



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – DECEMBER 13, 2024 COLLEEN A. GUNNIP, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. May, Ms. Abbott, Mr. Romeo, *Mr. Ryan, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Garland
ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Ms. Cody, Mr. Bush; also see attached

Chair Gunnip called the meeting to order at 10:37 a.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. APPOINTMENTS:

- a. **Confirming Reappointments to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Onondaga County Board of Directors (Debra Cody, Charles Garland)** (*Sponsored by Mr. Burtis*)

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. May, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- b. **Reappointing Two Directors to the Onondaga County Tobacco Asset Securitization Corporation (Colleen Gunnip, Richard McCarron)** (*Sponsored by Mr. Burtis*)

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- c. **Appointing Kevin Ryan as Republican Commissioner of Elections** (*Sponsored by Mr. Burtis*)

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Mr. May, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

2. TRANSPORTATION: Marty Voss, Commissioner

- a. **Authorizing the County Executive to Enter into a Five Year Agreement with the State of New York for Snow and Ice Control on State Highways for the 2024-2029 Seasons (\$4,717,185)** (*Sponsored by Ms. Cody*)

- County DOT plows state highways; state pays the county to do it; this is a 5 year extension
- Same agreement as other municipalities around the state; state does not negotiate terms
- NYS reimbursing for labor, materials and supplies; this allows DOT to increase the amount
- Changed wage rates for snowplow drivers 2 years ago, which helped with recruitment and retention
- Now have to modify agreement with state to reflect the higher wage rates

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

b. Authorizing the County Executive to Amend a Five Year Agreement with the State of New York for Snow and Ice Control on State Highways for the 2024-2029 Seasons to Increase the 2024-2025 Season Estimate and Amending the 2025 County Budget Accordingly (\$831,998)

(Sponsored by Ms. Cody)

- Addressing disparity for 2025 year; increase appropriations for current agreement

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

c. Authorizing the Sale of Surplus County Property Consisting of a Portion of Kinne Street, C.R. NO. 71, in the Town of Dewitt to Roger E. Salle and the Concomitant Discontinuance and Removal Thereof from the County Road System (\$6,000) *(Sponsored by Ms. Cody)*

- Surplus property identified
- County has piece of land that was cut off 40 years ago when state put in 298
- Property has state highway on one side and private business owner on the other 3 sides
- Owner would like to use the land to pave for additional parking and storing vehicles and equipment
- Owner will pay county \$6K; purchaser is Roger E. Salle; Brown Carbonic (CO2 Company)

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. May, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

3. OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT: Elizabeth Bough Martin, Director

a. Amending the 2024 Onondaga County Budget to Accept New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Benefit Project Funding (\$1,000,000)

(Sponsored by Ms. Abbott)

- Accept money negotiated with DEC for Buckeye spill
- County has 3 years to decide what the projects will be - DEC gives list of what types of projects they are looking for
- Projects have to be beneficial to public and associated with the actual spill
- Will be worked out in the future

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. May, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

4. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Shannon Harty, Commissioner

a. 2024 Transfer Resolution (\$1,000,000) *(Sponsored by Ms. Abbott)*

Purpose: WEP is seeking to transfer funds from Regular Salaries to All Other Expenses for the supplementary costs associated with unpredicted sludge/biosolid disposal. Sludge/biosolid disposal costs have increased due to delays in getting the Metro WWTP sludge dryer fully operational which has resulted in unbudgeted expenses. A transfer of funds is requested in the amount of \$1,000,000.

Summary: The 2024 410 – All Other Expenses budget assumed that the Metro Sludge Dryer would be fully functional by the end of Q1 2024. The dryer, when operational, will remove significant amounts of water from the waste biosolids reducing the tonnage of material to be disposed at a landfill. Unforeseen delays in getting the sludge dryer fully functional has regrettably increased the removal costs for sludge/biosolids resulting in costs exceeding the 2024 Supplies and Materials Budget. To cover costs already incurred, as well as costs projected through the end of this year, a transfer of \$1,000,000 is being requested for the 410 – All Other Expenses account from 101 – Regular Salaries. It is anticipated that a sludge dryer will be fully functional by the end of December 2024.

Fiscal Impact: This will have no impact on the budget – net \$0.

- Delays related to getting sludge dryer up and running; money will cover costs incurred up until now through end of year
- Final safety meetings and discussions with union; anticipate getting dryer up in next week or 2
- 2025 budget should be okay; budgeted in 2025 for dryer to be up and running
- Budget for 2024 assumed the sludge dryer would be up and running
- Dryer will be taking the water out, which reduces the tonnage sent to landfill
- Did not get dryer up and running as anticipated by Q1 due to delays, so more tonnage was sent to landfills
- Will have dry sludge in 2025

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

- 5. DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES-ECONOMIC SECURITY:** Sarah Merrick, Commissioner
- a. Amending the 2024 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for Onondaga County's Child Poverty Reduction Initiative Program (\$12,250,000) (Sponsored by Dr. Kelly)**

Purpose: To accept grant funds from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) for Onondaga County's Child Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI) Program.

