

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET

DATE: NOVEMBER 7, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY
TAYLOR
CHAMPAGNE
BENTLEY
KENNY
MERLINO
GIRARD
CONOVER
BELDEN

OTHERS PRESENT:

DANIEL STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS LOEB
SOKOL
STRAINER
THOMAS
MONROE
VANNESS
WOOD

CHRISTIE SABO, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING
REPRESENTING THE WARREN COUNTY YOUTH COURT:

KATHERINE CHAMBERS, YOUTH COURT PROGRAM DIRECTOR
CHAUNCY SOUTHWORTH, YOUTH COURT PARTICIPANT
MIKAELA SUDERS, YOUTH COURT PARTICIPANT
ALLYSON MULLIN, YOUTH COURT PARTICIPANT
HARRY McDONALD, YOUTH COURT PARTICIPANT
MATTHEW SUDERS, PARENT/YOUTH COURT VOLUNTEER

JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
ROB LYNCH, FISCAL ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SENIOR LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST
PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEET FOR ALL OTHER ATTENDEES

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 9:33 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Copies of a summary of the Budget Requests by Department and by Fund were distributed to the Committee members; *copies of which are on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Geraghty announced that New York State deferred the 53rd share payment of Medicaid until January which reduced the 2012 County budget by \$236,000. He stated this reduction would allow the County to reinstate the Mealsites but they would continue with the plan to cook the meals at two centralized locations. As a precaution, he continued, an additional \$124,680 would be allocated to the Contingent Fund to cover any further adjustments. He reported that \$13,100 in revenue had been earmarked in the Probation and District Attorney's Departmental budgets to cover the costs associated with the Ignition Interlock portion of Leandra's Law.

Mr. Geraghty requested Christie Sabo, Director of the Office for the Aging (OFA), to explain the new proposal for the Mealsites to the Committee members. Ms. Sabo distributed a document entitled "2012 OFA Nutrition Program Reorganization" to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.* Ms. Sabo apprised that the new plan reinstated all of the congregate sites with

the lease agreements currently in place and they would continue to function as dining sites in the communities. She added there would be two central kitchens: one at The Cedars and one at the Countryside Adult Home. She further added The Cedars Mealsite would continue to service the southern portion of the County and the Countryside Adult Home Mealsite would service the Chestertown, Bolton, Johnsburg and Warrensburg Mealsites which amounted to approximately 200 meals per day. She noted the cost savings in the new plan would be derived from staff reorganization as it would not be necessary to have two staff members at each location. She said the new plan would eliminate five positions and one vacant position.

Mr. Merlino asked for further clarification and Ms. Sabo explained that the meals would be prepared at one of the two central kitchen locations. She advised that additional funds were budgeted for transportation and mileage, as one employee from each of the congregate or satellite sites would travel to a central kitchen site to assist in the preparation and packaging of the meals prior to returning to their original site to meet the volunteers who delivered home meals and then reheat and serve the congregate meals. She pointed out additional funds were also budgeted to purchase carriers in order to maintain food safety heat levels. Mr. Belden asked if the Town of Hague was affected by the changes and Ms. Sabo replied in the negative. Mr. Belden asked if any seniors would be negatively affected or left out and Ms. Sabo replied in the negative. Ms. Sabo pointed out the new plan maintained the same level of meals which were currently served and the meals would be served in the same manner. Mr. Merlino inquired as to the cost of preparing the Countryside Adult Home kitchen to function as a Mealsite. Ms. Sabo replied that they had not researched the costs as the kitchen at the Countryside Adult Home was rather large. She said there would be some costs associated with storage which she did not anticipate would be significant. Mr. Champagne asked who would deliver the meals to the Presbyterian Church in Glens Falls and Ms. Sabo replied there would be no changes to the operation of the Presbyterian Church Mealsite, as the meals were prepared at The Cedars Mealsite and a Cedars staff member delivered the meals to the church. She noted that Solomon Heights would also continue to function as it had in the past.

