

# Warren County Board of Supervisors

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2017**



The Board of Supervisors of the County of Warren convened at the Supervisors' Room in the Warren County Municipal Center, Lake George, New York, at 10:02 a.m.

Mr. Ronald F. Conover presiding.

Salute to the flag was led by Supervisor Thomas.

Roll called, the following members present:

Supervisors Leggett, McDevitt, Braymer, MacDonald, Frasier, Simpson, Dickinson, Merlino, Strough, Seeber, Beaty, Montesi, Sokol, Thomas, Hyde, Geraghty and Conover - 17; Supervisors Girard, Brock and Vanselow absent -3.

Chairman Conover noted the purpose of the Special Board Meeting was to present the 2018 Tentative County Budget. Privilege of the floor was extended to Frank Thomas, Budget Officer, who proceeded to make the 2018 Budget Message, as follows:

“Good Morning, I’m grateful to again have the privilege to prepare and present today, a proposed 2018 Warren County budget to the Board of Supervisors. Thank you to Chairman Conover for the opportunity to serve as the County’s Budget Officer. Thank you to the Budget Team, Acting County Administrator Kevin Geraghty, Assistant to the County Administrator JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Treasurer Rob Lynch and Confidential Secretary Kristy Miller, for your work, advice and guidance in preparing this budget.

Each year as the Budget Officer I have the pleasure of interacting with the County’s Department Heads, discussing and reviewing their respective budgets, their needs and ways to reduce costs, if possible. We are fortunate to have very experienced and talented individuals leading Warren County Departments, often performing very difficult jobs. I appreciate and thank each one for the knowledge they bring to the process and for the work they provide each day for the residents of Warren County.

The proposed County property tax levy will increase by \$1,254,361 or 2.9% to an amount to be raised by tax of \$43,678,247. The County will remain under the property tax cap by \$81,222 by factoring the 1.84% inflation rate set by the State Comptroller, the growth factor, and the available carry over amount. While no one desires any tax increase, in the World of a State imposed 2% tax cap and inflation rates having gone as low as .68% for the 2017 Budget, when the County has the opportunity to raise revenue and remain under the cap we should not let it pass by.

The amount of sales tax budgeted for 2018 has been increased by \$827,000 from \$50,197,467 for 2017 to \$51,024,467 which is the actual amount received in 2016. Currently at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, receipts are 1.7% or \$540,000 above the amount collected in 2016. May this hold true or hopefully increase as the end of 2017 arrives.

More than two years ago the Board initiated the Court Project and resolved to fund Warren County’s share of the NSTEM Project at SUNY Adirondack. The bonds for these

projects have been issued and the service of the debt is due, \$917,000 of this expense is included on the proposed budget which leaves about \$425,000 remaining to be supported by a revenue source.

The computer/telecommunications equipment reserve and the vehicle reserve have served the County well and continues to be funded with the vehicle reserve being the beneficiary of a \$100,000 appropriation through Assemblyman Stec's office that will be used for the purchase of new patrol cars for the Sheriff's Department. The funding to control invasives continues at \$250,000 with 50% being allocated from the general fund and 50% from the occupancy tax funding.

A 2.9% wage and salary increase for CSEA and the Alliance Union employees has been negotiated and is accounted for along with a dollar amount for an anticipated settlement with the PBA Union. Three departments also received allocation adjustments to their salaries, \$164,000 for the Department of Public Works employees, \$84,000 for the Corrections Officers and adjustments to the County IT Departments salaries, each one as an effort to retain and attract employees and attempting to keep pace with outside competition from Town Highway Departments, New York State and the private sector. A 2.9% pay increase is also budgeted for all non-Union employees along with twenty-two salary adjustments that total \$32,072.

Performance reviews and evaluations of the County's Department Heads were conducted this year for the first time that I can recall. Thank you and congratulations to everyone involved in establishing and participating in this review process. From these reviews and average performance rating was assigned to each Department Head and that rating was used to determine the salary compensation increases for 2018 with a scale that ranged from a high of 3.3% down to 2.5%.

Recently, this Board of Supervisors moved to become fully self-insured for the County's health insurance and prescription drugs. This is a goal achieved that has been several years in its development, by first becoming experience rated, establishing and funding a reserve fund and beginning with self-insuring prescription drugs. There will be challenges going forward that will require closer monitoring and involvement of the Board and the County's Insurance Broker, but with the use of incentives for County employees, offering alternative health policies and using stop loss insurance the County will be in a position to manage health care and the expense versus managing only health insurance premium increases. In 2018 with increased employee contributions and by becoming self-insured there is \$222,000 decrease in the cost of health insurance rather than a four or five percent increase.

Employees are Warren County's greatest asset and the County's largest expense. They do the work and provide the services for the residents of our County. Going forward we must reaffirm our vigilance and questioning of creating new positions and filling of vacancies. This is one area that can avail itself to the largest cost containment and conversely the largest additional expense.

With a budget this large and diverse, it is almost impossible to make everyone happy with everything that is included. Not everyone will agree with the decisions that have been made in this proposed 2018 Budget. I think it is a responsible budget that will fund Warren County's operations as currently structured and remains below the State's 2% tax

cap, I respectfully ask for your consideration of this proposed 2018 Budget”.

Supervisor Thomas then proceeded to make a powerpoint presentation on the 2018 Tentative Budget, a copy of which is on file with the items distributed at the Board meeting. At the conclusion of the powerpoint presentation, Supervisor Thomas opened the floor to any comments or questions on the Budget proposal.

During the powerpoint presentation Supervisor Montesi questioned why the County Road expense was in the negative and Mr. Thomas responded there were Capital Projects estimated at \$1.1 million which were closed and the funds remaining were reallocated to the funding source it originated from. He said a portion of these funds were reallocated to the Road Budget of which \$400,000 was used to fund Bridge Projects which were typically funded through the tax levy, thereby offsetting it. He apprised the remaining \$200,000 was a result of the reduction of positions.

Supervisor Montesi inquired what balance remained in the surplus accounts and JoAnn McKinstry, *Assistant to the County Administrator*, responded the information would be included in the Multi-Year Plan which would be distributed prior to the November 17<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting. Supervisor Montesi asked Jeffery Tennyson, *Superintendent of Public Works*, whether he was aware of the remaining balances for the Road and Machinery Fund Balance and he replied in the negative. Rob Lynch, *Deputy County Treasurer*, informed the formula used to calculate how much money to use to leave 5% of the appropriations in the Reserve accounts and whatever remained was appropriated into the County Budget. Mr. Tennyson added the balance of the County Road Fund as of the end of 2016 was slightly more than \$1.2 million and the Road Machinery Fund Balance was \$626,000.

Supervisor Braymer commended Supervisor Thomas for his work on the proposed 2018 County Budget, and she noted, she was pleased the revenue generated from the County Jail was reduced since the Sheriff had indicated they would not be housing Federal inmates there. She continued, she also appreciative of the fact that the proposed Budget included putting more money behind the County's debt to pay it down and she acknowledged the County staff for the assistance they provided to the budgeting process. She voiced her concern pertaining to the lack of justification to allocate \$100,000 to the Warren County SPCA (*Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*) since the vast majority of the call log they submitted with their quarterly reports pertained to calls from outside of the County or dog contracts relating to the Town of Queensbury which the County did not pay for. She said she would like the amount allocated to them reduced and then those funds could be reallocated to some other project. She added it did not appear to her they had changed the services so significantly over the last three years that the contracted amount needed to be increased by almost double what they were previously awarded.

Supervisor Leggett concurred with Supervisor Braymer's concerns regarding the Warren County SPCA and Supervisor McDevitt respectfully disagreed.

Supervisor Merlino interjected that the services the Warren County SPCA provided to some of the smaller towns was important, noting they responded rapidly to his call last week regarding a rabid fox in the Town of Lake Luzerne. Supervisor Thomas stated the Warren County SPCA had recently responded to an incident in the Town of Stony Creek that would have been difficult to rectify without them because they only had a Dog Control Officer in their Town, but no Animal Control Officer. He stated if there were incidents with cats, farm animals and wild animals their Town was not equipped to respond which was why the services of the Warren County SPCA were needed. Mr. Leggett questioned at what cost these services were rendered.

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Supervisor Braymer apprised she had attempted to calculate out the number of calls they were going on for this type of service at a pay rate of \$15 per hour for the individual who responded and the result was only \$40,000 a year. She said she believed there were equipment costs, as well; however, she advised, she felt they should not be providing the County with reports that included items which did not relate to the contract.

Supervisor Thomas advised he had viewed the report Supervisor Braymer was referring to and he concurred that the Warren County SPCA needed to do a better job reporting their services.

Supervisor Geraghty stated while he understood the concerns with the reporting, it was necessary for them to understand there were other items to consider, as well such as the equipment, buildings, and what they housed. He reminded them they were receiving significantly more services from the Warren County SPCA now than in previous years when it was managed by someone else. He mentioned the Town of Warrensburg had the Warren County SPCA take over dog control services for them, noting he had received nothing but praise since they had taken this over. He advised it was necessary for them to take into account a significant amount of work that took place behind the scenes for which they received no publicity such as animal abuse calls which they did an excellent job on. He added veterinarian bills needed to be taken into consideration, as well since they were not always paid by the abuser. He concurred that the contract should be reviewed since it was a significant amount of money, but he felt they did do a good service, noting they also took care of cats which had always been an on-going issue for most communities.

Supervisor Beaty apprised the Board members all wanted “their bang for their buck” which was why he was appreciative of Supervisor Braymer voicing her concern regarding this. He said he was fully supportive of further analysis of the contract; however, he noted, although he was not charged with managing a Town, he was aware of the stories concerning how helpful and needed their services were as supported by Supervisor Merlino’s statement from earlier regarding the assistance they provided to the Town of Lake Luzerne on a rabies case. He commented he was unsure whether the services they provided justified the significant increase in their contract over the last few years, but currently he would not want the County to be without their service due to the influx of rabies cases here.

Supervisor Braymer remarked she believed it would go a long way if they would improve their reporting to include how much they paid to board the abused animals, etc. She pointed out the current report consisted of a flat invoice for \$25,000. She questioned what this \$25,000 was allocated to such as the fees they had to pay to vets, etc. She suggested they thoroughly review the voucher they submit before they allocate the quarterly payments to them.

Supervisor Seeber commented she thought every year they had observed improvements with the budget process and she suggested one of the improvements made next year was to set the same standard and consistency for all of the contracts specifically with the Board of Supervisors. She said in January any entity they had a contract with could attend the Board Meeting to provide an overview of what they used the money from the County for, as well as requiring all of them to submit quarterly reports detailing such. She apprised she did not believe it was fair for one entity to be held to different standards than the others they had contracts with. Supervisor Thomas remarked he thought this was an excellent idea.

Supervisor Simpson suggested the possibility of putting out an RFP (*Request for Proposals*) for the animal control services to ensure the County was obtaining the best value, as this was the typical practice when looking for services.

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Supervisor Dickinson thanked Supervisor Thomas for his due diligence when working on the Budget, as he was fully aware of how time consuming this work was. He stated he was appreciative of his effort for putting together another appropriate County Budget.

Supervisor Sokol inquired what the deadline for submission was and Supervisor Thomas responded proposed Resolution No. 427, *Adopting Tentative Budget Providing Appropriations for the Conduct of County Business for the Fiscal Year 2018 and Authorizing Public Hearing on the Budget*, set the date of the Public Hearing for the proposed 2018 County Budget for the regular Board Meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> following which it could be adopted and/or amended depending upon the desire of the full Board.

This concluded the comments on the 2018 Tentative Budget.

Chairman Conover called for public comments from anyone wishing to address the Board on any matter. There being no response, he continued with the Agenda review, calling for discussion on the proposed resolutions, as well as requests for roll call votes.

Supervisor Braymer informed proposed Resolution No. 428, *Authorizing Consent Order/Stipulation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Concerning Petroleum Contamination at Town of Johnsbury Tax Map Parcel No. 133.8-1-27 on Behalf of Real Property Tax Services*, pertained to entering into an agreement with NYSDEC (*New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*) to clean up a property in the Town of Johnsbury which they had been dealing with for twenty-seven years now. She said she, Mike Swan, *County Treasurer*, Lexie Delurey, *Director, Real Property Tax Services*, and Benjamin Botelho, *Second Assistant County Attorney*, had met with representatives of NYSDEC on October 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss what could be done with this property. She mentioned the County had not foreclosed upon the property due to the underground tanks located on the site which caused contamination and liability concerns to arise. She stated NYSDEC would be removing the tanks so the County could include the property within its next County Foreclosure Action. She explained the plan consisted of the NYSDEC cleaning up the property with the contractors they used from which the County would reimburse them up to \$15,000 of their expenses. She noted the funds were available within the Environmental Testing Fund Reserve to pay for the work. She added if contamination was found within the soil once the tanks were removed, the County would not be responsible for this portion of the clean up expense, as NYSDEC had agreed to cover anything over the \$15,000 the County was responsible for. She mentioned there were items left behind from the previous owner located inside of the building which the County would be responsible for removing.

Supervisor Sokol asked whether the parcel was located in a prime location and Mr. Swan replied it was an old Plymouth Dealership located within the heart of the Town of Johnsbury on Route 8 just outside of Weavertown.

Chairman Conover called for a vote on resolutions, following which Resolution Nos. 427-428 were approved, as presented.

Chairman Conover called for announcements, but none were made.

There being no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, on motion made by Supervisor Strough and seconded by Supervisor Dickinson, Chairman Conover adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m.