

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2018

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS THOMAS
MERLINO
STROUGH
WILD
SOKOL
BEATY
DICKINSON
GERAGHTY
FRASIER
DIAMOND
MCDEVITT

OTHERS PRESENT:

RONALD F. CONOVER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
MARY ELIZABETH KISSANE, COUNTY ATTORNEY
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS BRAYMER
DRISCOLL
LOEB
MAGOWAN
REPRESENTING THE WARREN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE:
SHAWN LAMOUREE, UNDERSHERIFF
LARRY JEFFORDS, COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR
MICHAEL COLVIN, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR
KEVIN HAJOS, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
ROBERT LYNCH, DEPUTY COUNTY TREASURER
TAMMIE DELORENZO, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
KRISTY MILLER, CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
TRAVIS WHITEHEAD, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY RESIDENT
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST-STAR*
THOM RANDALL, ADIRONDACK JOURNAL
MOLLY GANOTES-GLEASON, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Please note the following contains a summarization of the November 8, 2018 meeting of the Budget Committee; the meeting in it's entirety can be viewed on the Warren County website using the following link:
<http://www.warrencountyny.gov/gov/comm/Archive/2018/budget/>

Mr. Thomas called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

Mr. Thomas announced the purpose of today's meeting was to discuss the proposed changes to the 2019 Tentative Budget as suggested by Supervisors Beaty, Braymer and Diamond. Copies of the listing of changes suggested by each were distributed to the Committee members and are on file with the meeting minutes.

With regard to salary increases for Department Head staff, Mr. Wild suggested that a pool of money be established from which Ryan Moore, *County Administrator*, would be responsible for distributing raises and/or bonuses from. He commented that they could start with a pool of \$5,000 then decide whether this amount should be increased or decreased. Mr. Geraghty said he agreed with the concept, but thought the level of funding allocated should be based on the state of the County's economy.

A motion was made by Mr. Wild and seconded by Mr. McDevitt to set aside \$5,000 in the 2019 Budget from which Mr. Moore would be responsible for designating raises and/or bonuses to Department Heads based on merit. Following further discussion on this issue, Messrs Wild and McDevitt subsequently withdrew their motion and second as the Committee was in favor of investigating this option further before making a decision; it was noted that the intent was to bring this matter back to the Committee next year.

The Committee commenced a review of the suggestions for budget reductions, beginning with those presented by Ms. Braymer, who noted that the majority of her suggestions pertained to reducing the salary adjustments requested to the standard 2.6% increase given to all County employees. She noted that next year these adjustments could be revisited and decisions made by the County Administrator based on the results of the performance evaluations completed for all Department Heads.

A brief discussion ensued during which Mr. Moore was asked to comment on the merits of each employee filling a position listed in Ms. Braymer's suggested reductions; Mr. Moore indicated that discussion regarding the performance of individual employees should not be discussed publicly and he noted that if the Committee was interested in pursuing this matter, an executive session should be called.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to enter into an executive session to discuss the performance history of particular employees, pursuant to Section 105(f) of the Public Officer's Law.

Executive session was held from 10:18 a.m. until 11:06 a.m.

Upon reconvening, Mr. Thomas informed no action had been taken during the executive session.

A motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Merlino and was carried by majority vote, with Messrs Beaty, Diamond, McDevitt and Strough voting in opposition, to maintain the salary adjustments provided in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Moving on to Mr. Diamond's suggestions, specifically the deletion of the Information Technology Department's Computer Help Desk Tech I #3 position, Mrs. Frasier asked Michael Colvin, *Information Technology Director*, to comment on why the position was needed. Mr. Colvin explained he currently had five employees handling seven hundred computers throughout the County and they were having trouble keeping up with the demands this great number of terminals placed on them which meant they were not focusing on other issues that needed to be addressed. Mr. Diamond conveyed he was concerned about a potential deficit in the General Fund which had led him to suggest this reduction. Mr. Dickinson asked Mr. Colvin to explain the responsibilities of his Department and Mr. Colvin provided an overview. He advised one deficiency was with data storage, explaining that they were constantly adding additional storage rather than managing data because they did not have the staff available to focus on this task. Mr. Dickinson inquired if there were any security issues and Mr. Colvin answered they could be proactive and do more to prevent potential invasions. Mrs. Frasier opined that the Board should trust the Department Heads to determine what was best for their areas and base their decisions on these advisements. Speaking as Chair of the Support Services Committee which oversaw the Information Technology Department, Mr. Loeb recalled that when Mr. Colvin presented his budget to that Committee, they had been ready to create the position immediately and forward the request to the Finance Committee for a source of funding because they felt the need was that great.

