avenue for saving money and increasing the Surplus Fund balance. He said he felt that a combined meeting of all Supervisors and Department Heads should be held to discuss where services were being overlapped. For example, Mr. Caimano pointed out, there were currently two different crews maintaining the Municipal Center and Public Safety Building lawns, and those services could reasonably be combined and facilitated by one crew, rather than two. He added that this did not mean staff would be reduced, just that their services would be reapplied and used more efficiently.

Mr. Caimano stated that the Moody Report indicated the County's direct net burden was .4%, which was very low, and they might have to consider the use of bonding, or debt, to replenish the Surplus Fund. He noted that as with the equipment requests made by the DPW for the 2008 Budget, it was his opinion that it might be wisest to purchase the equipment through the use of one bond because the debt service would

---

---

have to be less than on the purchase of just one \$150,000 piece of equipment.

Mr. Belden apprised that William Lamy, DPW Superintendent, had produced a listing of the equipment needed, scheduling those purchases over a five-year period at a cost of \$1 million per year, subsequent to the initial cost for 2008, which would be higher. He said that he agreed with Mr. Caimano in that it would be best to bond the equipment purchases to achieve a lower debt service. Mr. Caimano stated that the equipment purchases had to be addressed because the County had an obligation to its residents and visitors to maintain the County roads and highways in a suitable manner.

As for action taken thus far, Mr. Caimano apprised that they had reviewed the status of the mortgage tax in Warren County and William Thomas, Chairman, would be discussing this issue at the Board meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup>. He said that a .25% increase in the mortgage tax would be suggested to the Board of Supervisors, which would generate an additional \$1 million per year in revenue for the County.

Mr. Caimano stated that efforts were being made to keep the amount to be raised by taxes as low as possible and it was his goal to achieve an increase of less than 4% over the 2007 figure. He said that there might even be a possibility of a 0% increase if they were able to get some of the cost savings measures discussed in place. Mr. Caimano said that he had been working with Department Heads to reduce Budget requests appropriately and he especially commended Mr. Lamy and Mr. Belden who had been working diligently to reduce the DPW Budget, which was one of the largest.

As there was no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Gabriels, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist