



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
September 23, 2013  
TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **County Begins 2014 Budget Review**

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee tonight began review of County Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended 2014 County Budget, hearing their first six presentations from County departments. The committee is scheduled to meet nine times between now and the end of October.

The 2014 Recommended Budget supports total expenditures of \$170.2 million, with local dollar spending of \$81.6 million (an increase of 1.6%). The recommended 3.54% tax levy increase is below the 2014 target set by the Legislature and above the State's 2.3% property tax cap. County property taxes would rise by \$21 for the owner of an average \$163,000 home.

Tonight Legislators heard presentations from the Department of Emergency Response, County Office for the Aging, and Facilities Division, as well as the County Historian, and the Tompkins County SPCA (animal control program). County Administrator Joe Mareane also presented his recommendations for the Capital Program for the next five years, and for the County's Contingency Fund.

Regarding the Capital Program, the Budget commits \$317,000 in additional funding—the equivalent of a ¾% increase in the property tax levy—to maintain infrastructure, in accordance with the County's Capital Improvement Plan. Capital funding in 2014, it was noted, will underwrite debt service for projects already approved, not support new projects.

The administrator also recommends a \$115,000 increase in the County's Contingency Fund to account as a safeguard against potential overages, in light of the increased precision in projections for major expenditures such as employee and retiree health benefits. Mr. Mareane noted that the \$772,000 allocated to the Contingent Fund each year has consistently been spent.

Among tonight's presentations,

Emergency Response Director Lee Shurtleff briefed Legislators on three staff-related over-target requests in his department budget, all recommended by the County Administrator, that relate to investments in the County 911 Center as the County prepares to hire a new Communications Center Manager—including a new position for training and quality assurance at a cost of over \$87,000. Administrator Mareane told Legislators he considers the position request "a very high priority OTR," since training and quality assurance is "extremely important to a very high-functioning communications center" and will be key as the County proceeds toward potential accreditation for the Center.

Although she has not requested funding to fill the gap, County Office for the Aging Director Lisa Holmes told Legislators Federal sequestration cuts, enacted this year and continuing in 2014, are

among major influences on her budget. Of more than \$11,000 in reductions, nearly \$9,000 of them affect the nutrition program for seniors, provided through FoodNet.

For the Facilities Division, over-target requests, both recommended by the County Administrator, include \$9,100 to cover the City of Ithaca sidewalk assessment, in accordance with the City's new law regarding sidewalk replacement, and \$50,000 to support building modifications and equipment that may be needed to support the County's workplace violence prevention program.

Legislators will hear from six more County departments when the committee reconvenes tomorrow, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street (Second Floor).

The 2014 Recommended Budget, along with other budget-related information, is posted on the budget page of the County web site at [www.tompkins-co.org](http://www.tompkins-co.org). (Click on "County Budget" to be redirected to the budget page, or use this direct link: <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/Budget/index>.)

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

**- END -**