



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

JAMES J. ROWLEY
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – JULY 26, 2022 BRIAN F. MAY, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Burtis, Ms. Abbott, Mr. Olson, Mr. Kinne, Mrs. Ervin
ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Rowley, Ms. Gunnip, Ms. Cody, Ms. Kuhn, Dr. Chase, Mr. Garland;
also see attached

Chair May called the meeting to order at 11:36 a.m. *The minutes of the previous meeting have been distributed. There are no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes are approved.*

1. COUNTY LEGISLATURE:

a. Standard Work Day and Reporting Resolution

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

b. Calling for a Public Hearing on the 2023 County Budget (October 6, 2022, 6:00 pm)

- Budget schedule based on the County Charter

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

c. Amending the Rules of the Onondaga County Legislature (*Sponsored by Mr. Rowley*)

- Discussed at June Ways & Means meeting; changes were presented
- Main areas of clarification had to do with legislative counsel and ability for Legislature to have outside counsel - agreement came with Law Department and sponsor
- Most changes are modernization of rules, alignment with Robert's Rules of Order and Open Meetings Law
- All yellow highlights are changes, blue highlights are gender neutral changes
- Rule #2 – letter (c) was changed to clarify how a special session can be called to order; procedural – 2/3 of members can call a session per Open Meetings Law within any time period versus (a) and (b) that have a 72 hour time period
- The current rules are on the website: www.ongov.net/legislature
- Rules that changed since the last Ways & Means meeting include 2, 26, 30; agreed on with Law Department

A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Olson, to approve this item. Ayes: 5 Abstentions: 2 (Kinne, Ervin); MOTION CARRIED.

d. A Local Law Regarding Videoconferencing by Onondaga County Public Bodies Pursuant to New York State Open Meetings Law (*Sponsored by Mr. Rowley*)

- Alignment with Open Meetings Law (OML); anticipation of meeting rules changing when emergency status changes
- Define circumstances for which a member can meet remotely - extenuating circumstances (i.e. sickness; not work trip); taking care of a sick relative out of town would be an extenuating circumstance

- Any county appointed committee is included
- Ultimately Chairperson's prerogative; if something comes up, talk to Chairperson

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

2. FINANCE:

a. INFORMATIONAL: Amending the 2022 County Budget to Make Funds Available to Support Various Housing Initiatives within Onondaga County

Presented by Martin Skahen, Director of Community Development

Housing Initiative - \$10,000,000

- Incentivize private sector investment in quality housing throughout Onondaga County
- Avg. sales price for home in 2018 was \$172,200; today is \$215,000
- Proposing fund to compliment efforts countywide targeting filling project gaps for affordable, mixed income, market rate residential housing
- Goal to stabilize rising assessments, provide housing security for vulnerable, and meet demands of growing community
- Community Development will put out request for applications to developers
- Committee will review and make awards – committee consists of Director of Community Development, someone from County Executive's Office and someone from Purchasing
- Awards are \$5,000/unit/project; total of up to \$250,000; 50 unit max/award; 40 total awards (if all at max)
- Starting point of this initiative is to incentivize as many developers as possible; shortage of housing stock
- May receive 70 applications and give 40 awards, or only receive 6 applications
- \$5,000 on \$300,000 house is not significant; \$5,000 on \$100,000 home would make a difference
- Is the objective to focus on lower priced housing stock?
 - Committee would weigh merits of project subsidy; i.e. if project is senior housing (lower priced housing proposal), would weigh in on decision
- Various entities in process of evaluating, and would be beneficial if Legislature was represented in the process as well
- Why not more funding?
 - Starting point; developing program; see how it works; if takes off like wildfire, then discussion of doing more
- Ranch homes needed - hopeful a number of the units will be senior housing
- \$5,000/unit can be for anything including infrastructure, roads, sidewalks, etc.; all components of subdivision
- Considerations:
 - Apprenticeship language – will there be consideration given to awarding homebuilder with 100% local labor or apprenticeship language? Can be looked at if county can do it
 - Has not been consideration for existing rental units that are not able to be occupied and need rehab
 - If Land Bank demos homes and developer looking at those vacant sites to build 40 homes; it would be considered
 - Suggestion to look at new and existing units – will find out with program and RFA; may have second round that opens things in different way
- Incentivizing affordable housing with \$5,000
- Marketing – will put together request for applications and send to developers in the county
- Money will be going to home builders and developers, not individuals building a home
- \$5,000 - match is a more expensive build of multiple units; help close gap for project that builder is already advancing
- Community Development projects are reimbursable; do not give money upfront; pay after they do what they need to do
- Initiative is countywide - may get more interest for people in specific areas (i.e. north county near possible chip plant)
- Affordable housing proposals have bigger gaps to fill than large subdivisions; people that want to build affordable housing should be all over this program to win an award to help
- What other things are happening for affordable housing?
 - \$5,000 is something that was not available before, so it can help to get closer
 - City's program is \$11.1M building affordable housing within city
- Process – similar to Community Development Block Grant; application has to be submitted, reviewed, then select apps
- Best applications will go to the top (i.e. low income housing) and receive money