Mr. Strainer inquired about the leases at the satellite sites as the County would not be using the kitchens and Paul Dusek, County Administrator, responded that the cost of the leases had not been addressed in the 2012 County budget as the costs were unknown. He added that some of the sites had an insignificant lease amount currently. As a precaution, he continued, the current lease costs were left in the 2012 OFA budget at the 2011 rates. He explained the only funds taken from the OFA budget were the savings from consolidating the kitchens and he added those funds were placed in the Contingent Fund in case there was an unforeseeable problem. Mr. Monroe questioned what would happen with the County owned equipment at each of the satellite sites and Ms. Sabo responded that some of the leases did not allow for the County to take possession of the equipment. Some of the equipment, she continued, would be required at the satellite sites in order to reheat the meals to comply with State requirements.

Mr. Monroe asked about the impact on employees and Ms. Sabo reiterated that five positions would be eliminated and one vacant position would not be filled. She explained four employees would be retained at the new Countryside Adult Home Site based on seniority. Mr. Monroe stated that the Town of Chester paid the salary of one of the employees and Ms. Sabo replied that this plan did not eliminate any employees whose salary was paid by a town.

Mr. Merlino noted the total savings to the budget from this plan was \$124,680 and asked if it was worth the amount of savings to make this change. He noted the seniors who went to the Lake Luzerne Mealsite enjoyed congregating but they also enjoyed the smell of the food as it cooked. He said he understood that the seniors would receive the same meals but to him it was just not the

same service. He added that the seniors came early to watch television, play games and socialize. He said it was upsetting to him that the OFA budget was being reduced by reducing services to seniors.

Mr. Kenny congratulated the Budget Team on this proposal which he opined was very creative. Chairman Stec agreed with Mr. Kenny and added this was a reasonable compromise as the services would continue to be provided at a reduced cost to the taxpayers. Mr. Champagne also agreed with Mr. Kenny and stated that he supported the new plan. Mr. Conover asked for further clarification on the changes to the Bolton Mealsite which were provided by Ms. Sabo. Mr. Taylor said that the Department Heads had been directed to reduce their Departmental budgets and asked Ms. Sabo if she felt this plan was a good solution. Ms. Sabo replied that if it was her choice she would not change anything; however, she continued, it was necessary to make budget reductions and this was the only possible solution. Mr. Monroe asked if the elimination of the five positions would be effective January 1st and Mr. Dusek replied affirmatively and he reiterated that the savings generated from implementing the new plan had been placed in the Contingent Fund in case it was necessary to cover the cost of the salaries past January 1st if switching to the new plan took longer than anticipated. Mr. Monroe stated that it was troubling to him that the unfunded mandates caused the County to make reductions in the areas which they could control and made it inevitable that they would need to make those reductions in areas which were important to the taxpayers.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried by majority vote, with Messrs. Conover and Merlino voting in opposition, to approve the changes to the OFA Departmental budget as outlined and to include same in the 2012 Tentative budget to be presented at the November 9, 2011 Special Board meeting.

Eluding to the \$129,800 earmarked for Non-Union Salary Adjustments identified at the October 24, 2011 Budget Committee meeting, Mr. Champagne requested an explanation of the process from which that dollar amount had been derived. Mr. Dusek replied that Rob Lynch, Fiscal Assistant to the County Administrator, had been given a percentage of increase to the 2011 County budget not to exceed 1.9%. He added that it had been necessary for Mr. Lynch to essentially work backwards from the maximum 1.9% increase and \$129,800 was the amount remaining after all of the Departmental and Fund increases were subtracted. He explained that the intention was to evaluate each non-union position commencing in January of 2012 to determine if the salaries of those positions were comparable to the wage scale. He advised some positions would receive a salary increase, some would receive no increase and there was a possibility that some positions would need to be decreased based on the wage scale in order to ensure that all County positions were paid an appropriate salary plus benefits. He said a comparison of each position would be completed by looking at the salaries of similar positions in other counties and the public sector. He noted the \$129,800 was for salary adjustments as opposed to salary increases and any proposed adjustments would be reviewed by the Personnel Committee and the full Board prior to being implemented.

Chairman Stec asked the percentage of the current non-union payroll that \$129,800 represented and Mr. Lynch replied it represented much less than 2% of the current non-union payroll, as 2% was approximately \$200,000. Mr. Champagne asked if job performance of the current employee in each position would factor into the decision for a salary adjustment and Mr. Dusek responded that the Board would need to discuss that issue as it was difficult to add job performance into the equation.