Objective/Work Plan: The grant specifics that households within the City of Syracuse who receive or are eligible for Family Assistance (TANF) are to be served with this funding. OTDA has approved using the funds over a three-year period for four specific programs.

1) Expanding the 2Gen Onondaga Generational Poverty Reduction initiative, part of the County Executive's PIE agenda, a comprehensive program to break the cycle of poverty in Onondaga County. This program focuses on helping young parents on temporary assistance achieve long-term self-sufficiency through comprehensive, multigenerational support. Components include mobility mentoring, economic stability through "benefits cliff" supports, comprehensive goal planning in five main areas of family well-being: social capital, economic assets, child development, post-secondary education, and health and well-being. In addition, while working with heads of households, the initiative works with non-custodial parents on employment and parenting. Grant funds will enable Department of Social Services - Economic Security (DSS-ES) to hire ten additional staff for this initiative. We anticipate serving 450 households over a three-year period.

2) Housing Assistance and Network for Community Engagement (CNY CHANCE) - DSS-ES will contract with Homeless and Housing Coalition to operate a landlord incentive and retention service and a tenant navigation service. Landlords who rent to Temporary Assistance clients will have a "one stop/one call" support system to address any tenant issues. Tenants will be able to access Tenant Navigators who will provide information on rights and responsibilities and assist with landlord issues. This model has been successful in Cincinnati, Las Vegas, Omaha and Dallas to expand and sustain permanent housing options for very low income households. We anticipate bringing online 750 new units and supporting 450 tenants over a three-year period.

3) Attendance project focused on school absenteeism - Department of Children and Family Services will lead this program and work in partnership with the Syracuse City School District. The program's goal is to ensure every student can succeed by regularly attending school. To combat chronic absenteeism, the project will embed a full-time Attendance Liaison within 7 schools. This Liaison will partner with the principal, vice principal, social worker, psychologist, and other school personnel to identify and support students struggling with consistent attendance issues. Supports may include transportation assistance, housing and utility support, health and mental health services, clothing, nutritional support and child care assistance. Each Liaison will serve 50 families. We anticipate assisting 1,050 families over a three-year period.

4) Diaper distribution for Temporary Assistance Families - DSS-ES will work with the Diaper Bank of Central New York to procure diapers and Early Childhood Alliance to distribute them. Households with children ages 0 to 3 will receive free diapers. For low-income families that have very limited resources and may have to weigh purchasing diapers versus other necessities such as clothing or food. It is well documented that without an adequate supply of diapers, children are at risk of developing health issues such as diaper rash and infections. Research has shown, however, that an inability to provide necessities for one's child is particularly frustrating and pernicious to the wellbeing of parents. We anticipate serving 1,995 children over a three-year period.

Funding Source: NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). TANF funds.

Budget: \$12,250,000

- Governor announced \$50M for Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse to focus on reducing childhood poverty
- Early in June, proposed 4 ideas (listed above) – state approved on Nov 25th
- 2Gen is \$4.5M, CNY Chance is \$4.2M, Attendance is \$2.1M, Diaper project is \$1.3M
- After approval, will get contracts up and running sometime late January