- Never done before, laying down specific criteria is difficult; will look for biggest impact
- Project came from different conversations with developers, as well as knowledge that more units need to be built

Requests for next meeting:

1. **Asking that the Legislature be part of the process/committee**
2. **Provide general criteria of how the committee will choose one project over another**
3. **Specify what the skin in the game will be for a commitment**
4. **Provide a brief understanding of what other efforts are or could be done**
5. **More information on eligibility, where to build targets, and how builders will be chosen (Who is building, what, where, and when)**

Lead Program - \$3,726,082

- Used to further lead based work in county; can be used for Health Department for their work with lead based initiatives
 - i.e. Conducting mobile lead testing on children; when child has elevated blood level, get them into early intervention
 - Comes when mental issue identified and get help needed
- Funding could address high cost units in lead program - apply for lead program, pick number of units will do
 - HUD rule for lead - spend over \$20,000 on unit, it is high cost unit; have to get permission from HUD to spend more than \$20,000; Community Development currently matches out of Community Block Grant program
 - More high cost units with cost of materials; have certain amount of units have to do out of the grant, but then find unit that is less than \$20,000 to offset the high cost
- Could be used to partner with other community members doing lead based initiatives
- Shortage of contractors to do work – have considered putting money in to train; get more lead trained workers
 - Cost ~\$2,000 to go through everything for lead certification; if they can get interested contractors, can look to offset that cost; get incentivized to do courses and registration required by HUD and EPA
 - Need more than 4-6 contractors; funding not always the issue
 - Getting contractor interested in the process of certification and doing this work with regulations is tough sell
- NYS has eliminated lead testing at WIC by the Department of Health, because it is no longer considered a clinic - good program that was helpful, had to stop
- County program runs parallel with city:
 - City does upfront work to qualify applicant for lead reduction job, then send file to county
 - Community Development goes to house to identify lead hazards and takes care of them
 - When work is done, send back to city and city closes out project with HUD; coordinated effort
 - In addition to this money, city put in \$5,000,000 for lead for various programs
- Syracuse City School District and County meeting:
 - City has apprenticeship program for construction some students follow
 - Workers can get certification to qualify to work on lead projects
 - Contacted program coordinators, and setting up meeting to add to curriculum (RRP certified)
 - When student graduates from high school, they have the skills to be desirable to lead contractors
 - Have also reached out to lead contractors to make them aware of the program

Shape Up for Veterans - \$1,000,000

- Target – any honorably discharged veteran who meets income guidelines (family of 4 is \$71,000) will be eligible for funds to cover costs of home repairs – plumbing, heating, roof, insulation, etc.
- \$15,000/grant with 5 year deferred loan: lien on property for 5 years; if veteran sells property prior to 5 years, there would be a prorated portion to pay back
 - As long as veteran stays in property for 5 years, they will not pay anything back
 - If they leave at 4 years, they will be required to pay 20% back (prorated amount) to take the 5 year lien off
 - Those that want work done, typically stay in the house; do not anticipate issue
- How many veteran's are eligible and need this? Do not have data on how many need the help, but with the regular Shape Up program, Community Development does 40-45 jobs/year
- Would like to see this program continue after this
- Will do legwork to get application out there and have people apply
- Mike LeFlair in Community Development will be heading up; Bill Meyer in Cicero will help market program
- Veteran's Service Agency will be a partner in getting message out

