

Approved 2-29-08

**Budget and Capital Committee
February 11, 2008
3:30 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: N. Shinagawa, J. Dennis, K. Herrera, M. Hattery, T. Joseph
Staff: D. Squires, Finance; S. Whicher, N. Jayne, M. Lynch, County Administration; B. Grinnell-Crosby, Health Department; P. Carey, DSS; S. Dewitt; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office
Legislators: C. Chock, P. Mackesey
Guests: T. Ashmore, Ithaca Journal

Call to Order

Mr. Shinagawa called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of January 14, 2008

It was MOVED by Ms. Herrera, seconded by Mr. Dennis, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the minutes of January 14, 2008 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Comments from the Public

No member of the public was in attendance.

Chair's Report

Mr. Shinagawa had no report

Finance Director's Report

Mr. Squires distributed a year-end sales tax report and the noted the County ended the year approximately \$600,000 over the budgeted estimate. He said he has been working on closing the books for 2005 and said a lot of that work depends on departments submitting year-end claims. The Highway Fund and Machinery Fund will show a depletion in funds of approximately \$200,000; this was expected because of increased fuel and equipment costs.

Mr. Whicher spoke of the total sales tax receipts and said the County is almost back to where it was in being able to budget the prior year's receipts for the next year's budget. He said it has been a goal for some time to get back to this point as it is a safe estimate that can sometimes provide a cushion for the County.

Mr. Squires also reported the Audit Subcommittee will meet at 5 p.m. today.

County Administrator's Report

Mr. Whicher had no report at this time.

Public Information Officer's Report

Ms. Lynch said members should have received an electronic copy of the brochure for property owners that was produced in a collaborative effort between the Assessment Department and the Public Information Advisory Board.

**RESOLUTION NO. – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND AND
AUTHORIZING THE PAYMENT TO THE OFFICE OF GENERAL
SERVICES OF FIVE PERCENT MATCHING FUNDS FOR THE
PURCHASE OF BALLOT MARKING DEVICES FOR EACH
POLLING PLACE IN TOMPKINS COUNTY**

MOVED by Ms. Herrera, seconded by Mr. Joseph.

Ms. Jayne distributed copies of a revised resolution. Mr. Dewitt said the State has approved three ballot-marking devices subject to being certified. He said this particular ballot-making device will transition to an optical scanning system and was chosen for several different reasons. He said this appears to be a good solution because it prints on a plain piece of paper, and in addition to counting the final ballot it also captures an image of it. He said the machine was made in New York State and has been used in Canada for several years with success. Mr. Dewitt also spoke of the ease of implementing this system. Mr. Hattery said the Government Operations Committee asked for additional documentation on the expenditures. Mr. Whicher said he thinks the information attached to the revised resolution accomplishes that request. A voice vote resulted as follows on approving the resolution and submitting to the full Legislature: Ayes – 5, Noes – 0. MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requires Tompkins County to have at least one voting machine in each of its polling places where any voter can vote independently and secretly, and

WHEREAS, under a court order from United States District Judge Gary L. Sharpe, New York State must have a Ballot Marking Device (BMD) in place and operational by the September 2008 Primary Election in order to comply with HAVA, and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government has provided funds to New York State under HAVA for the purchase of Ballot Marking Devices (BMD) statewide, and

WHEREAS, HAVA will cover the bulk of the cost of these devices, Tompkins County will be required to match 5 percent of the cost for Title II funds, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Board of Elections has selected the Sequoia Image Cast Precinct Optical Scan System to be the BMD that will be deployed in Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County has submitted an order to the Office of General Services for New York State (OGS) for forty-five machines, providing a BMD for each of its polling places, at a total cost of up to \$785,561.53, and

WHEREAS, OGS will bill Tompkins County for the five percent match of the Title II funds upon issuing a Purchase Order for the BMD's, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County's five percent match equals up to \$41,345.34, and

WHEREAS, there are no funds within the Board of Elections to pay this cost, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee and Budget and Capital, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation for the purchase of ballot marking devices and other supporting equipment:

FROM: A1990.54440	Contingent Fund	\$41,345.34
TO: 1450.54400	Program Expense	\$41,345.34

RESOLVED, further, That the County Administrator is authorized to execute the required documents.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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State Budget Impacts

Mr. Whicher presented a summation of comments from County departments on State budget impacts. He said the overall impact on the County budget is not severe, and noted the Governor's has

proposed some reductions in State aid but has offset them with the authority to increase fees which the County may or may not wish to do. In the County Clerk's office the County can increase fees and also the Assessment Department may be able to achieve savings, but only by moving to annual assessment. Ms. Herrera asked what the time frame would be to change to annual assessment and was told this should be done in the April/May timeframe. Mr. Joseph clarified the State is encouraging, not requiring, counties to do annual assessment. If Tompkins County were to continue with triennial assessment it would receive \$155,000 from the State, and if the County moved back to annual assessment it would receive \$355,000.

