

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: MARCH 25, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY
GOODSPEED
BENTLEY
KENNY
MERLINO
GIRARD
STEC
TAYLOR
CONOVER

OTHERS PRESENT:

FRED MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &
FISCAL SERVICES
SUPERVISORS PITKIN
SOKOL
STRAINER
THOMAS
VANNESS
RICK MURPHY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF FISCAL SERVICES
WILLIAM LAMY, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
LAUREL GAILOR, CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
CONNIE FARRINGTON, QUEENSBURY RESIDENT
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 10:39 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 3, 2010 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Copies of the meeting agenda were distributed to the Committee members and a copy is also on file with the minutes.

Commencing the agenda review with Item 1, Mr. Geraghty presented a chart entitled "Employees Salary by Dept 2010" which was included in the agenda packet. He pointed out that the chart was categorized by Department and included pertinent information relative to each position therein, such as whether it was mandated or associated with a mandated program; the salary; average costs of the associated benefits package; reimbursement levels; full or part-time designation; and the total cost to the County. Mr. Geraghty noted that a preliminary version of the chart was being presented for conceptual approval. He added that with the Committee's consent, each Department Head would be contacted and asked to provide information on each position under their jurisdiction, consistent with the parameters of the chart. Mr. Geraghty advised that the finalized chart would be a helpful tool to be used if the Committee determined that further position reductions were necessary to sustain the County Budget.

Mr. Kenny noted that Fred Austin, Building Project Coordinator, was included on the chart and he questioned why this was the case since the Human Services Building (HSB) was now complete. Mr. Thomas replied that Mr. Austin's employment would not be concluded until the County signed off on all construction documents and certified that the Project was complete.

Upon further review of the chart, Paul Dusek, County Attorney, suggested they consider revising the columns of the chart to include employee numbers, rather than names, so it could not be said that any consideration lent to

position reductions was related to specific employees and Mr. Geraghty agreed that this change would be made. Mr. Taylor questioned how often the chart would be updated and Mr. Geraghty responded with his opinion that it should be updated annually for review each budget year because it seemed there were many questions relating to the salary and fringe benefits associated with positions and this document would help to answer them.

Mr. Bentley pointed out that there were two full-time Senior Account Clerk positions listed for the Treasurer's Office that included different salaries and JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, advised that this was because the amounts included any longevity pay earned. Mr. Girard said he would prefer that the full base salary for each position be listed along with an indicator for part/full-time and that longevity pay be separated, as well, to show the total that a new employee would receive.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Goodspeed questioned if there were any positions in place which were mandated in connection with the undertaking of non-mandated programs, such as some of those implemented by the Department of Social Services. Mr. Dusek replied that he suspected there were and that this might be another category added to the chart.

As the Committee seemed to be in favor of further development of the chart, Mr. Geraghty advised that the Department Heads would be contacted for the pertinent information to complete the chart for presentation at a future Committee meeting.

Mr. Geraghty advised that although no official report had been received from the Treasurer's Office, it appeared that 91% of both the expenditures and revenues included in the 2009 Budget had been realized, as per the financial system used by the County. He noted that several amendments had altered the amounts included in the budget adopted by the Board of Supervisors for 2009 and he questioned what these consisted of. Rick Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, responded that the amendments were comprised of any resolutions adopted by the Board of Supervisors which accepted unanticipated revenues or authorized unanticipated expenditures. Mr. Geraghty asked if there was any way to separate the revenues received in order to determine whether the \$109 million in anticipated revenues included in the 2009 Budget were actually received and Mr. Murphy replied in the negative, noting that all revenues and expenditures were recorded in the same accounting system which did not provide this information. In response to Mr. Geraghty's question as to when a reporting of the final figures associated with the actual budgetary figures for 2009 would be available, Mr. Murphy apprised that the Treasurer's Office was hoping to complete their accounting by the end of March, at which time this information would be available. He added that they were still awaiting confirmation on some large figures from outside sources and could not complete the process until these were received.

Continuing to Agenda Item 2, Goals for 2011 Budget, Mr. Geraghty announced that as per the information revealed at the prior Committee meeting, there appeared to be a \$1 million deficit for the 2011 Budget. He added that if the Committee sought to maintain a 0% increase, or a reduction, for the 2011 Budget, they would need to develop a plan for expense reductions and he asked the Committee how they preferred to address this issue.

Mr. Goodspeed questioned whether further information had been received respective to increased State mandates, or decreased State funding, in light of the State's budget deficit situation. Mr. Geraghty responded that Mrs. McKinstry had recently participated in a conference call with NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) to discuss this issue. He added that no further information had been received from NYSAC with regard to the matter, other than their initial indications that the Counties would not be greatly affected by the deficit.