- This is for veterans, and it is a heavy lift for these men and women to accept help; will take a real hometown effort talking to people
- Community Development will provide all assistance needed to get an approved application through
- Veterans program does not have an age restriction (regular Shape Up program is restricted to 62 and older)

b. INFORMATIONAL: Amending the 2022 County Budget to Make Surplus Room Occupancy Funding Available for use in Support of Hospitality Initiatives (Sponsored by Ms. Gunnip)

Presented by Robert Petrovich, Director of Economic Development

- Direct funding to hotel and ancillary hotel industries to help stabilize area tourism infrastructure; coordinated through Office of Economic Development (ED)
- Application process to be developed for hospitality businesses to request funding from this initiative
- Hospitality and tourism industry faces hardships as result of COVID pandemic and recovery
- Approximately \$1.5M from ROT balance to be divided into 2 initiatives
 - Hotels - \$500,000 - any hotel in area can apply for funding (i.e. used for capital improvements, workforce development, marketing)
 - Hospitality Tourism Infrastructure - \$1,000,000 - capital improvements only; non-hotel businesses within hospitality arena (i.e. banquet facilities, sporting facilities, arts & cultural organizations, etc.)
- Application process being developed; program through ED; similar to other programs for supporting local economy; have to establish set of criteria; has to be demonstration of need
- Application will be reviewed and vetted through ED; would make award based on need
- Have to work out process and what the merits of award are; will bring forward to next Ways and Means committee
- Mix in community with individuals and corporate companies that own hotels; will look at mix, and how it relates to what they looking for
- Appropriate use of funding for capital improvements: (i.e.) mechanical system upgrades, lighting upgrades
- Examples of infrastructure would include amenities associated with the hotel (i.e. swimming pool needing new liner)
- \$2.9M in excess ROT, subtracting out \$1.5M, leaves balance of \$1.4M
- \$1M - what it can be used for is yet to be determined; open to conversation, but nothing cast in stone
- On the applicant to prove what they are asking for is relevant and part of equation
- ED has experience with providing assistance during the pandemic to business community through IDA, OCDC, etc.
- Cannot speak to the parking garage at the Marriott that owes the city back taxes
- Excess ROT - during pandemic, not only were hotels not selling rooms, but county could not spend money on venues, because there was nothing to spend it on; accumulation of dollars; also county increased ROT from 5% to 7%
- Suggestion to consider criteria including the amount of ROT contributed – be able to apply for percentage back
 - i.e. smaller entity would not get the same as someone contributing significant amount more to ROT
- Suggestion to use Economic Development Advisory Committee to be the review panel
- Stress in hospitality industry - unemployment is 9.6%; maybe do something for workforce development and training
- Eligibility – look to have contractors use local business and workforce to extent possible

Requests for next meeting:

1. **Identify basic criteria as to what the \$1 million will be used for, and how it will be prioritized**
2. **Suggest member of Legislature be part of process**

c. INFORMATIONAL: Revising the Policy that Directs General Fund Accumulated Fund Balance in Excess of 15 Percent of General Fund Revenues to Debt Management and Reduction, and to Prevent Fluctuations in the Real Property Tax Levy, and Amending Resolution No. 270-1999, as Amended

