

Finance & Rules Committee
November 6, 2013
Minutes

Members Present: Committee Chair Scott Gray, Legislators Michael Docteur, Allen Drake, Michael Montigelli, James Nabywaniec, Barry Ormsby, and Chairwoman Carolyn Fitzpatrick

Others Present: Legislators Robert Thomas, Philip Reed, Michael Astafan, John Peck, Michael Behling, and Anthony Doldo, County Administrator Robert Hagemann, Deputy Administrator Michael Kaskan, County Attorney David Paulsen, Information Technologies Director Gregory Hudson, Real Property Tax Services Director Paul Warneck, Undersheriff Paul Trudeau, Watertown Daily Times Reporter Daniel Flatley, Confidential Secretary Jill Jones

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and offered privilege of the floor.

Tom Fossett, 155 Bishop Street, Watertown, Local 3089 representing local dispatchers and corrections officers asked the Committee to reconsider adding three positions in the dispatch center and said legislators should have received a package with slides and numbers in that regard. He stated that call volume has gone up annually, staffing has not changed since 2008, overtime costs continue to increase, the center will be picking up all the New York State Police dispatch calls next year, and there were promotions for senior positions but they can not supervise because they are busy answering phones. He said the dispatchers are getting burned out and one more person per shift would benefit them greatly.

With regard to the corrections officers Mr. Fossit stated that open positions are not being filled in a timely manner which creates a significant amount of overtime for the remaining positions. For the next five years more retirements are expected and he urged that the hiring process be fixed so there is not such a lag in filling the positions. He stated that for the first time ever, due to overtime, there may be a corrections officer that earns \$100,000 this year. With talks of a staffing analysis, possible expansion and dormitory style housing he urged legislators to think about new positions instead of all the overtime if not for 2014 then for 2015.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution revising and adopting 2014 tentative budget and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ormsby and seconded by Legislator Montigelli. Chairman Gray outlined the proposed changes which all total \$116,625. He noted that the tax cap only allows for \$118,000 and these changes are cutting it very close to that threshold. If adopted with these changes he said the tax rate would be \$6.58 which is an increase of 2.21%.

Legislator Ormsby appreciated everyone's efforts in putting the budget together and felt we did the best we can to cover our bases with the resources that are available. He expressed doubt that the County could withstand much more pressure from the State as they balance their

budget on the backs of the local municipalities and said we do our best to minimize increases to tax payers while maintaining necessary maintenance and personnel to do the job. He stated that apart from the projected increase in sales tax revenue he felt there should be some mandate relief for future boards.

Legislator Nabywaniec thanked administrators and legislators who worked on the budget. He said we have made good investments in the past with fund balance including the contribution to Samaritan Medical Center when the County Home closed, and purchasing the FBO at the Airport which will favorably impact future budgets but auditors have cautioned against use of that fund this year. He added that there are issues the Board needs to look at and work together to solve, and he hoped that tax revenues and sales tax will increase next year. He stated that the State is balancing their budget on the backs of county taxpayers and that should not continue. He felt the proposed budget did not solve all the problems but the County has done the best we could with it.

Legislator Docteur echoed the comments of other legislators with regard to the State passing down their costs to local property owners and felt we should put more pressure on our State representatives to stop that process. In past budgets legislators have paired down the Administrator's Recommended Budget and given as much money back as possible, and he expressed support for the proposed budget because it will put the County in a better position for future years and will rebuild the fund balance.

Legislator Montigelli pointed out that State mandates have put a lot of pressure on local governments, however the loss of sales tax revenue seems to be the result of a trickle down effect from federal policies like the sequester as a large number of federal employees live in the County.

Legislator Behling expressed support for adding the three positions in the Dispatch Center as the money will either be allocated now or at some point next year out of contingency for overtime and the problem will not be fixed. He suggested funding the positions from the contingency line as that is recognized fund balance that will be used, or taking it from overtime in the Sheriff's Department road patrol line and making them adhere to what is budgeted. He said savings from the Dispatch positions may not be realized next year but it will in the following year and morale will be increased.

Chairman Gray noted that the funds in the contingency account for 2013 have been spent and will not fall to fund balance. He said there have been many conversations in terms of the Sheriff's Department overtime and keeping it to the \$325,000 budgeted instead of overspending it to the current level of over \$500,000 in 2014. However, for various reasons (contractual) they do have some overtime built into their contract, but the budget team did try to recapture the additional revenue in that line for this budget. He reminded legislators that part of the current overtime costs are reimbursed through the Stonegarden grant details, and it may look like there is considerable overages but some does have offsetting revenue. He advised that the Sheriff's Department applies for Stonegarden grants as much as they can and related details will continue for as long as the grant funds are available, but an exact amount for next year is not known. He

acknowledged that Sheriff's Department overtime is a high number and is difficult to work with.

