



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislators Recommend 2014 Amended Budget

Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee tonight recommended that the Legislature amend County Administrator Joe Mareane's 2014 Tentative Budget and the Capital Program for the next five years. The amended budget, to be presented to the Legislature in special session next Tuesday, would increase the County tax levy by 2.95% and the countywide average tax rate by 1.34%. The recommended tax rate of \$6.89 per thousand is 4 cents lower than in the Administrator's budget, and an increase of 9 cents compared to 2013, representing an increase of \$14.81 for the average \$163,000 home.

In amendments during two voting sessions, the committee reduced the County Administrator's budget by \$260,128 in target spending. The recommended levy increase of 2.95% compares to a 3.54% increase contained in the County Administrator's budget.

Legislators recommended the amended budget by a 13-1 vote, with Legislator Pat Pryor voting no, and Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne excused. Legislator Pryor has previously stated that she would be prepared to vote against the budget if she felt the tax increase was too high.

Before reaching their recommendation, Legislators made several more changes to the budget, in addition to amendments approved last night, recommendations that may still be reconsidered as the process continues and will need approval of the Legislature, as part of the budget, to become final.

YOUTH SERVICES:

Legislators, by a 13-2 vote, restored \$20,044 in one-time funding to support, through department rollover, continued funding for transportation for youth through the Municipal Youth Services system, the county-wide youth development survey, and sexual abuse and domestic violence programming at the Advocacy Center. A proposal to move \$10,775 for the Advocacy Center to target funding failed by a vote of 5-10.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION:

By an 8-7 vote, Legislators recommended that \$15,000 to support a portion of the Deputy County Administrator's salary, designated as the third year of multi-year funding, be changed to target funding.

HUMAN SERVICES COALITION AGENCIES:

Restoration of \$5,000 in one-time funds for Food Security, support for area food pantries, was approved by a vote of 14-1.

PLANNING:

Legislators approved changing \$22,000 in one-time funding to support a feasibility study on economic development potential of the current NYS Department of Transportation maintenance facility site on

the City of Ithaca waterfront to restricted contingency. Legislator Mike Lane had questioned the expense since he noted the planned relocation had been pending for many years with no action from the DOT. Both Chair Martha Robertson and Planning Commissioner Ed Marx said having the allocation as part of the budget demonstrates the County's commitment to the project and could help bring in matching funds from the City and State for what would be an important professional study that would be key to redevelopment of the property.

Other actions:

Proposed restoration of \$6,206 in target maintenance-of-effort funding for Neighborhood Legal Services failed by a 4-10 margin.

Legislator Frank Proto advanced a proposal to allocate the Department of Emergency Response \$10,000 in one-time funding to support a tuition assistance program for Emergency Medical Technician trainees to help support emergency services needs at county volunteer departments. He said as of next fall TC3 will require tuition payment up front, which is posing a hardship and keeping service numbers down. Following discussion of various options, including earmarking \$10,000 for the program as part of the Contingent Fund, it was decided to not include specific provisions in the budget, but to ask Administrator Mareane and Emergency Response Director Lee Shurtleff to develop a program proposal to submit to the Public Safety Committee, as a first step.

Three potential amendments to reduce the tax levy slightly were advanced, but none won support:

- A proposal to reduce the \$115,000 increase in the Contingent Fund to \$100,000, and to devote the \$15,000 to reduce the tax levy to 2.91% failed by a vote of 6-8.
- A proposal to take the \$15,000 from reserves was defeated in a tied 7-7 vote.
- A proposal to use \$23,000 in reserves to reduce the levy increase to 2.89% failed by a 6-8 margin.

County Administrator Mareane thanked Legislators for their hard work and fiscal discipline throughout the budget review process and thanked Executive Assistant Kevin Sutherland for his work and the systems he has developed to guide the budget process. Budget Chair Jim Dennis echoed those sentiments, thanking his colleagues, administration, and staff for a productive review process.

On Tuesday, October 29, the Legislature will consider the recommended amended budget. Once the Legislature formally adopts recommended amendments to the County Administrator's budget, that package becomes the basis of deliberations, including the Legislature's public hearing on the budget. The public hearing will take place November 12, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, located on the second floor of the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. State Street, Ithaca. The Legislature's budget adoption vote is scheduled November 19.

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

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