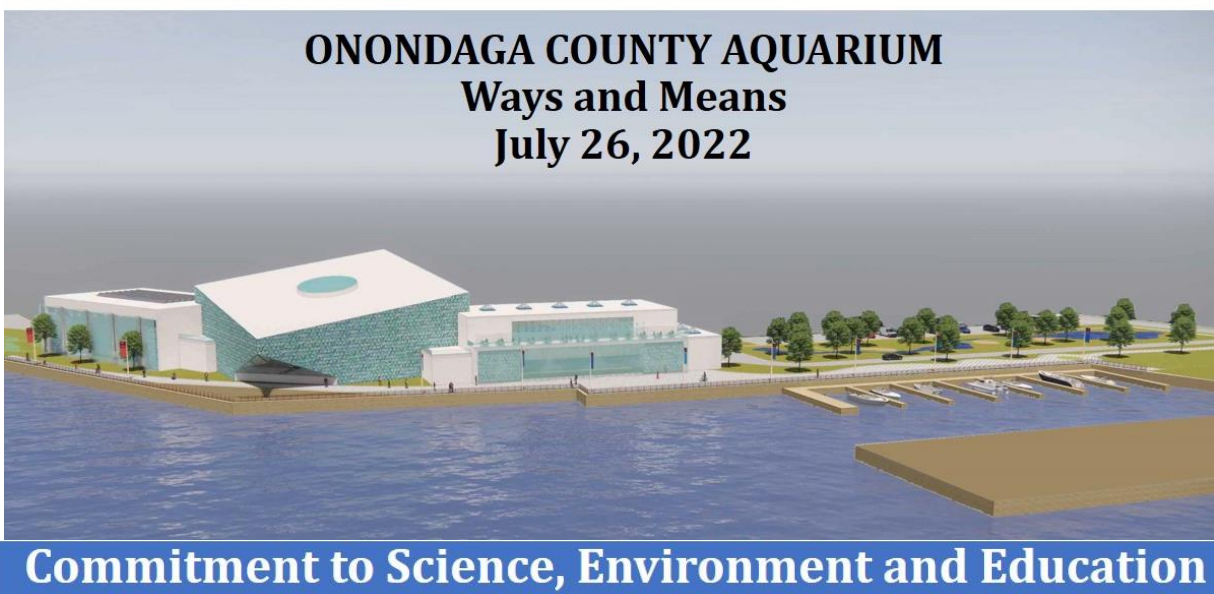
Presented by Chair Brian May

- Proposing changing fund balance threshold from 10% to 15%
- 10% fund balance set years ago by prior Legislature; fund balance number has not been looked at in years

- Raising the threshold shows better stewardship, adapting to circumstances, protecting taxpayer dollars better, and good look for rating agencies that determine what the county can borrow
- 15% is the number leadership and administration agreed on to start with
- Asking members to do homework and maybe look at different approach between now and next meeting
- Different authorities and entities use different metrics for evaluating municipality's fiscal strength; rating agencies and NYS Comptroller metrics both look for higher levels of fund balance than this
- One reason county was upgraded by Moodys was due to growth of fund balance; still below AAA rating level
- No right or wrong amount; depends on different factors; important that there is a policy and both the governing body and Executive work towards staying within that policy
- Proposing to add requirement for Legislature to review the policy on annual basis at budget time
- NYSAC – do not know if they have an official position in regard to a fund balance percentage
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) – guidance on percentage starting with no right or wrong amount; particular to environment, municipality and what is happening in the community
- Highest score from NYS Comptroller is 20% or higher; this is not overreaching
- Suggestion for stepped approach starting at 12.5%, then review next year
- Calculation for fund balance stays the same (adjusted previously by eliminating interdepartmentals)
- County has long history of being good stewards; some think 10% already too high
- Fund balance accumulated over 2 years; need to look at money and use for the good of constituents
- Legislature approved \$200 payments to seniors; there are also other proposed plans at this committee; county can continue to do these things and run the government; not this or that scenario
- Better policy with formal annual review of threshold a better use of authority with managing taxpayer dollars

d. INFORMATIONAL: Amending the 2022 County Budget to Make Funds Available for Construction of an Aquarium within Onondaga County (Sponsored by Ms. Cody)

Presented by Mary Beth Primo, Deputy County Executive Physical Services; Ted Fox, Director of Rosamond Gifford Zoo; Archie Wixson, Facilities Commissioner; David Bottar, Executive Director of the CNY Regional Planning & Development Board; Isabelle Harris, Director of Strategic Initiatives



- Like the county’s zoo, the Onondaga County Aquarium will be committed to education, conservation and scientific research
- The aquarium will benefit from existing partnerships Onondaga County has with local, regional and other academic institutions
- Advisory Committee for Science, Environment & Education