Legislator Astafan noted that during budget presentations the Sheriff's Department requested funds for storage units and wondered if thought was given to reapply the \$25,000 to get the best bang for the buck or if additional funds were proposed for that line. Chairman Gray stated that it will not be reapplied as it was not proposed as part of the budget. He added that they did everything they could within the tax cap and there were a number of legitimate requests that had indications of support but they had a cap to work within and they did the best they could to fit all the pieces together within the cap. Legislator Astafan shared the concern about fund balance and felt we were headed in the right direction with it, and appreciated the consideration given to some points that legislators wanted looked at.

Chairman Gray stated that unless legislators want to consider a tax override the budget is at where it can be. He turned attention to the detailed letter from the outside auditors included with the proposed changes and said extensive discussions have taken place with them which resulted in the letter outlining their position with regard to fund balance. He noted that the use of fund balance this year is not recommended as we have legitimately spent \$9 million in one-time expenditures in the last few years. He advised that the auditors are mostly concerned that a certain amount of fund balance is still used for recurring or day to day costs in the budget labeling it as inappropriate use.

Legislator Doldo stated he had concerns with the fund balance, the positions in Dispatch and overtime throughout the County. He felt overtime in general needs to be looked at as it is hurting the County in other areas. He supported funding all three positions in the Dispatch Center to lower overtime costs and boost morale because he felt it will cost the County in the long run one way or another. He said he had ideas for funding the positions, but did not identify areas where he felt the funding should come from.

Chairman Gray stated that funding choices are use of fund balance, against the auditors recommendations, or a tax cap override and resolutions are prepared if that is the desire. He did not recommend using fund balance for the 2014 Budget, he said if adopted as proposed it is hoped that fund balance would be generated for next year and if general fund spending goes up, instead of staying flat like it did this year, fund balance could be applied for 2015 as a rate stabilization mechanism. Without fund balance to fall back on and if general fund spending goes up he suggested a levy increase of up to 8% may be necessary. He added that it is also hoped that sales tax will increase next year which will also help.

Legislator Ormby expressed support for the proposed changes to the budget as he felt they took a good step toward answering the requests of departments, based on feed back and the extensive networking that has been done among legislators, and said he would not support exceeding the tax cap.

Legislator Behling suggested that an extra cell phone fee could be implemented in order to fund the three dispatchers as it was previously estimated that such a fee could generate about \$200,000. Legislator Reed pointed out that implementing such a fee is under Home Rule and our

Assemblyman/Assemblywoman or Senator would have to carry that bill for approval.

Chairman Gray advised that there is a very aggressive agenda for the first quarter/half of 2014 to examine the Five Year Highway Capital Plan, Buildings Department projects, and some of the issues in the Sheriff's Department (with locking mechanisms, etc) and it will include how much funding will be needed and what the best way is to fund the projects in order to solve issues that are lingering. These will be extensive, thought out positions and strategies in order to accomplish our goals. He added that the cell phone tax can be added to the agenda and we can always amend the budget if there is support for the tax and we can get home rule legislation done and move it forward and then amend the budget and hire the dispatchers.

Board Chairwoman Fitzpatrick advised that she spoke to Fire & Emergency Management Director Plummer and told him we could not afford three additional dispatchers and he agreed that at least one would be helpful and said an April or July start would also be agreeable. She said it is not what was requested, but is a start and we can look at what can be done for 2015. When budget discussions started legislators knew they were not going to make everyone happy but they had to look at what was best for everyone including the taxpayers, and this is the best that can be done right now.

Legislator Peck asked if the County could expect to see some income in the foreseeable future from the gambling legislation that passed recently. Chairman Gray advised that it appears the County may gain some revenue as identified by Administration during the budget presentation, but the facilities have to be located and built first so it is going to be a while.

Legislator Peck stated that he was not in favor of overriding the tax cap this year, and said we must live within our means and do the best we can with what we have; if it appears certain line items are "running amok" it is legislators responsibility to get a better handle on what is going on and find efficiencies. He expressed support for implementing a cell phone tax as technology is changing much faster than what we are collecting revenues for from land lines. He did not want to overburden residents but does want to derive some more revenue. It is not only the expenses in Dispatch, but also the long term investment in the radio frequency program that will need to be funded and he felt it would be prudent to do some long term planning in the very near future.