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- How many more people will DSS need to bring on to accomplish this?
 - 2Gen expansion allows for funding of 10 positions
 - Chance program will bring on team of 5; Homeless and Housing Coalition will be the hiring agent
 - Attendance project working with school district and nonprofit CCSI, will bring on 7 liaisons
 - Diaper project – thinking maybe 1 part-time person for administration; partnering with diaper bank and ECA using infrastructure in place, do not think this should entail hiring a lot of personnel
- With expanding 2Gen impact, will that mean other resources get pulled in?
 - Currently serving 95 families; it is a slow process
 - First cohort of families has been almost 2.5 years, and they are beginning to be phased out completely
 - In 6 months, will contact these families to see if returned to any public assistance – need to prove the model works
 - With this state money, DSS will be able to reach 450 families
 - SU working with DSS as exterior evaluator; that will be enough to say if the model is effective or not
 - State is working closely with county to see if the model works
 - Want to try to convince federal and state to allow DSS to change how they implement TA currently to have a graduated process, versus people falling off
 - Falling off and instant crisis is why people end up coming back
 - (i.e.) Someone has nothing to fall back on and working at a job with inconsistent hours
 - If DSS can account for volatility of employment arena with graduated approach in this model, the hope is to be able to change how policies are written
- If there is a transition to change the way DSS is doing things (along with helping more people with 2Gen), is it tracking towards being something that can be budgeted for?
 - Certainly can make a case that staffing is claimable
 - The innovative things (i.e.) like cliff effect money to offset the instant drop, currently uses local money; but in this model, DSS will be able to use federal dollars to do it
 - If DSS can prove it works, maybe they can figure out how to claim for it; cannot guarantee that
 - Able to go down path, then DSS can redirect staffing and use staffing in a different way; this is baby steps
 - Onondaga County is way ahead of every county in NYS on this
- Has DSS been able to make tweaks on existing programs based on what has been seen with 2Gen so far?
 - A little; going to train eligibility workers differently to be more than just entering data and calculating budgets
 - There will be a more interactive role for the DSS workforce
- When will the county get a sense of how 2Gen is working?
 - It is slow; 95 families working so far, and in 6 months will have 5-15 families completely off the program
 - At that time, can give the Legislature the stories and feedback on those
 - In the next few years, with hundreds of families on model, DSS will have better sense of what is working
 - Working with Syracuse University to have objective review
 - Will not come and say it is working, if the evaluation says it is not
 - DSS has done research on the model prior to implementing
 - Taking components from efforts and initiatives that impact poverty in positive way to bring them together
- Is DSS contracting with CCSI for the absenteeism?
 - Yes

- Is there an outcome metrics: what does serving a family mean, and what is the success of the program?
 - This will be administered through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
 - It is modeled on a school absentee prevention/improvement program that DCFS was running prior to COVID
 - DCFS has strong metrics, which can be provided on the model that was working
 - The liaison will work with parents to see what the barriers are
 - State is allowing quite a few things for the county to use money for including (i.e.) rent payments, school clothes, transportation to school or medical appointments, etc.
 - Allowing county wide range of discretion to use dollars to do what it takes to get students back in school (regularly)
- What is the sustainability for the project, and is there a plan for expansion (only in 7 schools)?
 - That will be a discussion with the County Executive and Legislature
 - Need to start by proving the models work, then take next step

A motion was made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

6. COUNTY CLERK: Emily Bersani, County Clerk

a. A Local Law Adopting a Domestic Partnership Registry (*Sponsored by Mr. Olson*)

- Recognizing domestic partnerships in Onondaga County
- Lot of inquiries, as people do not always want to get married
- Opens doors for benefits including (i.e.) health insurance, life insurance, access to retirement, hospital visitation rights
- The County Clerk's office maintains a registry; anything out of the office is out of their control
- Not sure what policies will accept a domestic partnership; Onondaga County's does not; no impact on county plan
- Clerk's office will retain a \$35 fee
- Do not anticipate large volume, but there is interest and revenue

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- What other counties are doing this? Where do residents have to go if Onondaga County does not do this?
 - Clerk:
 - Madison and most other counties; based language for this law off other counties (i.e.) NYC local law
 - Madison County charges \$100; most counties charge \$35-\$40
- What has the Clerk learned as far as the validity or credence given these registries for insurance plans?
 - Clerk:
 - Goes both ways
 - When Clerk's office gets inquiries, do not ask why they want to be in a domestic partnership
 - Assume their policy already recognizes a domestic partnership
 - Cannot speak to different insurance companies, but know the county's BCBS current policy does not
 - Law:
 - It makes it easier for a person to go to their employer
 - When someone is trying to qualify for a domestic partnership, there is a generic statute that defines what that person needs, and what they cannot do – there is a list of documents that they can provide
 - This local law provides a simplified affidavit attesting that they met the requirements
 - Do not know if insurance companies will take the registry certificate, but it makes it easier
 - People are going to other counties that have open registries (no county boundary) to sign up, then taking the (i.e.) Thompkins County certificate to their HR department
 - Based on NYC (oldest model), it has served an easier purpose to get the benefits
- Are the qualifications for the Onondaga County domestic partnership registry fully aligned with the statute?
 - Law:
 - Yes; basically copied the statute and did not add on or detract
- What does a person have to bring to prove they are in a domestic partnership?
 - Have an affidavit that bullets out the requirements

- County Clerk's office is not proofing
- The people will sign the affidavit that is then notarized; if anything is not true, it is penalty of perjury
- Not looking to prove they are in the same household
- Had that question and concern, but this is how the County Clerk's office operates
- Registry is usual recording system, so it lives online and is public record
- What is the process for the dissolution of a domestic partnership?
 - Clerk:
 - Affidavit of termination
 - Law:
 - Requirement when signing that if it falls apart, the person has to come back
 - Also built in 6 months to meet statutory requirements
 - (i.e.) If a person terminates, they cannot file with a new partner immediately due to cohabitation period
- How many people do this?
 - Will let the Legislature know when it is up and running
 - Can ask around to other Clerks
 - Had a few inquiries since starting, which is why the ball is rolling now
- Is this gender specific?
 - No; before same sex was legalized, it was more popular; now may not have same oomph