Mr. Whicher noted other State budget impacts that have been identified:

Preschool Special Education – the State has limited expenses to \$75,000, which would save the County \$163,000;

Elimination of funding for Empire Zone Administration will affect TCAD. Mr. Whicher thinks that as long as IDA can retain bonding authority, they can afford to pay for the EZ Administration because it is working quite well. Mr. Joseph said when Empire Zone was originally set up we were told we were getting State Aid; however, it would not be ongoing.

Detention Centers – The Governor's budget would eliminate the State's 50% participation. Mr. Whicher said this is an area in the State budget that should be pushed back as the expenses of one juvenile could result in dramatic costs quickly. Although this is not a big problem in Tompkins County, it could potentially be. Mr. Whicher attributes this to the County's preventive programs. In the past these costs have been split 50/50 with the State.

Family Assistance Program – Mr. Whicher said this is an area that definitely should be opposed. There should not be a shift towards counties and he sees this as one area where the State can very cleverly negate the Medicaid cap.

Jail - Cook/Chill program. While this idea sounds like it potentially could result in savings but there needs to be a lot of further examination.

County Clerk's Office (\$332,184) – Increased Recording Fee – The Governor's budget would allow counties to increase the recording fee from the present \$5 fee to \$20 fee; and the present \$3 fee to \$5 fee. ; this would require action by the County Legislature.

Annual Revaluation and 100% Equalized Value (\$255,000) – If the County can support a return to the Full Value standard, this additional funding will make the program more feasible and will eliminate the under funding of the current program.

Mr. Whicher said if everything were to remain the same as it is now, the County would be looking at a net decrease to the County of \$450,000. If program decisions were made to increase recording fees and move to annual assessment, the County could see \$600,000.

He also noted good news in the Mental Health budget and said it appears that budget will break-even which is a monumental improvement over past years.

Committee Goals

Ms. Jayne distributed a revised set of Committee goals. The Committee reviewed the proposed list and made changes that are reflected in the text below. A revised list will be included in the agenda packet.

Goal 1-Develop an annual Budget that supports community needs while improving the fiscal health of the County.

1. Assemble a work team to include the County Administrator, 2 Legislators, and up to 4 Department Heads to develop an effective process for routinely exploring revenue options and cost saving strategies for promoting long-range fiscal viability
2. Convene Budget Community Advisory Panel (CAP) to review implementation of its' recommendations
3. Work with the County Administrator to establish financial goals, guidelines, and parameters for the entire County organization in support of annual budget development.
4. Establish regular meetings, at least once a year (when all Committee members can attend), with state and federal elected officials that represent Tompkins County to discuss the burdens of unfunded mandates and suggest how they, as our representatives, can help alleviate them.

Goal 2-Initiate the development of a 3-year financial scenario that includes both fiscal parameters and spending priorities, and that addresses the desire to look at medium range problems.

1. Review Capital Plan
2. Prepare a proposal in consultation with the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, to consider changing the local law on room occupancy tax.

Goal 3-Ensure efficiency of current resource allocation and management systems.

1. Review the fiscal policy, specifically the policy as it pertains to mid-year requests by County departments and non-County departments.
2. Address the target fund balance - is this sufficient.
3. Articulate the necessity of Standing Committee review of programs mid year.
4. Assessing the role of standing committees in the budget process.

Budget Calendar

The Committee agreed to the proposed budget calendar presented with the agenda. It was suggested that "Financial Budget Scenario" be included as a bullet be added under Budget Retreat.

Security

Mr. Dennis raised the issue of security at public meetings and said he would like to have discussion on this. Ms. Herrera said she would be open to having a discussion on this, however, she thinks there will be reasons not to proceed, such as cost and making meetings exclusionary. Mr. Joseph spoke against instituting any type of security system for Legislature meetings. He also noted that when the State first presented the idea of security in the Courthouse, the County Legislature strongly resisted.

Commercial Driver's Licenses

Mr. Whicher spoke of the Commercial Driver's License Program and said they didn't apply in time for the Community Development Block Grant, and while he has an issue with them for failing to do

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that he said the program is outstanding and exceptional. They are short \$50,000 for this year and will be needing funds very soon. He has instructed them to request funding from other sources but they may be back at a later date with a renewed request for funding. Mr. Dennis said this was discussed at last week's Human Resources Committee meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office