The Committee proceeded with a discussion regarding the Information Technology position and the possibility of undertaking an audit to determine the needs of the Department, during which a motion was made by Mr. Wild and seconded by Mr. Beaty to create the position in the 2019 Budget, but delay filling it until an audit was complete. Following further discussion, Mr. Thomas called the question but the motion failed with no one indicating a vote in favor. A second motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Diamond voting in opposition, to maintain the Information Technology position as listed in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Returning to Mr. Diamond's suggestions for budget reductions, Mr. Thomas spoke about the part-time Human Resources Clerk position, indicating a full-time position was originally requested. He informed the request as based on the amount of data entry that needed to be done and the need for a position to carry out a wellness program. Mr. Diamond stated he did not feel this position was necessary and he had concerns about the County's financial position which led him to suggest that it be deleted.

A motion was made by Mr. McDevitt and seconded by Mr. Diamond to remove the part-time Human Resources Clerk position from the 2019 Tentative Budget, but the motion failed due a lack of the majority vote required with Supervisors Dickinson, Frasier, Geraghty, Merlino, Sokol, Thomas and Wild voting in opposition.

Regarding deleting the position of Communication Officer #20, Shawn Lamouree, *Undersheriff*, explained he prepared three budgets for the Sheriff's Office and he indicated in the past he was advised to request positions during the budget process. He advised 911 calls had increased, overtime cost had run their budget into the negative and they were operating with a minimum number of staff who were not taking mandated breaks. Larry Jeffords, *Communications Supervisor*, advised that by contract Communications staff were entitled to a 30 minute lunch break and two 15 minute breaks, but these were not being taken because they were under-staffed in comparison to the demand for services. He apprised they answered calls within 9-12 seconds, reporting they had recently received a call from a pregnant woman who was hemorrhaging and the 911 operator walked her through a procedure that saved her life. Mr. Diamond opined there would be a loss of revenue and inquired if there was a plan to make up for this loss and Undersheriff Lamouree replied there was no plan, informing they received \$170,000 in grant funds that was allocated the Communication Budget for equipment; he advised they did not charge people for calling 911. Mr. McDevitt thanked Undersheriff Lamouree and Mr. Jeffords for the quality of work they provided.

A motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Diamond voting in opposition, to leave the Communication Officer #20 position in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Moving on to the Deputy Insurance Administrator position, for which Mr. Diamond had suggested the salary adjustment be reduced to the standard 2.6% awarded to all County employees, Mr. Thomas informed the position was funded through the Self-Insurance Fund and was not paid from the County Budget. Mr. McDevitt asked why the Board voted on the position if it was not included in their Budget and Mr. Thomas replied this was because the Board created and controlled the Self-Insurance Fund. Mr. Loeb explained the reason for the adjustment requested, advising the person filling the position was not being paid at the proper grade for the work she was doing. He noted the Self-Insurance Administrator had acknowledged the adjustment requested was sizeable, at \$7,622, and had proposed that if the Board was not willing to do the entire adjustment in one budget year, a solution may be to divide the amount and appropriate equal halves in the 2019 and 2020 Budgets. Diamond asked if any of the other participants in the Self-Insurance Fund, such as SUNY Adirondack or the City of Glens Falls, were given a say in this matter and he suggested that if they were not, they should be.