Mr. Merlino asked when the sales and occupancy tax revenue figures would be available for the fourth quarter of 2009 and Mr. Murphy replied that they would be available at the end of March. Mr. Merlino commented that it would be very difficult to make any decisions on budget reductions for 2011 until the final figures were available for 2009.

Mr. Stec noted that the chart outlining Departmental positions might prove very helpful in considering possible positions to be eliminated if the Committee decided to proceed in that manner for budget reductions. He questioned when a final listing could be provided and Mrs. McKinstry apprised that a final document could be established within a few weeks, depending upon Departmental response. Mr. Stec said it seemed the chart would be received within the same time frame that the Treasurer's report on final figures for the 2009 Budget was expected, which would be favorable for the Committee as they could consider both simultaneously.

Chairman Monroe stated his opinion that it was premature to set any kind of goal for the 2011 Budget until further information was received regarding the final figures for the 2009 Budget, as well as the surplus fund balance. Mr. Geraghty countered with his opinion that a goal needed to be determined as quickly as possible to notify the Department Heads and allow them sufficient opportunity to develop plans for expenditure reductions in preparation for the 2011 Budget process. Mr. Taylor said he felt it was realistic to assume that budget reductions would be necessary for 2011, but noted that he did not feel it was appropriate to list "Reduction in Workforce" as a 2011 Budget goal, as was indicated on the meeting agenda.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Bentley questioned what areas attributed to the anticipated \$1 million shortfall for 2011 and in response, Mr. Murphy distributed copies of the document provided at the prior Committee meeting which outlined these figures; *a copy of the document is also on file with the minutes.*

Mr. VanNess noted that there were collective bargaining unit contracts expiring in 2010 that would require negotiations for renewal. He suggested that during these negotiations they should discuss the possibility of including language in each contract that would require each employee to take a mandatory week-long furlough. Mr. VanNess explained that these would be considered voluntary/mandatory furloughs because although each employee would be required to take off five unpaid days per year, they would be able to choose those days. He further noted that these measures would greatly assist the budget situation while creating the least impact to County employees by avoiding the need for extensive position reductions. Paul Dusek, County Attorney, apprised that only one Union contract, the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) Alliance contract, was to expire in 2010. He stated that there would be a considerable number of issues to consider before the negotiation process began, which he would address with the appropriate Committees in executive session. Mr. Dusek noted that Mr. VanNess' suggestion, as well as any others introduced, would be added to a list that he would keep for review in these discussions.

Mr. Goodspeed stated his agreement that the Committee could not set a realistic goal for the 2011 Budget until the final 2009 Budget figures were disclosed. He further stated his opinion that it was not proper for the Treasurer's Office to refrain from providing the Committee with the anticipated total of the surplus fund balance to assist them in making budgetary decisions. In response, Mr. Murphy indicated that the surplus fund balance was truly unknown and would continue to be so until the Treasurer's Office completed their final reports for 2009. He said that at this point they anticipated a positive closing balance for the surplus fund, but that was all he was able to disclose at the current time. Mr. Geraghty apprised that in the past the Treasurer's Office had been criticized for providing an inaccurate fund balance estimate and had therefore determined they would not provide estimated figures in the future.

Mr. Girard said while he agreed that budgetary constraints would not allow the County to operate as it had in the past, he felt that it was more appropriate to reduce the hours of operation, rather than the number of employees, as appropriate staffing was necessary to continue providing services at the County level. He advised that some alterations might be required to alter the 40-hour work week determination, but he felt this was far superior to implementing further workforce reduction measures.

In connection with Mr. Girard's suggestion, Mr. Stec said that including information regarding which Departments were constitutionally required to provide staffing for five-day per week operations on the chart being developed by Mrs. McKinstry might be helpful to the Committee when considering the options available for budget reduction. He then questioned whether any research had been performed to ensure that State mandated programs were being provided for at the minimum funding and staffing levels. Mr. Geraghty responded in the negative, noting that they were relying on each of the Department Heads to ensure that this was being done.

Mr. Taylor noted that the elected term for the current Treasurer was to expire in 2011 and if the Board was in favor of changing this from an elected position to that of an appointed Comptroller, they should begin planning for the change. Mr. Bentley questioned whether changing the Treasurer's position from an elected to an appointed term was subject to permissive referendum and Mr. Dusek replied that he was unsure and would have to research the matter and report back to the Committee.

Because the majority of the Committee was opposed to setting any goals for the 2011 Budget until final figures for the 2009 Budget were received, Mr. Geraghty announced that the next meeting would be scheduled when such information was available.

As there was no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mr. Merlino and seconded by Mr. Goodspeed, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist