

SECOND DAY OF ANNUAL SESSION

Johnstown, NY

November 20, 2023

Roll Call – Quorum Present

Supervisors: Argotsinger, Blackmon, Bowman, Bradt, Breh, Callery, Fagan, Fogarty, Greene, Groff, Howard, Kinowski, Wilson, Young

TOTAL: Present: 15 Absent: 5 (Supervisors Lauria, Potter, Born, Goderie and Bardascini)

Chairman Horton called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Chairman Horton called for a moment of silence for the passing of former First Lady, Rosalynn Carter.

Chairman Horton then invited Finance Committee Chairman David Howard to the dais to Chair the Budget Review session.

Chairman of Finance Committee Howard thanked the Finance Committee and Budget Director Cowan and said they did a great job so far with the 2024 Tentative Budget. Mr. Howard then asked Ms. Cowan to lead review of the 2024 Tentative Budget.

Ms. Cowan presented a MS PowerPoint and provided two (2) Budget Adjustment Worksheets listing proposed revisions for the Board to review. She advised that the changes listed on the first worksheet are proposals since the Tentative Budget was released last week based upon new details or calculations. Ms. Cowan stated that she would like individual motions taken on the changes listed on the second Budget Adjustment Sheet because those were requests from department heads for reconsideration of previous Finance Committee reductions.

Supervisor Callery inquired about the Public Health Departments vehicle leases and how originally it was higher. Ms. Cowan stated that originally the Public Health Department budgeted for two (2) leased vehicles.

Supervisor Argotsinger made a motion to approve the list of recommended adjustments on worksheet one as presented on the handout by Ms. Cowan, seconded by Supervisor Wilson and unanimously carried.

Ms. Cowan noted that the second page of the handout are new requests from Departments where the Department Heads are requesting monies be reinstated. She stated that this is not normal practice and reiterated that she would like individual motions to be taken on each item.

(Supervisor Potter entered the meeting at 1:13 p.m.)

Supervisor Bowman made a motion to increase Emergency Management Office A.3640.3640-4040 – EXP – Insurance from \$4,712.00 to \$5,000.00 to reflect actual insurance amount for 2024, seconded by Supervisor Bradt and unanimously carried.

The next proposal involved an increase for Senior Stenographer consulting services. Supervisor Callery stated that he would like to keep the appropriations the same whenever-possible. Supervisor Argotsinger stated that he has spoken with Planning Director regarding this issue. He stated that the current Senior Stenographer is a very integral part of the Planning Department and would like to see the \$15,000.00 added back in to the Contractual account to ensure a good transition.

Supervisor Argotsinger noted that the Planning Department has \$20,000.00 in the Professional Services account; however, the Planning Director is willing to cut that account by \$10,000.00. Supervisor Argotsinger noted that the Planning Director is also willing to reduce \$4,000.00 from the Training and Conferences account. These changes could affect the \$15,000.00 increase to the Contractual account.

Supervisor Callery noted that the Planning Department does not have \$20,000.00 in the Professional Services account, it only has \$10,000.00 because of earlier Finance Committee reductions.

Supervisor Callery noted that this maneuver will not affect the Planning Departments bottom line in the budget.

Supervisor Argotsinger made a motion approving to increase A.8020.8020-4090 - EXP-Professional Services to A.8020.8020-4130 – EXP – Contractual by \$14,000.00 with the proposed reductions to cover it, seconded by Supervisor Groff and unanimously carried.

Sheriff Giardino stated that he is predicting higher 2024 supplies costs and that increases are not to replace regular supplies.

Supervisor Callery proposed to make the final appropriation \$40,000.00.

Supervisor Blackmon made a motion to make the adjusted amounts \$40,000.00 in the A.3110.3110-4530 – EXP – Supplies account, seconded by Supervisor Potter and unanimously carried.

Ms. Cowan stated that just because this year trended high with placements within the Department of Social Services does not mean it will continue to be high. Supervisor Callery asked where the Department of Social Services is to date. Ms. Cowan stated that the 2023 actual to date amount is just over \$2.4 million.

Supervisor Argotsinger asked what the reimbursement rate is. Ms. Cowan stated that she did not know the reimbursement rate

Supervisor Callery made a motion to deny the requested change to increase the A.6010.6119-4170 – EXP – Programs (Child Care) by \$275,000.00, seconded by Supervisor Argotsinger and unanimously carried.

Supervisor Callery made a motion to deny the requested change to increase the A.6010.6123-4170 – EXP – Programs (Juvenile Delinquents) by \$98,000.00, seconded by Supervisor Bowman and unanimously carried.

Chairman Horton contended that the year-to-date amount justifies the request to increase the A.6010.6140-4170 – EXP – Programs (Safety Net Assist.) by \$165,000.00. Supervisor Young noted that the previous actual amount in 2022 was \$1.2 million and it seems there has been an uptick. Supervisor Callery stated that the Department of Social Services can always come back next year if needed.

Supervisor Callery made a motion to deny the requested change to increase the A.6010.6140-4170 – EXP – Programs (Safety Net Assist.) by \$165,000.00, seconded by Supervisor Argotsinger and carried. (Supervisors Horton, Greene and Young opposed)

Ms. Cowan stated that because the Board approved a large expensive contract for Nursing Services at the Correctional Facility for 2024 with Maxim Health care, she is proposing to abolish a vacant Registered Nurse position.

Supervisor Greene made a motion to abolish the Registered Nurse Position that has been vacant for a year, seconded by Supervisor Argotsinger and unanimously carried.

Supervisor Callery stated that out of all of the years of doing the County Budget and looking at every page in the Budget Book he does not know if there are any other cuts that can be made. He thanked Supervisor Howard and Ms. Cowan for all their work on the budget this year. Supervisor Callery stated that he would like to see the tax levy decrease.

Supervisor Potter stated that he concurs with Chairman Horton that the revenues are down, and expenses are up. He stated that he would like to see an acceleration of the Vision 2026 Plan. Supervisor Potter stated that only so much can be cut and only so much Fund Balance can be used.

Supervisor Groff stated that he was disappointed that a newly proposed Emergency Dispatcher Position was cut during an earlier Budget Review meeting. He noted that there have been almost 40,000 emergency calls this year. Supervisor Groff stated that the dispatchers talk to every individual that calls in and dispatches all agencies for every emergency call within the County. He stated that in January of 2023 an Emergency Dispatcher was added.

Mr. Stead noted that the Committees on Public Safety and Personnel supported adding the Emergency Dispatch Position; however, the Finance Committee did not support the addition. He stated that this will have to be formally voted on at the next Board of Supervisors meeting with all other proposed new 2024 positions if endorsed conceptually today.

Supervisor Callery stated that Supervisor Groff made a “good pitch” but the Sheriff did not want to fill the two (2) Emergency Dispatcher Positions, he wanted to hold them as temporaries. Supervisor Callery stated that it is hard to grant adding a new position when the Sheriff did not think it was necessary to permanently fill the other two (2) positions.

Ms. Cowan noted that it would cost \$85,000.00 for the payroll and benefits for the Emergency Dispatcher Position. She stated that approximately \$44,645.00 is for payroll and \$38,177.00 is for benefits.

Supervisor Wilson stated that the Emergency Dispatchers are the first line of defense and he believes that this position is needed.

Supervisor Blackmon stated that he supports adding back the Emergency Dispatcher Position.

Supervisor Groff made a motion conceptually support adding the Emergency Dispatcher Position within the Sheriff's Department effective January 1, 2024, seconded by Supervisor Wilson and unanimously carried.

Mr. Stead explained that a Resolution would be drafted for final consideration at the next Board Meeting.

Supervisor Blackmon stated that he received a letter regarding funding for the Code Blue Shelter in the City of Gloversville and the Board of Supervisors to increase the amount budgeted for the shelter contract in the DSS budget.

Mr. Stead stated that a Reconsideration vote would be required because the Board already actual on the contract. Reconsideration would require two-thirds vote to pass and be moved by a Supervisor that voted with the majority's decision at the previous meeting.

Supervisor Breh stated that she was also contacted regarding the Code Blue Shelter's \$93,000.00 contract and the Code Blue Shelter is requesting an additional \$24,000.00.

Chairman Horton stated that he would like the Board of Supervisors to reconsider its decision at the next Board of Supervisors meeting.

Supervisor Argotsinger stated that he would like to discuss the 2024 interest and earnings projection the Treasurer's Office budget.

Supervisor Callery inquired what the number is to date. Ms. Cowan stated that she spoke with the Treasurer today and the current balance is just under \$600,000.00. She noted that the Treasurer has been aggressive with investments this year. Ms. Cowan stated that August through December still needs to be booked, but thinks it will be just under a \$1 million.

Supervisor Argotsinger proposed increasing A.1325.1325-2401 – REV – Interest and Earnings from \$600,000.00 to \$1 million.

Ms. Cowan stated that this account is not one that she handles it is handled by the Treasurer.

Supervisor Argotsinger made a motion to increase A.1325.1325-2401 – REV – Interest and Earnings from \$600,000.00 to \$1,000,000.00, seconded by Supervisor Callery and unanimously carried.

Supervisor Fagan stated that as long as he has been on the Finance Committee, this has been the hardest budget year he can remember. He stated that the biggest issue is what the State has done with mandating away revenue and increasing expenses. He noted he is concerned going forward and the Board of Supervisors will need to be careful with future budgets. Supervisor Fagan stated that the County is sitting on a nice Fund Balance now, but that money may be needed in the future.

Mr. Stead noted that two (2) collective bargaining units have not settled on contracts yet and those substantial unknown amounts are not in the 2024 Budget at this point.

Mr. Stead stated that Ms. Cowan has talked to the Treasurer about sales tax recently. Ms. Cowan stated that the third quarter brought in \$5.3 million. Ms. Cowan also stated that the 2024 Tentative Budget Review increased sales tax revenue to \$19.5 million. Ms. Cowan noted that the A.1000.1985-1110.0002 – REV – Town Share Sales Tax, A.1000.1985-4905 – EXP – Town Distribution of Sales Tax and A.1000.8389-4941 – EXP – Smart Waters Intermunicipal Agreement would be related increases.

Supervisor Callery made a motion to increase A.1000.1110-1110.0001 – REV – County Share Sales Tax to \$20,000,000.00 and make the corresponding changes to sales tax distribution/sharing amounts, seconded by Supervisor Fagan and unanimously carried.

Ms. Cowan stated the County has struggled with the lack of people and employment. She stated that the way the County budgets for vacant positions is by budgeting for the full salary and the most expensive health insurance plan for every position. She noted that there are currently 54 vacant positions throughout the departments. Ms. Cowan stated that instead of budgeting the \$28,000.00 per person, she proposed to budget 33 percent of the \$28,000.00 for the vacant positions, which would save approximately \$1,000,000.00.

Supervisor Fagan noted that vacant positions in the Solid Waste Department would not affect the tax levy.

Mr. Stead stated that in prior years the County had budgeted benefits “globally” and did not always budget expenses for 100 percent of the positions. He stated that he does not think there is a big risk in this maneuver. The Finance Committee discussed this option previously rather than relying totally on Fund Balance.

Chairman Horton stated that this year the Board of Supervisors has went a long way in closing the gap within the budget, but he is not sure that the Board should continue to do that by being this “creative”. Chairman Horton stated that the County would be veering from past practice drastically by taking this approach. He stated that he would not be supporting this.

Mr. Stead suggested a brief recess, so the Budget Director could check all changes and calculations made at today’s session.

Finance Chairman Howard called for a recess at 2:30 p.m.

Finance Chairman Howard called the meeting back to order at 2:41 p.m.

Ms. Cowan stated that there are two (2) options. Option one (1) would have the tax levy at \$33,489,329.00 putting us \$320,527 over the tentative levy presented last week. Option two (2) with the 33 percent on the 54 positions would reduce the tax levy to \$32,489,329.00. She noted that both with both options the tax levy as presented are over the tax cap.

Supervisor Kinowski inquired where the “33 percent” came from. Ms. Cowan stated that the County has had about \$1 million fall out unspent in past years. Supervisor Kinowski asked if the 54 vacancies are a high number. Mr. Stead stated that 54 is higher than past years. Ms. Cowan estimated that in past years there have been 20 to 30 vacancies and a majority were within the Department of Social Services.

Mr. Stead noted that this is not something that needs to be set as a permanent policy.

Supervisor Kinowski asked why the 33 percent could not be taken from the payroll and state retirement as well. Ms. Cowan stated that those numbers are what they are and that there are two (2) open enrollment periods where people can add or drop health insurance.

Supervisor Kinowski stated that if there is a history of about 20 vacancies could that be reduced from the budget and use less Fund Balance. Mr. Stead stated that it could be done, but the presented way is a more conservative approach.

Supervisor Callery made a motion to budget 33 percent of actual cost of health insurance benefits for each of the 54 open positions for an approximate savings of \$1,000,000.00, seconded by Supervisor Fagan and carried. (Supervisor Horton opposed)

Ms. Cowan stated that, with this savings, the Tax Cap is at \$2.6 million.

Mr. Stead stated that you do need to be careful with how far you go with using Fund Balance to fill annual budget gaps.

Chairman Horton stated that the County is going down a “slippery slope”, we do not have a spending problem we have a revenue problem.

Supervisor Argotsinger inquired about the average tax rate if we get under the Tax Cap amount. Ms. Cowan stated that applying \$2.71 million will put the tax rate at \$10.25 per thousand. Supervisor Potter asked what it would be if \$3 million was applied from Fund Balance. Ms. Cowan stated that it would bring the tax rate to \$10.11.

Supervisor Fagan inquired if the final rates have been received for employee health insurance. Ms. Cowan stated that all are in except for the 2024 Empire Plan rates.

Supervisor Fagan made a motion to apply additional Appropriated Fund Balance to keep the Average County Tax Rate at \$10.25, seconded by Supervisor Greene and carried. (Supervisor Kinowski and Horton opposed)

Ms. Cowan stated that final figures would be ready next week.

Supervisor Kinowski inquired when the last chance to vote on exceeding the State Tax Cap is. Mr. Stead stated that the earliest we can do it is the November 29, 2023 meeting. It must be done prior to budget adoption. Ms. Cowan stated that as it stands we are under the Tax Cap. Mr. Stead stated that the Public Hearing for the 2024 Budget will be on November 29, 2023.

Chairman Callery called for a moment of silence for Weight & Measurement Director James Callery's wife, Rhonda L. Callery who passed away this past weekend. He noted that the Wake will be held this Friday, November 24, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. Patrick's Church, Johnstown.

Mr. Stead advised that the next Board Meeting is going to be held on November 29, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. and a Finance Committee meeting will be held prior to the Board meeting at 11:00 a.m. in Meeting Room #1 in the County Office Building.

The Board recessed at 3:12 p.m. until Monday, November 29 at 1:00 p.m.

Certified by:

— *Jon R. Stead, Administrative Officer/ DATE*
Clerk of the Board