



Onondaga County Legislature

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE 2020 TENTATIVE BUDGET ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE DEPARTMENTS - SEPTEMBER 20, 2019 DEBRA J. CODY, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Rowley, Mrs. Ervin, Ms. Williams Mr. May, Mr. Ryan

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Jordan

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Knapp, Mr. Holmquist, Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, Mrs. Tassone, Dr. Chase, Mr. McBride, Mr. Bush; also see attached list

Chair Cody called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m. She pointed out the room exits, asked everyone in attendance to sign in, and for speakers to use their microphones.

DEPARTMENT OF WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION, pg. 5-14: Frank Mento, .P.E., Commissioner; Michael Lannon, P.E., Deputy Commissioner; Andy Ohstrom, Administrative Director; Shannon Harty, Deputy Commissioner; Lisa Consiglio, Fiscal Officer

Mr. Mento:

- Introduced himself and the leadership team at the table, a committed and competent team; blessed to work alongside them
- Critical things heading into next year:
 1. ACJ entering the next and most likely final phase, a Long Term Control Plan (LTCP)
 2. Existing conveyance and treatment assets need upgrades and renewal, driven by federal and state regulators and mandates
 3. Moving toward consolidation of sanitary assets under WEP's umbrella; those 3 points set the foundation for this budget
- The projected unit increase is \$.82 per month, about \$10 per year; need that increase, very important, put to use by:
 1. Supporting the debt service of critical CIP
 2. Support increase in operational expenses, i.e. chemicals, energy, fuel, parts, fleet, and labor and benefits; important to keep pace with rising costs
 3. Most importantly, reducing the amount of fund balance needed for our overall budget; 2014 fund balance in the neighborhood of \$40 to \$42 million, excessive, since then trending down year by year, now at \$20 million, where we need to be due to risks associated with our business that are unpredictable, unknown, and highly weather dependent; in more prudent position today and ready to go forward
- Some legislators recently toured the Metro plant, got to absorb the scale and magnitude of the above-ground physical assets, below ground is another whole city of assets that have to be maintained and upgraded; assets work 24 hours a day, much wear and tear; have to be on top of our game, monitor these things and work through repairs and conditions, must plan and resource appropriately
- 380+ employees at WEP, each contributes in their role and does a great job, proud of the work they do; important end result, able to balance exceptional Public Health with good stewardship of the environment
- All in this together, appreciate the continued partnership with our needs and desires so that we can deliver on our mission; will take any questions

Chair Cody:

- Thank you; toured plant last year, an impressive operation
- What is the estimated amount of fund balance to be used this year?

Mr. Mento:

- Around \$6.9 million to close 2019; 2020 will be \$4 million

Mr. Rowley:

- Using all that was budgeted?

Mr. Mento:

- 3rd quarter numbers are tracking right on, hard to say if we will use it all; do our best to come in with a balanced year-end budget; hope not to use all \$6.9 million

Mr. Rowley:

- Are all requested new positions funded in this budget; describe the need

Mr. Mento:

- Yes; 5 new positions proposed, no increase in headcount, unfunded 5 other positions, realigned roster based upon our strategies moving forward; have been seeking key position for 3 years - Instrumentation/ Electrical Engineer, critical need, 1 person fills this role, need backup and support given our capital plans moving forward, that piece of instrumentation, SCADA, and electrical work is critical to monitor our program assets

Mr. Ohstrom:

- Principal Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator: 2 requested, 1 would be assigned to the Brewerton plant, currently don't have a head operator; these titles take a long time to develop through requirements, time, and experience; the other would be assigned to the Metro biosolids project, \$15 million project, becomes its own facility; that investment will save us money on disposal cost
- Sewer Maintenance Superintendent: currently 1 person oversees 90 employees, with turnover, new employees, and emphasis on increased maintenance to infrastructure will be broken into 2 different supervisors
- Project Coordinator: would be assigned to supporting consolidation, a lot of administrative, legal, and financial work associated with that, would begin immediately

Mr. Rowley:

- Describe where we are in the process of the county executive's initiative to consolidate sewers and how it might unfold going forward from your perspective

Mr. Mento:

- In the infancy stage; before doing any work on locally owned assets we need to find a vehicle for ownership, worked with outside counsel for the last several months to develop that legal instrument, now 99% ready to begin discussions; this winter anticipate knocking on municipality doors, particularly in the Meadowbrook-Limestone area which is the most critical in terms of infiltration and inflow, once signed will be able to facilitate work

Mr. Rowley:

- Any kind of agreement would have to come before the legislature?