“ Central New York has a unique story to tell when it comes to our investments in bringing back Onondaga Lake....the aquarium presents the perfect opportunity to not only share that story, but also provide an educational experience that many communities envy”

Le Moyne College President, Linda Le Mura

- Accreditation will open it to foundation and donor money
- County Executive convened advisory committee: invited representatives from higher education institutions and local schools, engineer that worked on the lake cleanup, the MOST, Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Office of Environment, WEP, Onondaga Nation and Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI, Edward Michalenko)
- First meeting scheduled next week; did not want to start earlier if aquarium was not going to be put up for a vote
- Feasibility study talks about importance of conservation work, science and research
- Zoo being contacted by universities, colleges and schools interested in being part of research and having fresh water courses; Cornell, ESF and SU – have programs they would like to enhance

College and Community Collaborations

Collaborators include:

- Baylor University
- Cornell University
- Hunter College
- Jefferson Community College (JCC)
- Le Moyne College
- Morrisville State College
- Onondaga Community College (OCC)
- SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF)
- SUNY Oswego
- Syracuse University
- University of Vermont

Since the Rosamond Gifford Zoo was first accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) in 1987, we have acknowledged the impact our collegial partnerships have on our shared missions, conservation programs and research.

The information developed and shared through these partnerships enhances the educational experiences of our visitors as well as our communities.

Education Partnerships

- **Collaborated with Syracuse Stage** to offer free outdoor performances of a children’s play. Prior to the shows, the zoo set up a scavenger hunt challenging guests to look for the zoo animals that corresponded to characters in the play.
- **Worked with the Redhouse Arts Center** to set up an outdoor classroom and performance space at the Northwestern Mutual Amphitheatre for their nine-week theatre arts summer camp for ages 6-10.
- **Partnered with SUNY-ESF** to become a WorkStudy site for their students, enabling us to hire three ESF students for the summer season.
- **Worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension** to offer two 4-H Youth Leadership seminars at the zoo.
- **Partnered with ACR Health’s Q Center** to add LGBTQ sensitivity training to our Summer Zoo Camp counselor training.
- **Worked with a summer STEAM In Service program at Grant Middle School** in Syracuse to bring a group of 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students to the zoo to learn about animal enrichment.
- **Partnered with high school tech students in the Syracuse City Schools P-Tech program** to create a display for our Holiday Nights program
- **All first and second graders from the SCSD** come to the zoo for an educational program and field trip
- **A new Community Engagement Committee** was formed and lead by Friends board member Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter, to engage with organizations and community members of all ages and abilities to get them involved with their zoo.

Education and Community- In Person Education

- **Spring Break Zoo Camp**
- **Edventure Academy ages 3-10**
- **Wild Beginnings ages 1-3**
 - **Zoo Safari**
 - **Summer Camp**
- **47 sessions (710 registrants)**
- **Zoo to You – all 32 Onondaga County Libraries receive an in-person nationally themed Summer Reading program**
 - **Zoo Guides**
- **Train and employ 15-20 inner-city high school teens**

Design & Construction Process

- **Onondaga County issues Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposal for Architectural and Engineering services**
- **Onondaga County goes through RFP review process, then awards the contract**
- **After conceptual and schematic design is completed, value engineering is performed if needed**
- **Design development continues through complete construction documents & specifications**
- **Project is bid, construction contract awarded**
- **Construction administration and project management continues through completion.**

