

ACTION SUMMARY
Expanded Budget and Capital Committee #2
September 10, 2008
4:00 p.m.
Legislative Chambers

APPROVED

Present: 10 Legislators Chock, Kiefer, Koplinka-Loehr, Proto, Robertson, Stevenson, Dennis (arrived at 4:06 p.m.); Shinagawa (arrived at 4:37 p.m.); Mackesey (arrived at 5:17 p.m.); and Burbank (arrived at 5:17 p.m.)

Excused: 5 (Legislators Hattery, Herrera, McBean-Clairborne, Randall, and Sigler)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr (6 members present).

Health Department

Ms. Cole, Public Health Director, provided an overview of the department's 2009 budget submission. She introduced the following division managers and asked them to explain their programs and over-target requests:

Sigrid Connors – Community Health Services
Theresa Lyzcko – Health Promotion
Sylvia Allinger – Children with Special Care Needs
Liz Cameron – Environmental Health

OTR 135 for part-time staff was discussed.

Mr. Dennis arrived at this time. (7 members present)

Ms. Robertson requested that any written comments from staff be submitted to the Clerk and copied for the Legislature.

OTR No. 16 (Reclassification of Physical Therapist position) was discussed.

Mr. Shinagawa arrived at this time (8 members present), and took over as Chair.

Mental Health Department

Mr. DeLuca, Commissioner, provided an overview of the department's 2009 budget submission. He said he supports creation of a County fleet. OTR Nos. 7-12 were discussed.

Board of Elections

Mr. Dewitt, Commissioner, and Ms. Cree, Commissioner, explained the proposed 2009 department budget requests (OTR Nos. 80-82) and their concerns in the upcoming year with the voting machines and possible additional one-time funding that may be needed.

Recess

Mr. Shinagawa declared recess at 5:16 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 5:31 p.m. Mr. Dennis was excused at 5:16 p.m. (7 members present). Ms. Mackesey and Mr. Burbank arrived at 5:17 p.m. (9 members present).

Business Improvement District

Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Travis explained their over-target request for \$17,000 (OTR No. 90).

SPCA

Ms. Smith, Executive Director, provided an overview of the program's 2009 budget submission; questions and discussion ensued.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr was excused at 6:02 p.m. and returned at 7:24 p.m.

Emergency Response

Mr. Shurtleff, Director, provided an overview of the department's 2009 budget submission, noting this is still a department in transition. There were questions and discussion, including capital budget.

Personnel Department

Ms. Fitzpatrick, Commissioner, provided an overview of the department's 2009 budget submission, and additional information was distributed.

Human Rights Commission

Ms. Martel Moore, Director, explained and provided an overview of the department's 2009 budget submission. *Ms. Robertson requested staffing information prior to 2006.* Discussion focused on a restructuring study.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Whicher reported on a discussion held at the Department Head meeting this morning concerning the handling of reductions from the State as additional communications have been received. Initially the State approved across-the-board cuts of two percent, which departments have absorbed. An additional six percent cut is now being proposed but is not fully defined and a proposal to request department budgets at the State level remain flat in 2009 is being considered. Mr. Whicher is suggesting that County departments continue with the 2008 programs at the current funding levels. If the State is looking at 2009 flat budgets that could mean \$3-5 Billion. Mr. Whicher recommends the Legislature hold onto extra reserves and then make an intelligent decision when more facts are known. He said the direction he is proposing is the County will handle overspending at the end of this year if needed and is looking for reassurance from the Legislature on this directive as requested by the Department Heads.

Ms. Kiefer is prepared to support not making adjustments at this time and wait until the end of the year and to support the general approach of the County Administrator. Discussion followed concerning Ms. Kiefer's comment and if there was agreement by the Legislature as a "sense of the body". Mr. Stevenson believes this is a complicated issue and is not convinced that cuts should not be made.

It was stated that departments be asked to continue to work on putting together information on the proposed six percent cuts by the State and request that during budget presentations departments address the issue. Also monitoring of these budget concerns will continue with the understanding that decisions are subject to change if current estimates grow.

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Ms. Robertson spoke of the New York State Association of Counties conference being held in two weeks and asked if there were resolutions being considered to send to the State regarding the budget cuts. She also asked if consideration should be given to the Legislature passing a resolution.

Ms. Kiefer suggested an update be given at the first voting meeting in October of this body prior to any action being taken.

Mr. Squires advised the Legislature that if adjustments are not made to the current budget it could have a negative impact on the fund balance.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr returned at this time.

Ms. Chock questioned the legality of the State making these cuts mid-year and asked if any legal action can be taken.

Following further discussion, Mr. Whicher agreed to send out an e-mail to departments informing them of this discussion.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.