Legislator Reed appreciated efforts by Fire & Emergency Management Deputy Director Fred Lampman to get back some of the \$1.20 cell phone tax (per cell phone) implemented by the State specifically for cell phone dispatch as the County now provides that service. He advised that the State has currently put it into a competitive grant program and Jefferson County does not receive any funds. He said the dispatchers do a great job and we should be receiving the cell phone tax money in order to properly fund that operation.

There being no further discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution with the proposed changes to the budget as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution entitled appropriation for the conduct of county

government for fiscal year 2014 and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislator Docteur and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution adopting Capital Plan for 2014-2019 and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ormsby seconded by Legislator Montigelli and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution for certification of taxes to the City of Watertown and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec and seconded by Legislator Ormsby. Administrator Hagemann advised that the amount in this resolution will be updated based on the changes made to the budget earlier tonight. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution levying tax map maintenance charges for 2014 and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Montigelli seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution approving mortgage tax report and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Montigelli seconded by Legislator Ormsby and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution levying Hudson River-Black River Regulating District assessments and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Montigelli seconded by Legislator Docteur and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution for payment of legislators' expenses and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislator Ormsby and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution approving amended Jefferson County Administrative Policies and Procedures for Travel and Credit Card Policy and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Docteur seconded by Legislator Montigelli and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution amending the 2013 County Budget and Capital Plan in relation to the JCC Master Plan Project and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislator Montigelli and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution granting easement to Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ormsby seconded by Legislator Nabywaniec and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution recognizing the receipt of surplus finds from the dissolution of the Jefferson County Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) and authorizing the funding of the Jefferson County Local Development Corporation (LDC) and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Ormsby and seconded by Legislator Docteur. Legislator Peck appreciated the approval of the funding transfer to allow the ADC to exist under the LDC and continue to do positive work for agriculture in the County. Legislator Ormsby (ADC Board Member) advised that the last of the paperwork to accomplish this change was signed today and it has been quite a process but the good work of the ADC will continue. There being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution authorizing the commencement of eminent domain proceedings in relation to Watertown International Airport and entertained a motion for consideration. Mr. Hagemann advised that a slightly revised version of this resolution was on legislators' desks for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Montigelli seconded by Legislator Ormsby and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution authorizing agreements with Empire State Development and various contractors and amending the 2013 County Budget and Capital Plan with respect to the Business Center at the Watertown International Airport and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislator Ormsby and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

Chairman Gray introduced a resolution amending the 2013 County Budget and Capital Plan in relation to the Watertown International Airport Taxiway A Rehabilitation and Extension Project and entertained a motion for consideration. A motion was duly made by Legislator Docteur seconded by Legislator Ormsby and there being no discussion, the Committee agreed to sponsor the resolution as presented.

On a motion by Legislator Nabywaniec seconded by Legislators Ormsby and Docteur and unanimously carried, the Committee approved the following General Services Committee sponsored resolutions:

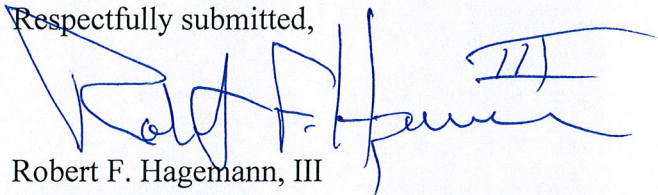
- Authorizing Agreement with the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services in Relation to the Federal Domestic Preparedness Equipment Program and Amending the 2013 County Budget
- Amending the 2013 County Budget in Relation to Road Machinery Fund

On a motion by Legislator Ormsby seconded by Legislators Montigelli, Nabywaniec and Docteur the Committee approved the following Health & Human Services Committee sponsored resolutions:

- ◆ Accepting Funding in Connection with the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) Immunization Billing Grant and Amending the 2013 Adopted Budget in Relation Thereto
- ◆ Amending the 2013 County Budget Relative to Emergency Medical Services Educational Courses in Conjunction with Jefferson Community College
- ◆ Accepting Donation on Behalf of the Department of Social Services and Amending the 2013 County Budget

There being no further business of the Committee, on a motion by Legislator Docteur seconded by Legislator Montigelli and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert F. Hagemann, III". The signature is stylized and includes a date stamp "11/11" in the upper right corner.

Robert F. Hagemann, III
Clerk of the Board