



# Onondaga County Legislature

**JAMIE McNAMARA**  
Clerk

**TIMOTHY T. BURTIS**  
Chairman

**TAMMY BARBER**  
Deputy Clerk

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## **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 12, 2024** **COLLEEN A. GUNNIP, CHAIR**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Abbott, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Garland**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. May**

**ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Ms. Cody, Mr. Olson, Mr. Brown; also see attached**

Chair Gunnip called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

### **1. PERSONNEL: Carl Hummel, Commissioner**

#### **a. Personnel Resolution**

- Adding more titles to the HELP program
  - After legislative approval, they will be submitted to the NYS Civil Service Commission for inclusion in the program
  - Can then hire into the positions in a noncompetitive basis
  - After 1 years' time, employee can convert to competitive status, so they do not have to take a test
- This will address recruitment issues, as well as the backlog of exams not being offered by the state

#### **Questions/Comments from the committee:**

- Please clarify if the 1 year is from the time when the position is created
  - 2 Phases to the program
    - Initial phase began in 2023
      - The 1 year time started when titles were approved by the Commission and submitted to the Dept. of State
      - Someone hired the day of approval would have 1 year; someone hired 4 months after would have 8 months
    - State expanded and extended program this year
      - The 1 year time would be based on when someone was hired in this year
  - Expecting the state to extend HELP into 2025, as there is a backlog of resolutions the state needs to get to
  - Resolutions Personnel sent at beginning of June have not yet been seen by the Commission
  - Hired to date with titles the county has will fall in one year
  - If there is an end date, that would be the new cutoff (could be one year or shorter)
  - Waiting on information from the state
- Do the duplicate positions go away, and is someone automatically put into the other position?
  - Yes, automatically converted into the existing position after the time served
  - Funding follows the person
  - Do not delete the HELP titles until everyone is out
- Is the county able to use the HELP positions again?
  - Program requires titles be deleted from appendices – local Civil Service rules on appendices
  - Would come back to the Legislature with new resolution to delete titles as not needed, or at program end
- Can the county hire more than 1 person under a title, if the previous person is no longer with the county or transferred?
  - Personnel can reuse the titles as long as they still exist

- Are there more civil services tests being offered?
  - Better than 2 years ago, but nowhere near what it was pre-COVID
- Does Personnel think there may be consideration (by the state) on revamping the system completely?
  - Not sure if a complete revamp is on the table, but there will be changes
  - State is still doing research - changes are coming, they are working on them now, but do not know what they are

***A motion was made by Mr. Knapp to approve this item.***

- To date, there have been 183 hires under the program
- This is only from the first round of titles approved last year in Human Services areas
- Positions approved in May, submitted in June (when approved by Commission) should increase the number

**REQUEST: A list of all hires made through the HELP program.**

- It would be good to have a list as during budget there are conversations about vacancies, and this program has helped
  - Yes it has, and part of the program is dealing with vacancies
  - Other part is to resolve the provisional appointments because exams were not coming out
  - This is most of what Personnel is trying to do with this round of titles
  - Lot of people sitting in provisional titles for months or years
  - Cannot resolve these provisional appointments without the tests, which is the point of the program
  - Resolve appointments that existed before HELP program even started
  - Will send over information to clarify
- Another issue with promoting from within into provisional (if they do not work out), is that person has bump back rights, which then makes a mess with others being bumped back as well
  - Yes, called Contingent Permanent appointments
  - Departments tent to avoid them as they can be problematic
  - The “second promotion” (one behind initial promotion) employee is informed it is a Contingent Permanent appt.
    - Sometimes they do not accept it
    - No one wants to take a promotion to get bumped back through no fault of their own
  - Quite often the positions are left vacant
- Leadership should check the dates to make sure the person is working out or not
  - Civil Service Technicians, department liaisons, work closely with departments to keep them apprised of schedule
- Because the county is not using civil service results for hiring, is there any DEI metrics for hiring women, minorities, new Americans?
  - Those going for HELP positions still have to complete an application and meet minimum qualifications for job
  - Still tracking data – where it is offered, and statistics on minority hiring for both the 101 and 103 lines

***Ms. Abbott seconded the motion. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**2. FINANCE:** Steve Morgan, Chief Fiscal Officer

**a. A Resolution Authorizing the Issuance Pursuant to Section 90.10 of the Local Finance Law of Refunding Bonds of the County of Onondaga, New York, to be Designated Substantially “Public Improvement Refunding (Serial) Bonds”, and Providing for Other Matters in Relation Thereto and the Payment of the Bonds to be Refunded Thereby**

