



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Livable Wage Funding Recommended, as Legislators Advance 2014 Budget Amendments

More than a month after receiving a recommended 2014 County Budget from County Administrator Joe Mareane, Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee began to propose recommended changes to the budget, after hearing presentations from departments and agencies.

Legislators recommended the following changes to the budget. Tonight's decisions may be reconsidered at later expanded committee meetings and will require approval by the full Legislature to become final.

LIVING WAGE:

Legislators voted 10-5 to earmark \$100,000 of the Contingent Fund to support living wage adjustments for new County contracts. Legislator Nate Shinagawa proposed the earmark to give the Legislature a modest amount of capacity to support cost increases associated with achieving the living wage threshold in County contracts, as the County Administrator reviews new contracts for 2014 in line with the findings and recommendations advanced by a county work group regarding improvements in how the 2003 living wage policy is applied. The set-aside would have no impact on the tax levy, since the extra \$100,000 is already budgeted, and recommendations to release contingent funds to pay a livable wage related to specific contracts would be subject to Legislature consideration and approval.

Some Legislators had requested delay until later in the budget review, suggesting that it was too early to yet decide on setting aside the contingent funding for a specific purpose. Legislator Peter Stein called the approach "a good place to start."

YOUTH SERVICES:

Big Brothers Big Sisters Program: By unanimous vote, Legislators restored \$20,893 in target funding for the One-to-One Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Legislator Nate Shinagawa said he was particularly impressed by the public comments about the program at last week's public forum, and that there is "a very loud and clear voice about how important this program is to people of this community."

4-H Urban Outreach: \$20,000 in one-time funding was restored to support development of an expanded Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Urban Outreach program in Ithaca's West Hill neighborhood.

Regarding the youth programs, both Legislators Carol Chock and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne expressed concern that, year after year, youth services and human services programs have to appeal and compete for relatively small funding amounts.

SALES TAX REVENUE:

Based on advice from County Administrator Joe Mareane, the committee approved an adjustment in the amount of sales tax revenue projected in the budget. The Administrator reported that, while a 1.15% increase in sales tax revenue had been used in preparation of the recommended budget, third quarter results for this year show that increasing that projection to 2% is now prudent, and legislators by unanimous vote agreed to add \$259,000 in revenue to reflect that change, bringing the tax levy down by the same amount, decreasing the recommended tax levy increase by .6%.

TOMPKINS COMMUNITY ACTION:

By a vote of 12-2, Legislators approved \$25, 337 in one-time funding, to help offset losses in federal funding from sequestration. The action would restore the full over-target request submitted by the agency, which had been recommended at half-funding by the Administrator. Legislator Pam Mackesey maintained that failing to approve the expense would have a potentially enormous impact on TCA's ability to leverage outside funding.

SOIL AND WATER:

Legislators, by a vote of 13-1 deducted a County-supported rent expense of \$36,097, since the Legislature last week approved housing the Soil and Water Conservation District headquarters in the County Public Works Facility on Bostwick Road. County Administrator Joe Mareane noted that Soil and Water will still be fully funded, and a \$15,000 over target request to support the District's Agriculture Program remains part of the recommended budget.

TCAT:

\$888 was deducted from the TCAT budget, to adjust to a revised amount requested, approved without dissent.

ASSESSMENT:

By unanimous vote, \$20,000 in one-time money was removed from the Assessment budget for a public interface expense, since that expense is being incurred in 2013.

Potential Tax Impact of Recommendations to Date

In its first actions, the committee reduced by target spending in the County Administrator's recommended budget by \$275,128 target and increased the use of reserves by \$25,337. If tonight's committee recommendations were approved, the county's total 2014 tax levy would increase by 2.91% (down from 3.54% in the Administrator's budget), and the average county tax rate would stand at \$6.88 per thousand dollars assessed property value, an increase of \$14.40 for the owner of the average \$163,000 home.

The committee resumes deliberations tomorrow, October 22. Another voting meeting could take place Monday, October 29, if needed, to consider additional changes to the recommended budget.

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

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