Mr. Mento:

- When leases are signed we will be back to talk about the consolidation effort; don't want to begin that process until we have an endorsement

Mr. Rowley:

- Want to be able to weigh in, as a legislator, as to whether or not it is a good deal

Mr. Mento:

- Understand

Mr. May:

- 2019 Automotive Equipment (**A671500**) budget was modified and increased; has everything been purchased for this year?

Mr. Ohstrom:

- Yes; waiting for 2 vehicles to come in

Mr. May:

- Maint, Utilities, Rents (**A694130**), walk us through forecast energy usage and things of that nature

Mr. Mento:

- Big factor in our budget, maintenance, energy, and fuel costs are rising, need to be ready to deploy resources, can't afford any downtime, think we can work with what's in the budget for 2020; chemicals are a bit questionable, part of the plant was offline a few years ago, trend may have been a slight nominally, taking steps to ensure we have everything we need

Mr. May:

- **Funding adjustments (pg. 5-16) also lists emergency repairs for pump stations coming out of that line; how much is devoted to repairs?**

Mr. Mento:

- Will get back with a more definitive figure; emergency repairs by nature are things that we cannot control

Mr. May:

- Would be good to get a sense for what part of this is energy and what part is maintenance and repairs

Mr. Mento:

- Will provide a breakdown

Mr. May:

- In terms of a long term maintenance plan, where is the DEC and where are we in terms of the ACJ?

Mr. Mento:

- In the final stage, the last phase of the ACJ involves our preparation of a LTCP, which has to be approved by DEC - a continuation of projects for a few more years, specifically focused on water quality, to try and work that water quality perimeter to a reasonable level
- LTCP will become a variance application, will someday be able to use this application and work being done to support a variance on water quality; investments going forward will be less but more focused

Mr. May:

- When do you think the plan will be in place?

Ms. Primo:

- Bringing LTCP to October committees; have an agreement with ASLF

Mr. May:

- What is in the Provision for Capital Projects (**A674600**) account?

Mr. Lannon:

- Cash capital account, used for a variety of different things; smaller-scale capital projects \$100,000 to \$200,000 where cash is used instead of bonding

Mr. May:

- Perfect; thank you

Mr. Rowley:

- Not long ago there was an issue with municipalities and the work you do for them under contract; rates were substantially higher than municipalities anticipated, there was a lot of discussion and the rates were rescinded; where we are in terms of doing repair work for municipalities, the development of the rates and trying to ensure that type of issue doesn't come up again without input from municipalities?

Mr. Mento:

- Good question, not familiar with what was done in past years; taking a hard look at the rate structure and timing now so that we are able to bill and collect more effectively, in the 8 months he has been here, for the most part, we sometimes don't charge enough for our services; trying to work with them to provide the service slightly above costs, especially as we go forward with consolidation

Mr. Rowley:

- **When was the last increase to those rates? (*see pg. 6 for further details)**

Mr. Mento:

- Will find out

Mr. Rowley:

- How much revenue is generated from that type of work?

Mr. Mento:

- If memory serves, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1.5 to \$2 million per year

Mr. Rowley:

- Is that revenue all in Svcs Other Govts – Home & Comm Svcs (**A590048**)?

Ms. Consiglio:

- Actually under Sewage Treatment T & V, which is account 1671

Mr. Rowley:

- That is not in the County Executive 2020 budget book

Mr. Rowley:

- Massive operation with huge assets; do you plan for a catastrophic failure, go through scenarios or do anything to mitigate risks, any specialized insurance in place to guard against something like that?

Mr. Mento:

- Something we are looking at and all are thinking about; working on an asset management strategy that will tip us off to those kinds of things; if we have a catalog and structure as to how our assets are doing we are better able to respond rather than react

Mr. Morgan:

- No special insurance; regular property insurance is in place

Chair Cody:

- Does the Transfer to Grant Expend (**A668720**) go to Save the Rain education?