Mr. Kenny pointed out that non-union employees had not received a salary increase since January of 2009 while the union employees received salary increases each year. Chairman Stec advised that the \$129,800 was earmarked in the Contingent Funds for possible salary adjustments and did not

guarantee that any non-union positions would receive a salary increase. Mr. Champagne asked if there was a maximum salary for certain positions in Warren County and Mr. Dusek replied affirmatively. A brief discussion ensued.

Continuing, Mr. Geraghty reported that 2012 Budget Appropriations totaled \$145,243,023 compared to 2011 Budget Appropriations of \$145,246,186, a decrease of \$3,163. He added the increase to the tax levy was 1.7% which was an increase of \$648,906.61 compared to 2011. He recalled his review of the Hudson River/Black River Regulating District at the previous Committee meeting. Mr. Monroe asked if there had been any changes pertaining to the Planning & Community Development Department since the October 24, 2011 Budget Committee meeting and Mr. Geraghty replied in the negative. Mr. Monroe said he had requested the Planning Department to provide the amount of revenue brought into the Towns over the last 30 years and the response had been approximately \$28 million. He opined that the Community Development function of the Department was very important to Warren County and to the Towns. Mr. Thomas requested an explanation as to the \$329,800 increase to the Contingent Fund and Mr. Dusek responded that a portion of the increase was due to the \$129,800 earmarked for non-union salary adjustments and a portion was due to the \$124,680 in savings generated from the reorganization of the OFA Nutrition Program. Mr. Dusek continued by saying that any unused portion of the aforementioned figures would be utilized to increase the balance of the Contingent Fund, as recommended by the State Comptroller's Office.

Mr. Dusek apprised that the Director of the Information Technology (IT) Department recommended upgrading the computers of the County as the majority of the existing computers were between eight and ten years old. He added the concern was the newer Windows Programs, which were not compatible with the older Windows Programs, and would no longer be serviced as of 2014. He apprised it was not worth upgrading older computers with the newer Windows Programs and the upgrade would be a good use of Contingent Funds. He said he hoped the Board would seriously consider utilizing the Contingent Fund to upgrade the County's computers and the County Fleet vehicles in the future.

Pertaining to the Sheriff's Department budget, Mr. Thomas said he understood the increase in salaries for Corrections positions and the 911 Dispatch Center but he requested an explanation for the \$557,000 increase in Road Patrol. Mr. Geraghty responded that some of the increase was due to salaries, contract maintenance, retirement costs, loss of revenues and an increase in the cost of fuel. He noted that retirement costs for Law Enforcement Personnel were higher than those of other employees. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Monroe questioned the increase in the Administrative & Fiscal Services budget and Mr. Geraghty replied that salaries had been shifted from the County Attorney budget. Mr. Monroe apprised that the County needed to focus on dealing with unfunded mandates and noted that due to the Truth in Taxation Law the residents of Warren County would be made aware of exactly how much of their tax dollars were expended for unfunded mandates. Chairman Stec expounded that Warren County, along with all of the Counties of New York State and NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) had been complaining about the unfunded mandate situation. He said mandate relief was the responsibility of the New York State Legislators who were unwilling to address the issue. Mr. Monroe asked if the County had any rights under Home Rule or General Municipal Law. He said a tax cap was placed on the local governments which hampered their ability to govern for the benefit of their people. Mr. Bentley opined that the Truth in Taxation Law would send a strong message to the State Legislators if the taxpayers called and complained about the amount spent on unfunded mandates. Discussion ensued pertaining to unfunded mandates.

Mr. Girard stated that 40% of the sales tax generated in Warren County was attributed to tourism and he suggested looking at ways to increase sales tax revenues from tourists to assist with the rising cost of health insurance. He said the health insurance costs increased significantly every year. Mr. Strainer agreed that relief from increasing health insurance rates was needed and he suggested looking into self-insuring for health insurance benefits. He said he had spoken to many employees pertaining to the amount they spent on medical bills and had discovered it was significantly lower than what he had expected. Mr. Kenny disagreed and pointed out that in 1994, he had medical bills exceeding \$1.7 million as the result of an unanticipated illness.

Mr. Geraghty opened the Committee meeting to public comment.

