



Onondaga County Legislature

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WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – MARCH 26, 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. McCarron, Mr. Bush; also see attached

Chair Gunnip called the meeting to order at 10:41 a.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **SHERIFF:**
 - a. **Authorizing Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the United States Postal Inspection Service Concerning the Central New York Contraband Interdiction Team (\$30,041)**
(Sponsored by Mr. Olson)
2. **OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT:**
 - a. **Amending the 2024 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Office of Climate Change (\$100,000)** (Sponsored by Ms. Abbott)
3. **ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY:**
 - a. **Approving an amendment to the Currently Effective Schedule of Rates to be Charged for Water and Water Service Provided by the Onondaga County Water District** (Sponsored by Ms. Abbott)

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to approve the Consent Agenda. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. **APPOINTMENTS:**
 - a. **Recommending Appointments to the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (Theresa Wheatley, Mike Becallo, Matthew Cushing, Greg Popp, Robert F. Cuculich, Louella Williams, Joseph A. Hardick, Colette Matthews-Carter, James Beebe, Tina M. Fitzgerald)**
(Sponsored by Mr. Burtis)

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

- b. Confirming Appointments to the Onondaga County Board of Ethics (Bishop Colette Mathews-Carter, Hon. John V. Centra, Nancy Lowery, George Dooher, Jr.)**

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

- c. Confirming Appointments by the County Executive to the Onondaga County Public Library Board of Trustees (Sam Edelstein, Mary Bilbo Coughlin, Esteban M. Gonzalez, Svetlana Dyer, Desaree Dixie) (Sponsored by Ms. Cody)**

Mr. Donnelly presented this resolution.

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- There was at least one additional resume put forth
- How is it decided who is appointed, what is the rationale for the appointments, and why was one person not considered?
 - As with many boards, individuals submit resumes
 - Resumes are reviewed by the office
 - County Executive makes the determination
 - Submitted to Legislature for review
- Is there a formal way of acknowledging receipt, or letting someone know if they are not chosen?
 - Not sure; believe the resumes are kept on file for the individuals who are not chosen
 - In the event other vacancies come up, there is a pool of individuals to be considered
- Is there a response sent to the individuals that the position has been filled?
 - Not sure, but will check with staff on what acknowledgements are sent out
 - Resumes come through the portal on County Executive's website and some come through mail
 - Often there are more individuals who apply than there are openings
 - There will be vacancies in the future; comfortable with the slot provided today
- Please expand on the rationale behind the County Executive's appointments, and how these were chosen
 - Do not know
 - They are individuals that applied, and the County Executive looked at the resumes
 - These are the ones the Executive was most comfortable with at the time
- Does this fill all the current vacancies?
 - There is a reappointment for next month – someone currently on the board

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

2. OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT: Jesse McMahon, Director

- a. 2024 Transfer Resolution (\$75,000) (Sponsored by Mr. May)**

- Adding \$75,000 to the existing \$100,000 in the Office of Environment budget to support Soil and Water (SWCD) for water chestnuts

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- 2 budgets ago, came up with solution based on needs of SWCD for what needs to be accomplished
- \$175,000/year available to SWCD to remediate water chestnuts in river system; never know what is used or expended
- Anything not expended goes to project account and is fortified at budget time; need to release full amount today

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

- In Environmental Protection, Mr. Yaus brought up a \$500,000 settlement designated for SWCD for water chestnuts
- When will this be available, what are the parameters, will it go straight to SWCD, and will this offset future years?
 - Law:
 - Have not received the money yet
 - Received initial approval for water chestnuts from DEC and has been agreed to by the parties
 - Do not have final signed agreement, but it will be between DEC and SWCD to fund directly
 - Will report back when it is received
- Expenses incurred by SWCD go through Office of Environment – only expend what is appropriated
 - Environment:
 - Year after year seeing increase
 - Will keep an eye on how the \$500,000 is spent, and what that does to Office of Environment budget
 - Do not see this issue going away anytime soon
 - Resources growing with private companies helping out, and SWCD will do the work

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion to approve this item.

- Where is the \$500,000 coming from?
 - Law:
 - Couple years ago, worked on cleaning up tax rolls and long vacant properties
 - One long term vacant property was on Cold Springs Road along Seneca River
 - BP and Buckeye Pipeline (2 of multiple oil companies that were there) are providing this money
 - Long delinquent owner purchased property from them; over decade of unpaid taxes, went into bankruptcy
 - BP and Buckeye did remediation, removed the silos from the Seneca River, and they were under obligation to do further cleanups
 - Things got complicated between delinquent homeowner, who was not going to allow continued access
 - Had remedial access issue, back taxes and DEC involvement
 - Buckeye and BP were on the hook to either pay \$1.5M for Environmental Benefit Project Fund in the area of impact or pay less in a fine
 - 2 years ago the county compromised taxes on the sites
 - In exchange for that, county got an agreement to use the \$1.5M for county projects in the area
 - DEC agreed that \$500,000 of that could go to water chestnuts
- This money had to go to a DEC project
 - Law:
 - A DEC approved project – water chestnuts was approved
- Will the total \$1.5M go to a contingent account?
 - Law:
 - \$1M is awaiting approval for proposals
 - This is a subset able to get as it is in the water way, along Seneca River – met program parameters
- When the county gets the money, will it go to a contingent account?
 - Law:
 - This money is going straight to SWCD
 - DEC prefers to hand money to the person doing work
 - It will not come back to Legislature if paid directly (to SWCD)
- Where is the other \$1M going?
 - Law:
 - Not positive; if it comes to county, it would likely be subject to appropriation via legislation
 - Environment:
 - Whatever project is approved by the DEC

A vote was taken on the resolution. ***Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

3. DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – ECONOMIC SECURITY: Sarah Merrick, Commissioner**a. Personnel Resolution** (*Sponsored by Dr. Kelly*)

Purpose: *The authorize a M/C grade change from 31 to 32 for Principal Employment Counselors (6) in the Temporary Assistance Employment Division.*

Objective/Work Plan: *Principal Employment Counselors supervise ECI's and ECII's. One Principal Employment Counselor supervises Employment Aides. In total there are 41 ECI's, 5 ECII's, and 8 Employment Aides. Principal Employment Counselors supervise an average of 10 employees.*

Their work activities include:

- *Each team function follows unique regulations. Unique goals. Unique data. Unique population. They aren't supervising staff who perform duties that several other teams do.*
- *In addition to work tasks, they mentor staff on the complex element of quality case management practices related to medical conditions, all kinds of treatment, care navigation, education and training services, career exploration, job development, domestic violence, trauma informed approaches, substance abuse, person, motivational interviewing, de-escalation, criminal history, serious mental health, etc.*
- *Network with many community partners related to their team function. Represent DSS. Greater Syracuse Works, CNY Works One-Stop, Syracuse Build/I-81 project, Resettlement agencies, SCSD, EOC, RISE, PIL, HHQ, Crouse, Industrial Medical Associates, Medical Answering Service, Private medical providers, Drug and alcohol treatment providers, Mental Health providers, Social Security Administration, Vol. Lawyers, Legal Aid, Private Lawyers, homeless shelters, etc. Certain partner collaboration is based on funding – local, FFFS, SNAP E&T funding – awareness of this.*

This request will align the salary for Principal Employment Counselors with work activities and those they supervise.

Funding Source: *Salary savings in the 101. Averaging 45 vacancies thorough the department.*

Budget: *Annual increase for 6 Principal Employment Counselors - \$12,750*

- *Late 2022, OCC notified DSS that they no longer wanted to administer JobsPlus*
- *DSS took over JobsPlus, and it is now called Temporary Assistance (TA) Employment*
- *Have ~3,800 – 4,000 open TA cases, and mandated to assist individuals to:*
 - *Seek employment*
 - *If deemed unable to work, ensure they are getting services for short-term disability and get back into employment*
 - *If deemed permanently unable to work, then transition from TA to Social Security Income (SSI)*
- *Taken 2 years to realign TA Employment to have 5 functional areas:*
 - (1) *Focus on exempt population*
 - (1) *Focus on transition from TA to SSI*
 - (1) *Focus on individuals where English is their second language*
 - (2) *Focus on non-exempt and able to work – get resumes together, interviews and link with employment*
- *~1,500 people became employed last year*
- *Social Security Transition Team moved 359 TA clients to SSI*
 - *Between what is recouped from SS grants and what DSS would have paid out for 1 year of benefits = \$1.9M savings*
- *Trying to get alignment of supervisors overseeing the tactical teams – Principal Counselors*
 - *Asking for grade increase*
- *DSS has broken even by bringing JobsPlus to the county*
 - *Cost of personnel to run program the last year at OCC was \$5.2M*
 - *Last year's cost to DSS was \$5.4M – increase happened due to wage increases*
 - *Did save a few hundred thousand dollars in administrative costs OCC was charging*
 - *Have seen more efficiencies with department aligning, and eligibility staff working closely with employment staff*

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

4. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: Archie Wixson, Commissioner
a. A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of an Additional \$15,500,000 Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to Pay Costs Related to the Renovation of the Former Central High School for Use as a STEAM High School in and for Said County (\$15,500,000) (Sponsored by Mr. Knapp)

- Additional bonding to complete project at STEAM school - \$15.5M short
- Estimates and budgeting began in 2019, and since then there was market volatility with COVID and other
- NYS Dept. of Education approved 98% coverage of the project
- Syracuse City School District (SCSD) will invest the other 2%
- Onondaga County is not at financial risk; just authority financing and building the project
- SCSD will operate STEAM school and pay lease amount equal to county's cost of investment until bond matures
- When bond matures, will transfer property back to SCSD; will be theirs from then on

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- Is this additional funding (\$15.5M) being reimbursed at \$0.98 on the dollar?
 - NYS Dept. of Education allowed an MCA of \$89M (\$74 plus the \$15.5M)
 - NYS only paying 98% of \$89M
 - SCSD will pay the 2% to make the county whole
 - Lease agreement and working agreement in place with SCSD and city of Syracuse
 - SCSD will also be paying the interest on the (15 year) bond
- Syracuse Common Council passed resolution supporting this; have SCSD and city of Syracuse backing this
- Please talk about the project timeline
 - Already begun the work
 - Has to be complete for occupation for the 2025 September semester

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

5. FINANCE: Don Weber, Director of Real Property Tax
a. Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills

- Most corrections are property owners billed for sewer that have private septic
- One senior care facility billed incorrectly

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
 Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

DATE: MARCH 26, 2024

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Judy Jerome	citizen
Peter McCarthy	citizens
Jeff Brown	OCWA
Leslie Jeremy Young	OCSD
Sarah Merrick	DSS-ES
Jesse McMahon	On Co Environment
Dawn Manner	Library
Mark Cook	"
Kristi Simola	Fire
Melissa Colombo	Fire
Sirena Sharpe	Finance
Jesse Dean	Finance
Patricia Gonsale	Comp
Anne Laughlin	Comp
Tim Kelly	Comp
Nancy Long	EX
Janeell Harris	EX
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Jim Beebe	Leg.
Dawn Ledrick	Leg.
John Jesantis	Leg.
Joe Fratreschi	Leg Counsel
Ben Yaw	Law
Steve Morgan	CFO
Brian Donnelly	C.E.