Creation of a Reserve Account for Capital Improvements and Major Repairs

- Aquarium Revenues
 - Proposed budget has a line item for capital reserves \$328K per year
- Naming Right Proceeds
 - Anticipate receiving same or more NR revenue than we receive for the sale of the amp NR
 - Visibility is superior for these reasons; location not as remote; open year-round; and yearly attendance will be far greater than amp attendance
 - Plan; 25% of proceeds will be set aside for aquarium capital reserve fund and 75% of proceeds will be used to support K-8 grade attendance and educational programs
- Foundation & Sponsor Support
- Sales Tax/ROT
 - Aquarium is proposed to generate over \$750K in sales/ROT yearly. Just as the county does with the amp, CE proposes putting aside \$250K per year of these increased sales tax for the aquarium capital reserve fund
- Oneida Nation Gaming Exclusivity Payments
 - Currently use Oneida payments to pay amp yearly debt with balance deposited into a aquarium reserve fund. This reserve fund has a balance of approximately \$5M. In the last couple of years Oneida payment has greatly exceeded the debt payment. The plan is taken yearly surplus after debt payment is made and dedicate $\frac{3}{4}$ to the aquarium and $\frac{1}{4}$ to the amp

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- County will build and maintain the aquarium using a reserve fund consisting of:
 - Revenue from the aquarium – capital reserves of \$328,000
 - Naming rights – assuming \$300,000/year – 25% to capital at \$75,000
 - Foundation and donor support
 - Sales tax – based on projected earnings, will be ~\$250,000
 - Oneida Nation – reserve fund balance for amphitheater debt is \$6.3M; last year had \$1M left over; projecting this year to have \$900,000 left over after paying amphitheater debt; split surplus and dedicate 75% to capital reserve
 - TOTAL: \$1.4M for reserve on annual basis; not looking at net operating income proposed to earn

Why Have Confidence in Attendance Estimates?

- **Feasibility Study**
- **Prices of Other Popular Attractions**
- **Rosamond Gifford Zoo Attendance**
- **Attendance at Other Aquarium**
- **Third Party Expert**

Foundational/Private Support

“This (*aquarium*) is certainly the kind of worthwhile project that banks, businesses, and non-profit foundations will be eager to support.”

Allen J. Naples, Senior Vice President/Commercial Executive with Community Bank NA, former Central New York Regional President of M&T Bank

Operational Structure

- Currently there are over 30 accredited facilities within AZA that have a Public-Private operational agreements. Many are between a public facility owner and either a not-for-profit or a for-profit operator.
- A public private operational model helps to maximize the benefits to both entities and to the visiting public.
- Typically, the public entity is the owner of the facility and responsible for major capital improvements.
- The non-public partner is focused on the aquarium's management and all operations.
- Advancement of mission-based educational, research, conservation and philanthropic endeavors as well as cultivating important funding sources such as foundations and private donors, sponsorships, public grants and special events will be the responsibility of the non-profit or a partner organization.

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- Ticket pricing: \$21.95/adult; \$9.95/student
- Design and construction number is \$85,434,751; with increased costs and inflation, is the number still realistic?
 - Do not see 15-20% increase in the number, see acceleration from year lost from time estimates came in; will have this year consumer cost index, and whatever market volatility will see moving forward
 - \$85M is based on 80,000 sq. ft. facility, ~\$1,000/sq. ft.
 - i.e.: 2021 Facilities finished Zoo Animal Health Clinic (20,000 sq. ft.) – started and finished project at \$7M; technology and equipment at \$1M; total of \$8M facility, which is under \$400/sq. ft.
 - Projected aquarium at \$1,000/sq. ft.; not total comparison because of unique exhibits driving prices up, but priced out that way; acceleration next year at 4-6%
 - Commercial industrial institutional market different than residential; spring 2020 to 2021 saw 16% increase; following year had 8% increase; public works labor tied to established prevailing rate (locked in for 2-3 years)
 - CPI at 8% or 9% growth; if it will be another \$8-10M, should be understood and communicated to taxpayers
 - Facilities tasked with bringing in aquarium at \$85M, same as other large projects
- Will there be a project labor agreement in the RFP? RFP is never tied to project labor agreement; construction/design will fall under Wicks Law project that will take special state legislative action; have not sought that action to date
- Reserve account – part based on 1,340 visitors per day (490,000 annually)
- Amphitheater agreement with Oneidas specific to that; Legislature will have to take action to put the money towards aquarium and divert money from amphitheater
- 350,000 visitors at zoo/year; confident will exceed at aquarium, because:
 - Zoo has competition all within an hour or two, including even the Chittenango Animal Park
 - Brand new high tech facility; very energetic setting; zoo in different setting and over 50 years old
 - Seasonality of aquarium being enclosed
- Operational structure - aquarium workers will not be CSEA; county will not be running it, hiring or training staff, handling animals, running the gift shop or event space, etc.; all of that will be the responsibility of the operator
- Chattanooga – appreciate comparisons, but estimation not apples to apples; Chattanooga aquarium mostly privately funded; government did not spend more money to do that; why not get private companies and investors?
 - Chattanooga showing how to develop an undeveloped area and help drive economic development
 - County Executive has said the aquarium makes good investment and opportunity
 - North Carolina aquarium was completely state funded; Tacoma aquarium part of zoo, which was also state funded; Onondaga County is not seeking state funding; cannot find another example of a county funded aquarium

