



Inclusion Through Diversity

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September 24, 2013
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Budget Review Continues

In their second night of deliberations Legislators acting as an Expanded Budget Committee heard seven more department and agency presentations, as they review County Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended 2014 County Budget.

The 2014 Recommended Budget, with total expenditures of \$170.2 million and local dollar spending of \$81.6 million, is focused on maintaining, but not expanding, County services, while addressing funding challenges at several partner agencies and maintaining the County's fiscal health. The plan recommends a 3.54% rise in the tax levy and would increase County property taxes by \$21 for the owner of an average \$163,000 home.

Tonight Legislators heard presentations from the Assessment, Finance, and Health Departments, the Office of Human Rights, Information Technology Services, and the Legislature Office, and from the History Center. Nearly all the presenters submitted no over-target requests as part of their budgets, and only one over-target request, from the History Center, was not included as part of the administrator's budget.

For the Assessment Department, Administrator Mareane recommended three over-target requests: an upgraded public interface for assessment data (\$25,000 split between target and one-time funding); just over \$15,000 for temporary office staff due, in part, to increased STAR registration activity; and nearly \$49,000 to support a temporary six-month position to enhance succession planning as the department prepares for potential imminent retirements of valuation staff—that OTR recommended at half the level Assessment had requested. Director Jay Franklin noted his department is still coping with the loss of New York State maintenance aid and is now a nearly 98% locally funded operation.

As part of her budget presentation, incoming Human Rights Director Karen Baer communicated to Legislators her vision for the Office of Human Rights and focuses for 2014. Saying that she sees the field of Human Rights as largely a "balancing act" incorporating such elements as enforcement, education, and collaboration, Baer said she is committed to partnership and bridge-building as part of her leadership responsibilities. She said, "I am hoping the work that we do will be supported by people throughout the county and that the Legislature will be responsive to their voices." Priorities for the year ahead include analysis of department structure and internal protocols; review and assessment of the agency's statutory powers; balancing the focus between enforcement and outreach/education as "key foundations" for the work; collaborating with other community stakeholders, with opportunities for healing, celebration, and dialogue; and building partnerships and engagement with other county departments, as well as with other State, Federal, and non-profit agencies.

The more than \$10,000 History Center over-target request that Administrator Mareane declined to recommend would increase the Center's archives director position to full-time to address an archival backlog.

The Expanded Budget Committee has recessed until October 2, when seven more presentations are scheduled. All Expanded Budget sessions begin 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 and other budget information are available for review at the budget page of the County web site at 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.

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