Katherine Chambers, Warren County Youth Court Program Director, said she realized the funding for Youth Court had already been eliminated from the 2012 County budget; however, she reported that training had been completed for 16 new youths making the number of youths in the Program over 200 per year. She stated if funding was not found these new youths would be unable to participate in the Program. She noted an extensive study had been completed on the value of the Youth Court to the County and said she would be willing to answer any questions the Committee may have in reference to the Program. Mr. Belden stated that he served on the Traffic Safety Board and asked if the Program received funds from the STOP-DWI budget and Ms. Chambers replied that funding had been eliminated two years prior. Ms. Chambers invited participants in the Warren County Youth Court Program to speak.

Chauncy Southworth, Youth Court Participant, stated that he was a senior at Glens Falls High School who had been participating in the Youth Court Program since sixth grade. He said he had participated in all aspects of the Program. He expounded that the Program was valuable as it allowed the youthful offenders an option other than the Family Court System. He opined that the youthful offenders received stricter sentences than they would in Family Court and were placed in a position where their community service was completed alongside positive role models. He said a lot of the youthful offenders did not have good home lives or strong friendships. He announced that his time as a participant in the Youth Court had helped him decide on a career as a Prosecutor. He apprised the Warren County Youth Court was a great Program for the participants as well as the youthful offenders and it would be a shame if it no longer existed.

Matthew Suders, Parent/Youth Court Volunteer, said he was a resident of the Town of Queensbury whose daughter had participated in the Youth Court for several years. In reference to Mr. Girard's comments on tourism sales tax revenue, he stated that the beauty of the region was the County's resource. He agreed with Mr. Girard that it was necessary to find a way to get the tourists to help fund the County's programs. He said he wasn't suggesting increasing sales tax by a significant amount but reiterated that the beauty was the areas resource and the County needed to find a way to capitalize on it. Pertaining to the elimination of funding for the Youth Court, Mr. Suders commented that this action impacted all of the youth of Warren County, as well as the projects completed by the community service sentences. As a Glens Falls Police Dispatcher, he reported most of his time was spent assisting families with troubled youths. He opined that a price tag could not be placed on the services of the Youth Court and asked if a study had been completed as to the costs these services would place on the Court System without the existence of Youth Court.

Harry McDonald, Youth Court Participant, apprised that he and his friends dedicated their lives to the Youth Court Program and noted that each Thursday night they helped youthful offenders who were sentenced by their peers, as opposed to adults. He stated the Youth Court Participants also volunteered at the community service projects and recently a youthful offender had thanked him

for allowing them to be involved in the program. He said the youthful offender had informed him that her home life was not positive and that she did not have school friends.

Mikaela Suders, Youth Court Participant, commented that she had participated in the program for several years and agreed with Mr. Southworth's comments. She stated the Warren County Youth Court affected the way she had developed as a member of society and her decision to be involved in the legal system. She said she could not imagine her life without the Youth Court which allowed youths to become positive members of society.

Allyson Mullin, Youth Court Participant, admitted that she came to the Youth Court as an offender for truancy. She said she had anxiety issues and had been bullied in school. She mentioned she had been sentenced to community service and had become friends with Mr. McDonald and Ms. Suders as a result. Ms. Mullin informed that she scheduled school and work around the Youth Court schedule in order to continue participating. Without the Youth Court, she continued, an additional 200 youths would be handled by Family Court and the Probation Department.

Ms. Suders interjected that for the lesser offenses youthful offenders would be required to pay a fine to the Family Court System, as opposed to the Youth Court which required the youths to become involved in their punishment and rehabilitation through community service.

Motion was made by Mr. Girard and seconded by Mr. Merlino to reinstate the funding for the Warren County Youth Court.

Mr. Belden asked the amount of funding which had been eliminated from the Youth Court and Mr. Merlino replied approximately \$19,000. Mr. Geraghty noted the amount was not the full budget for the Youth Court. Mr. Champagne asked for clarification and Mr. Dusek stated that the total cost of Youth Court annually was approximately \$70,000 and the problem was the State funding had been reduced and the County's contribution was \$18,000 to \$19,000. He said he had advised the Budget Officer that if the Youth Court was to continue the County would need to contribute more funding to make it sustainable. He noted Mr. Loeb's efforts in attempting to maintain the Program in 2011. He opined it was a good Program which benefitted the youth of Warren County but in order for the Program to continue, the County would need to contribute more than they had in the 2011 budget.