- Advisory Committee:
 - Not created 6 months ago, as the Legislature was not near a vote on project
 - Will inform designers about fresh water exhibits, science and educational research
 - There will be salt water portion as it draws in people
- Aquarium will be both salt water and fresh water exhibits
- Annual maintenance costs – responsibility of operator; line item in budget for \$400,000
- \$40M given to Rochester from state for aquarium project; \$121M total investment by county and state; see value in investment in zoo and aquarium; multistage project, and last stage will be 220,000 gal aquarium
- Rochester project is 1/3 size of Onondaga County proposal; if county has aquarium, Rochester may not build theirs
- County is not getting money from state for aquarium – big project in Clay that will get help from state
- Timeline for aquarium: going to have at least 10 – 13 month design phase; 1.5 years for construction
- What does city of Syracuse say concerning public safety, and have they offered an opinion on the aquarium?
 - Phone call with mayor, Legislator Garland and Legislator Ervin, mayor and deputy voiced approval of project
 - Public safety – have not talked with city; destiny has had issues recently; across from Hiawatha are the Aloft hotel, Myers Creek Brewing, and other businesses and residential areas, have not heard of major crime issues there
 - Expect this aquarium will spur development; more people means the area will be safer
- County project, but do not understand why county is putting all money out, when it will benefit city of Syracuse
- Aquarium needs to go to public; if public wants facility, vote would be easier; why not take to public?
 - County Executive has had conversations with public including civic groups, business groups, schools, seniors
 - County Executive has answered multiple emails on project in regard to criticism or questions
 - Did a Tele-Town Hall
 - 7th time Executive team has come to legislature
- Amphitheater had town hall meetings where people could ask questions with presentation; there has not been a public arena with this project; Tele-Town Hall had constituents with questions, but they never received answers on the call
- Legal opinion - no mechanism in NYS constitution to put something like this to public vote; no legal way to do that
- Aquarium feasibility study says it does not include land, parking, environmental testing, or remediation within the \$85; also says in beginning that it does not include or consider changes in economic situation (i.e. major recession)
- Number is current; feasibility done in October 2021, after county suffered worst of market volatility; public sector labor has not risen much – will look for increases when contract is up
- Construction and material costs coming down with construction supply more consistent; missing overseas acquisitions
- If approved, the Legislature will be involved in land acquisition, SEQRA, etc.; have not finalized terms of contract; will be bringing back to legislative body to vet, consider and approve
- County has some control with RFP and management company

The meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

DATE: **JULY 26, 2022**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
WILLIAM TOWSE	IBEW 43
Pat Harrington	IBEW 43
Brian Sturges	IBEW 43
Nick Butchko	IBEW - 43
Ted Jyl	PARKS - ZOO
Tamara Singer	Parks - 200
Seth Griesbeck	Parks - 200
Marie Simmons	Friends of the Zoo
Gabe Rosetti	Laborers # 633
Karl Button	IUOE 158
Mitch Latimer	Carpenters
Don Smith	IUOE 158
BT Mills	Parks
Leann Kiggins	Parks
Rob. Angelito	Parks
Mark Nicotra	PARKS
D. Botton	AMY PPARS
Matt Nesbitt	FW Local 60
MBP	CE
IMH	CE
Nate Stevens	OC Econ Dev
Lynn Duff	On Co ED