A motion was made by Mr. McDevitt and seconded by Mr. Beaty to reduce the salary adjustment requested for the Deputy Insurance Administrator position to the standard 2.6% increase, but the motion failed due to a lack of the majority vote required with Supervisors Dickinson, Frasier, Geraghty, Merlino, Sokol, Thomas and Wild voting in opposition.

Moving on to the request to reduce the animal cruelty prevention appropriation to \$15,000 in the 2019 Budget, Mr. McDevitt indicated these issues had become more sophisticated and required a certain expertise; he added the \$50,000 expense projected was the price of doing business. Mr. Diamond informed he knew of an agency that would provide the service for the cost of travel. Mr. Strough apprised he agreed with Mr. Diamond, suggesting that the money be used for Patrol Officer training that would allow the Sheriff's Office to provide the services internally.

A motion was made by Mr. McDevitt, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and was carried by majority vote, with Messrs. Diamond and Strough voting in opposition, to leave the appropriation for animal cruelty prevention at \$50,000 in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Mr. Thomas said the next suggestion on Mr. Diamond's list was to reduce the Contingency appropriation by \$90,000. He indicated \$275,000 was set aside for the PBA (*Police Benevolent Association*) contract that was currently in arbitration. Mr. Diamond mentioned the Fund Balance would reach over \$1 million this year and he questioned why there had to be such a large surplus for unknown expenses when they knew they were below the expense line. Ms.

Braymer said she also questioned why they needed such a large balance and she suggested they reduce the balance to \$250,000 which would reduce the tax levy. Mr. Merlino commented he agreed the balance could be slightly reduced, but noted they did not have a forecast for next years sales tax and occupancy tax. Robert Lynch, *Deputy County Treasurer*, notified the State Comptroller's Office had informed that \$250,000 was too low of a balance and they had suggested that it be increased to \$275,000 and that was why this amount had been budgeted.

A discussion ensued, following which a motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Dickinson, and carried by majority vote, with Mr. Diamond voting in opposition, to maintain the amount appropriated to the contingency fund, as listed in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Mr. Thomas indicated the final item Mr. Diamond suggested pertained to reducing the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau (*LGCC&CVB*) contract to the amount provided in 2018. Mr. Dickinson mentioned these monies were provided from the occupancy tax fund and were not provided by Warren County residents in the tax levy. He mentioned he had worked with area businesses for many years through the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee and knew they were interested in supporting the LGCC&CVB. He indicated last years contract was for performance, which, he said, they had met and exceeded. Mr. Dickinson explained they LGCC&CVB had programs in place and the potential for additional employees; he advised the organization was an asset to the County.

Mr. McDevitt exited the meeting at 12:11 p.m. and Mr. Beaty exited the meeting at 12:12 p.m.

Mr. Diamond mentioned he had not seen any reports showing what the LGCC&CVB was doing and he requested an audit to gauge their performance. Mr. Dickinson explained they provided monthly reports to the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee. Mr. Strough confirmed he had communications with the LGCC&CVB and could attest that their return outweighed the investment made. Mr. Geraghty advised they provided an ROI (*Return on Investment*) for every event and they provided reports and information every month. Mr. Merlino apprised that over the past seven years the amount of sales tax received totaled about \$1 million, but this year it had reached \$2 million, and he attributed the increase to promotion by efforts of the Tourism Department and the LGCC&CVB. Mr. Wild informed the CVB provided sales and marketing efforts and he suggested Mr. Diamond review their long-term plan.

A motion was made by Mr. Wild, seconded by Mr. Merlino and was carried by majority vote, with Mr. Diamond voting in opposition, to retain the amount appropriated to the LGCC & CVB in the 2019 Tentative Budget.

Mr. Moore noted that Mr. Beaty had prior engagement which had forced him to leave the meeting early; because of this, Mr. Moore said Mr. Beaty had asked him to advise the Committee he was withdrawing his suggestion for a means to eliminate a property tax increase for 2019.

There being no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. Diamond and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 12:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Ganotes-Gleason, Legislative Office Specialist