Ms. Consiglio:

- Yes

Mr. Mento:

- Save the Rain is part of the ACJ, reported on quarterly, and still involved in our projects, especially green infrastructure projects and stormwater capture, will continue to be important until we closeout the ACJ; moving forward don't think we will ever lose the opportunity to put forth green projects where they make sense

Chairman Knapp:

- Clean Water Fair was a lot of fun, very informative and well attended, happy to see the number of legislators present; how much is in the budget for Save the Rain projects this year?

Ms. Consiglio:

- \$225,000

Chairman Knapp:

- Back in the spring, some significant projects were passed, sludge thickener and dryer, also a new digester; provide an update of where we are at

Mr. Lannon:

- Wrapped up the Metro Digester Phase II Improvement project, expect bids in 4 weeks, construction will start in 4 to 5 months from there

Chairman Knapp:

- Pretty much a replacement for all intense and purposes?

Mr. Lannon:

- It is asset renewal; replacing some sludge heat exchangers in the digester control house, converting floating cover of digester number 4, a gas holder, to a permanent cover and installing 2 gas bubbles on the ground

- Biosolids dryer in the design consultant procurement process, expect design to kick off later this year or early next year, construction to follow 14 to 16 months after
- Metro thickener project is the replacement of some mechanicals for the 3 thickener tanks, at 95% design, expect to send for DEC approval within the next 6 weeks
- Brewerton asset renewal project is under award to construction contractors, should kickoff within the next month or so

Chairman Knapp:

- We are making electricity with the methane captured

Mr. Lannon:

- Currently have a 350-kilowatt cogeneration unit, installing 2 additional units to produce electricity as well; gas bubbles will provide storage to feed the cogeneration units

Chairman Knapp:

- Do we use that energy or sell it?

Mr. Lannon:

- Won't generate enough to sell, definitely beneficial, provides cost savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions; will save electricity at Metro

Chairman Knapp:

- Have sludge disposal costs stabilized?

Mr. Lannon:

- It has - went from \$50 to \$87 per wet ton; 5-year contract effective Jan. 1, 2019, a real challenge as landfills are limited on the amount of material they can take

Chairman Knapp:

- Where does it go?

Mr. Lannon:

- Ontario Landfill

Mr. Holmquist:

- Thank you for everything you've done and are going to do, by most accounts this is one of, if not the biggest, issue facing local government in the next decade-plus and the Town of Manlius, Village of Fayetteville and Village of Manlius appreciate everything involved - county consolidating this is outstanding
- The plan is to replace and repair the worst areas first; any estimate as to the process and potential expectations going forward as far as improvement benchmarks and things like that?

Mr. Mento:

- Starting in Meadowbrook-Limestone, 1 of 6 service areas, a 20 year program, suspect as legal instruments are signed we will move forward next spring with work to remove I&I, mostly slip lining pipes, manholes, and looking at surrounding structures, repair if needed while there, progress will be measured at the treatment plant, suspect meaningful reductions within 2 to 3 years, that same methodology will then apply to other service areas as we seek to get to the root cause of this problem, not at the treatment plants but at the pipes, pumps, and I&I areas

Mr. Bush:

- Thank you for the tour of the facility, amazing and an education, until seen in operation you have no concept of what is going on, appreciate that opportunity; hope you continue to reach out to the 5 villages that still have treatment plants to work with them and provide technical assistance to an important part of our county

Mr. Mento:

- Very good; thank you

*Mr. Morgan:

- In reference to Mr. Rowley’s question regarding rates, a local law was passed November 2017, effective January 1, 2018, with a new rate schedule; there was some consternation, not sure if all have been implemented.

Mr. Rowley:

- Thanks for reminding me

Chair Cody thanked Mr. Mento and adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m. until 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



KATHERINE M. FRENCH, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: 2020 BUDGET REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE DEPARTMENTS

DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

NAME	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
PLEASE PRINT	
Michael Lannon	WEP
Lisa Consiglio	WEP
A. Karpinski	SM
FRANK MENTO	OE/WEP
SHANAWSON HARTY	WEP
ARROW KOLLER	DMB
Carl Hummel	Personnel

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DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

NAME	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
PLEASE PRINT	
Andy Ostrom	WEP
Mark Matt	
Jim Maturo	Comptroller
Yvette Velasco	LAW