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

DATE: JULY 26, 2022

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Nancy Lowery	OCEID
Rebecca Shiroff	OCEID
Alexis Rodriguez	Economic Development
J. Anneller	O.C.
Maria Maher	O.C.
DAN VADALA	CSEA
Kim Hall	Parks
Dale Grifolds	Parks
ERIC SOPCHAK	PARKS
Kate Treher	Law
James Mason	
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Ann Rooney	CE
Marty Jedd	Community Development
Josh Schick	CSEA
KRISTI SMITH	Fin Op
IDA STEWART	SAVE THE 16 TH
Emma Murphy	WAER
Jacqueline LaSalle	Save the 16 th
Mr Pierce EL	Save the 16 th
Ms Charlene Terven	Women's Bus. Dev.
Elise Baker	

July 22, 2022 Ways & Means Committee Meeting

Minutes Additions

Community Development - Item 2.a

Legislator Kinne:

- Why aren't we spending even more money on this?
- Aging community that wants ranch homes and there is a lack of ranch homes. What is your focus down the road?

Mr. Skahen:

- These funds are our starting point. If it takes off like wildfire we can have discussions about doing more.
- This is something we're putting out to developers. We are hopeful a number of them will be senior housing. We want people to be able to age in a home instead of in a facility. Hopefully, developers will want to do senior housing and we will consider their applications.

Leader Ryan:

- What we're considering is \$10 million out of appropriated fund balance to help subsidize housing initiatives, correct?

Mr. Skahen:

- Yes, it subsidizes components of housing being built

Leader Ryan:

- It could be \$5,000 per home built, correct?

Mr. Skahen:

- Yes

Leader Ryan:

- Is there any consideration given to a home builder who uses 100% local labor?
- Any apprenticeship language built in?

Mr. Skahen:

- I can look into if we can do that

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Item 2.b

Leader Ryan:

- We have \$2.9 Million in excess ROT with \$1.5 Million coming out which leaves \$1.4 Million correct

Mr. Petrovich:

- Correct. Steve Morgan can speak more details but I think those numbers are generally correct.

Chairman May:

- Steve Morgan gave me a nod. Generally correct.

Leader Ryan:

- Looking forward to spending more ROT this year on those who initiate ROT, those who put heads in beds, and using those excess ROT funds before we have to carry them over to next year at budget time.

Legislator Kinne:

- There's a headline on Syracuse.com about the parking garage across the street from the Marriott owing the city over \$800,000 in back taxes. They obviously need help but that's a big nugget. Are we going to try to help them?

Mr. Petrovich:

- I can't speak to that. I am not aware of that.

Legislator Kuhn:

- If the hotel industry is struggling, why do we have a lot of excess ROT and room occupancy?

Chairman May:

- During the Pandemic, we couldn't spend ROT on our venues because there was nothing available for us to spend it on.

Mr. Morgan:

- That is part of it but we also increased the ROT tax from 5% to 7% which is generating more ROT revenue.

Leader Ryan:

- I hope that every effort would be made for example when a facility wants to put in a banquet room that we use local contractors who are based in Onondaga County and train the next generation of our workforce with county dollars.

Mr. Petrovich:

- Point noted

Finance - Item 2.c

Ms. Chase:

- Just wants to remind everyone that the fund balance has been accumulated over a very difficult few years when things could have been taken care of better than they were.
- I was consistently reminded that this was a rainy day fund
- Even though it was raining no one wanted to dip into it
- We are the stewards of the money for our constituents. We can't just leave it in a savings account just because that's what we do.
- Money should be used for the good of our constituents

Leader May:

- I suppose we all agree with that. Thank you

Mr. Morgan:

- Certainly and I think you're seeing that.
- This Legislature approved payments to seniors
- You just heard over an hour of discussion about proposed plans
- We can do these things and still run the government. It's not a "this or that" type of scenario

Aquarium - Item 2.d

Mr. Ryan:

- Does the \$85 Million seem realistic or do you see a possible 15-20% increase on that number?

Mr. Wixon:

- No
- I see an acceleration from the year that we lost
- You can look at the cost of the zoo's animal health center for related data on costs