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Ryan, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

*Mr. Ryan left the meeting

7. LAW DEPARTMENT: Ben Yaus,
a. A Local Law Regarding Residency for Deputy and Assistant County Attorneys

- Have attorney coming on board who is currently in Rochester and went to SU Law School
- Can be difficult to commit to job within a county without residency
- This law sunsets in 3 years and gives Law Department the opportunity to offer someone 6 months to relocate
- After 3 years, Law would have to come back for any other residency waivers

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- Is 6 months flexible, or can it be extended?
 - Think it is a reasonable period of time
 - Did not put in ability to extend; would have to come back to the Legislature for an extension
 - Want to keep within precedent of 6-9 months
- Is 9 or 12 months something worth discussion, and how did the Law Department land on 6 months?
 - Started with 9 months, as was done for the Office of Environment Director
 - County Attorney's idea was to not bring too much to Legislature
 - For this attorney, who is not moving with a family, 6 months is enough time
 - Could not agree more though, as experience is valued and it is a tough market
- Would like to talk to other Legislators about a good number for a recruitment tool
 - Welcome that, but trying to bring the attorney in for January; can amend and extend
- Because it is a local law and has requirements for publishing, it would be best to move forward now, then revisit
- Definitely need to look at it, but good for this person in this case
 - Happy to revise and expand it to look at residency more

8. COUNTY LEGISLATURE: Chairman Burtis**a. Personnel Resolution** (*Sponsored by Mr. Burtis*)

- Been working without a full team as it is written in the budget; looking to correct that
- Has abolish with no effect to Legislature's budget line
- After year of being Chairman, know that the staff is excellent, and this position is necessary and worthwhile

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- Is there already a job description and duties for this, or is the Legislature creating a new one?
 - Personnel:
 - Yes, job already exists in other departments; not creating new

REQUEST: Provide the job description for the Executive Assistant

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item. Ayes: 6 Absent: 1 (Ryan); MOTION CARRIED.

9. FINANCE: Don Weber, Real Property Tax Director; Kristi Smiley, Deputy Director Financial Operations**a. Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills**

- Single property owner that has been paying private sewer tax, but is on a separate septic system; refunding owner

A motion was made by Mr. May, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item.

- When the county does this, is it only going back one year?
 - 2 separate processes
 - If it is a correction to a tax on a tax bill, law allows going back 3 years
 - Because the sewer charge is not a tax, but a user fee, county can go back 6 years; which is what they are doing

Ayes: 6 Absent: 1 (Ryan); MOTION CARRIED.

b. 2025 Town Tax Rates, Fixed, Ratified and Confirmed**c. Southwood-Jamesville Water District Tax – General Apportionment****d. Southwood-Jamesville Water District Tax, Town of DeWitt Apportionment****e. Southwood-Jamesville Water District Tax, Town of Onondaga Apportionment****f. Warners Water District Tax – General Apportionment****g. Warners Water District Tax, Town of Camillus Apportionment****h. Warners Water District Tax, Town of Van Buren Apportionment**

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

i. Authorize the County Comptroller to Transfer 2024 Unencumbered Appropriations and Appropriate Revenue After Expiration of the 2024 Fiscal Year Upon Approval of the County Executive and the Chairperson of the Ways & Means Committee**j. Authorizing the County Comptroller, Upon Approval of the Finance Department Division of Management and Budget and the County Executive's Office, to Transfer 2024 Unencumbered Appropriation Account Balances in Excess of \$7,500 into, between, and among all Interdepartmental Chargeback Appropriation Accounts and Adjust the Corresponding Interdepartmental Revenue Accounts**

- Annual resolutions authorizing transfers between accounts; process stays the same
- Transfers are prepared and reviewed with the Chair of Ways and Means, then posted by the Comptroller

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

DATE: **DECEMBER 13, 2024**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
M. Voss	DOT
Pliny Donahue	DOT / Fin Ops
Isabelle Harris	CE
Donald Weber	Tax
Spahr Merrick	DSS - ES
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Steve Morgan	Finance
Brian Donnelly	CE
Elizabeth Baugh Martin	Environment
Kristi Smiley	Finance
Emily Sasaki	Clerk
Evan Katalunas	Co. Clerk
Jill Hasell	County Clerk
SHANNON HARRIS	OC/WRP