Mr. Merlino opined that the 2012 County budget had eliminated or reduced funding to programs benefitting the seniors and the youths and had allocated \$150,000 in additional funding to the EDC (Economic Development Corporation). He questioned what benefits the EDC had provided to the County over the last five years and pointed out that the President of the EDC was new. He admitted the additional funding to EDC might benefit the County in the distant future but other programs were being affected.

Mr. Taylor apprised that if the County wanted to retain the Youth Court Program it was necessary to ensure it would be sustainable. He informed the Youth Board divided any funds collected among the programs and each community received an insignificant amount that had little impact. He suggested the funds be pooled for use in the Youth Court Program and he intended to present the concept at the next Youth Board meeting. He reported his attendance at two Youth Court sessions and said he had been impressed. He recommended other Supervisors attend a Youth Court session to see for themselves. He stated that Mr. Southworth had made a decision on his career path based on his experiences with the Youth Court.

In response to Mr. Girard's suggestion to increase sales tax, Mr. Taylor noted an increase in sales tax would affect all Warren County residents and impact them more than an increase in property taxes. He agreed with the increased funding to the EDC and said increasing the economic growth of the County was the best way to improve the economy. Chairman Stec agreed it was necessary to make the Youth Court sustainable. He recalled that Michael Barody, former Supervisor-At-Large for the Town of Queensbury, had petitioned the Towns several years ago in order to retain the Youth Court. Chairman Stec advised that the Towns of Queensbury and Warrensburg and the City of Glens Falls contributed funding to the Youth Court annually. He opined that sustaining the Program would be possible if all of the Towns contributed, which he said was the fairest option.

Mr. Girard noted the Youth Court Participants were volunteers and the drivers for the OFA Nutrition Program only received mileage reimbursements. He said the EDC had requested \$1 million and the County was contributing \$400,000 for 2012. He noted that funding had been reduced or eliminated for the OFA Nutrition Program and the Youth Court Program but the County had increased the funding to the EDC by \$150,000 compared to 2011.

Mr. Sokol thanked the Youth Court Participants for addressing the Committee. He questioned the costs to the Court System if the Youth Court was eliminated and asked if the concept had been studied. Mr. Geraghty replied that he did not know the total cost but he reported that the Budget Team had discussed the options with all entities. Mr. Monroe also thanked the Youth Court Participants for addressing the Committee and agreed that eliminating the Youth Court would shift the costs to the Court System.

Mr. Geraghty asked Mr. Girard the dollar amount associated with his motion and Mr. Girard replied his motion was to reinstate the amount which had been eliminated from the budget. Mr. Geraghty said he did not know the full amount of the Youth Court budget but noted the County's contribution was approximately \$18,000. He reiterated that Mr. Dusek had advised that amount of funding would not sustain the Youth Court through 2012. Mr. Loeb reported that a study had been completed by the Probation Department regarding the costs to the County if the Youth Court was eliminated. He added the impact on the community was more important than the cost to the Court System.

Mr. Bentley pointed out the Youth Court had a large number of volunteers and asked what the costs were for staff and Mr. Dusek responded there was one paid staff member and a contract with the Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse for administration of the Program. Mr. Dusek said that one of the ways they had been able to sustain the Program in 2011 was by asking the Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse to lower the cost of the administration fee. He added the Program had also lost State funding as well as funding from the STOP-DWI budget. He stated that a contribution of \$18,000 from the County would not sustain the Program for the entire year.

Ms. Chambers outlined the fund raising efforts by volunteers and noted there had been discussion pertaining to eliminating the contract for administration with the Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse. She noted there was other funding besides the County contribution which had been committed to the Program for 2012. Mr. Strainer asked about the possibility of soliciting funding from service organizations, such as the Elks Club, Lions Club, etc. He suggested making a plea to the public for donations to sustain the Program. Ms. Chambers noted a donation was made by the Kiwanis Club and Mr. Strainer recalled a 50/50 raffle at the hockey game.

Mr. Suders apprised the youth volunteers were more than willing to complete fund raising activities during special events but they required direction from the County as to what they could legally do.

He added that parents of the youths were also willing to volunteer and gave an example of selling hot dogs or coffee during a special event.

Mr. Geraghty called the question and the motion was carried by majority vote, with Messrs. Kenny and Champagne voting in opposition, to reinstate the funding for the Warren County Youth Court utilizing funds from the Contingent Fund and to include the funding in the Tentative budget to be presented at the November 9, 2011 Special Board meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Senior Legislative Office Specialist