- Potentially refund all or portion of 2015 GO (General Obligation) issuance
- As market continues to improve, and hopefully will improve over next 4-6 weeks, believe there is opportunity to refund portion of 15 outstanding bonds, or all of them
- Resolution allows county to issue bonds at lower rate, pay off existing bonds at higher rate, and spin up annual savings related to the transaction

- Based on analysis, there would be a net savings of almost \$1M to spread out over remaining life of new bonds
- Would help offset annual debt service going forward
- Not huge savings, but meets mark to consider doing this and moving forward
- New issuance in October, so hope will have better idea of where market is and have final plan of refunding bonds
- Hopefully there will be more savings with feds possibly reducing rate at next meeting

#### **Questions/Comments from the committee:**

- Will Finance have to come back to Legislature in October?
  - No, this allows Finance to move forward with refunding if metrics hold
  - If market deteriorates and savings are not there, will not go through with it
    - Only happened once with market souring, so the county pulled it back
- Over the years, Mr. Morgan has done effective job keeping an eye on market and saving the county money
  - Have not done recently with market, but have benefited on investment side
  - Majority of bonds issued in 2015 was for the amphitheater
  - Potential as refund bonds, the ultimate true cost of amphitheater could be less than what was originally in place
  - County has underwriters trolling all municipal issuers to see if there is refunding opportunities
  - When the rate environment is conducive to it, will get emails from underwriters about opportunities
  - County will then work with fiscal advisors who believe there is an opportunity, go through competitive process and hire an underwriter; there are guiderails (not one person determining what is best)
- \$1M savings is significant; rate environment in some opinions is going to get better
- Please talk about the county's credit rating and grade
  - Currently county is Aa2 rating with Moody's – top tier of rated counties in state
  - Aa rating with SMP – puts in middle/upper tier
  - Will get ratings reevaluated soon – week after next will have rating calls for new issuance; will use those ratings for refunding
  - Ratings are strong; Moody's upgraded county couple years ago; ratings have been affirmed and stable since
  - These ratings are forward looking – hope this round will get outlook change (same rating but positive outlook)
    - Outlooks indicate what they believe the rating will be in next 12 -18 months
    - If stable, rating will stay the same in that term
    - Negative – potential rating will go down
    - Positive – potential rating will move positively in that term
  - Ratings are strong and allows county to go to market to issue bonds at competitive rates to fund county's infrastructure improvements, which will only continue to increase
- Will refinancing the bonds refinance the term as well?
  - Yes, term will go out to 2045 based on schedule; 20 years
- What does Aa2 equate to?
  - Aa1 is gold standard
- When the county goes to market with that rating, what are the savings?
  - Depends on gap in ratings; talking about (i.e.) Aa3 or lower rating vs. Aa2 or Aa1, could be 50-100 basis points
  - Depends on size of issuance, what the projects are, etc.
  - The stronger the rating, the more competitive the rates will be
  - When financial house is in order with outlook future growth, potential for growth, and community growth with financial stability, that plays a lot into the ratings; allows county to hit market with competitive rate
  - Before pandemic, commonly getting rates below 2% (nearly free)
  - Previous County Executive did lot of investments in infrastructure
  - Continue to do that, but now costs more money; on flipside, the county is earning more on investments
  - Overall concept is higher rating, better bond package

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

- 3. **LAW:** Ben Yaus, First Chief Deputy County Attorney
  - a. **Settlement of Action: ESTATE OF ANGELA P. PENG V. COUNTY OF ONONDAGA, ET AL (NDNY)**

Mr. Yaus stated, “Legislators, the resolution you are to consider concerns litigation pending in the northern district of New York entitled, ESTATE OF ANGELA P. PENG V. COUNTY OF ONONDAGA, and I would therefore recommend such be discussed in Executive Session.”

*A motion was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the Estate of Angela P. Peng. V. County of Onondaga. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

*A motion was made by Ms. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Knapp, to exit Executive Session. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

Chair Gunnip stated for the record that no motions or actions were taken during Executive Session.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 12, 2024**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Melissa Colombo	Fin Ops
Ben Yaus	Law
John Sickinger	all
Steve Morgan	Fin.
Brian Donnelly	CE
Tim Beebe	leg
Darcie Hestriak	leg