

Law and Finance Budget Hearing
November 14, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Thompson; Supervisors Daly, Grattidge, Peck, Sausville, Veitch, Wormuth, Richardson, Wright, Jenkins, Raymond, Southworth, Collyer, M. Johnson, Rowland, Wood, Barrett and Kinowski; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator; Sandi Cross, Office for the Aging; Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Diane Brown, Maplewood Manor; William Schwerd, Cornell Cooperative Ext.; Chris Aldrich, Joanne Bosley, Real Property; Brian O’Conor, Auditor; LoAnn Sanders, Deputy County Clerk; George Martin, D’Arcy Plummer, Treasurer; Karin Levison, Public Health; Jason Kemper, Planning; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Paul Lent, Emergency Services; Denny Finneran, Donna Dardaris, League of Women Voters; Press.

Chairman Thompson called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Mr. Hellwig read the Rule for approving the amendments to the 2012 budget as follows:

1. The Budget Committee will review all requests for budget amendments during the hearings, and will not vote on those amendments until all presentations have been made.
2. Each member of the Law and Finance Committee and the Chairman of the Board shall have one vote. For an amendment to the budget to be approved, it must receive the affirmative vote of at least four committee members and win a majority of the members voting. Members may not cast a vote unless they were present for the discussion or have reviewed a transcript of the proceedings. If a member was present for the discussion but is unable to stay for the actual vote, he or she may leave a sealed vote to be cast by the Chairman.
3. The Tentative budget, along with the amendments approved at the Law and Finance hearing(s), will be presented to the full Board of Supervisors at the Friday Workshop meeting on November 18th at 3:00 p.m. Any changes to that document will require action by a majority of the weighted vote of the entire Board. (109,804 votes).
4. The 2012 Tentative Budget, as amended at the Friday Workshop and the Law and Finance Hearings, will be presented to the public at a public hearing on December 1st at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room.

Mr. Hellwig stated that he would like to make a few comments with regard to the tentative budget as it currently stands. He said he would be providing a more detailed overview of the \$26 million increase from the 2011 adopted budget to the 2012 tentative budget since it seems to be a troubling aspect of the tentative budget for some who have voiced their concerns without factoring in all of the data before reaching a conclusion.

This total represents a gross amount, meaning that the actual cost also has to factor in any additional revenues before reaching the true costs of the increase. This increase in expenses has offsetting revenues that reduce the gross increase of \$26 million to a net general fund cost of \$13 million. This \$13 million is made up primarily of the following costs:

- \$4 million increase to cover a mandated rate increase from the NYS Retirement System
- 3.7 million increase in the operating subsidy for Maplewood Manor
- \$2.2 million project costs to pending litigation with the Hudson River/Black River Regulating District if the Court rules against the Counties named in the lawsuit
- \$1.8 million increase in the health insurance premium based on the projected rate increase of 7% for benefits that are currently tied to a collective bargaining agreement that won't expire until the end of 2012
- \$800,000 for final contract with CSEA which represents a 2% cost of living adjustment for 900 of the counties 1,400 employees. There is no 2012 cost of living adjustment budgeted for remaining workforce which includes the Supervisors and all management personnel.

Mr. Hellwig said Saratoga County already has the lowest per capita personnel costs of any county in the capital region. This leaves \$500,000, which represents the portion of the total increase that we have some discretion over how much to place in the 2012 budget. This means, based on the choices within our control, the budget has increased by .16%. It is critically important for everyone to recognize, especially our county residents, that we truly have gone to great lengths to control the cost of services that we provide and manage on their behalf. In addition, I would also remind everyone that despite the challenges that we are currently facing, we have and continue to be the strongest county in the State of New York in terms of our growing economy, growing population, above average property values, low crime rate, commitment to quality of life issues and low property taxes. The numbers speak for themselves.

Evidence of the Boards devotion to continue to build on their past success is further reinforced by their annual approval of millions of dollars in funding for the past 20 years to agencies and initiatives that support and grow our economy, which in turn provides businesses with revenue and employment opportunities for our residents. This Board has also completed well over \$100 million in capital improvements to the county infrastructure within the past five years alone, and has accomplished this without raising our property taxes by one single penny. The foresight and planning that has preceded these accomplishments has always included a careful review of how to make sure our stakeholders receive the greatest benefit from these investments. Based on the current level of business activity and population growth, it is clear that the right choices have been consistently made by this board.

Mr. Grattidge said during the Capital Workshop, the Office of Emergency Services made a proposal to the Capital Committee for the purchase of a new telephone system to replace the current aging and at risk system. The Capital Committee was not comfortable

with the \$425,000 cost of the proposed and requested more options. The Director has come forward with a new proposal that capitalizes on the existing phone system at 152 West High Street, at the Social Services Building, which is reasonably current. The new proposal calls for a 72-month payment plan to replace the phone system that services the county complex, 50 West High Street, Maplewood Manor and the Sheriff's Department. This plan will include all materials, labor, phones, and ongoing system maintenance. This new system will be expandable and adaptable to new technology. The technological and functional life span will easily span past the 72-month payment period. The additional costs for pursuing this option will be \$3,600 above the current phone systems costs or basically \$300/mo. with the existing phone vendor Twin States.

Mr. Thompson asked what the overall costs would be? Mr. Lent said, \$190,000. Mr. Grattidge said that amount includes what we are paying now. Mr. Lent said currently we pay \$22,222 annually for a maintenance contract for the existing system. We would no longer need that contract because the maintenance costs are included in the 72-month fee. Additionally, there are other revenues that we are not capturing now because our call counting system has failed and is unable to be fixed. An estimate has been done on the amount of dollars that we could capture and are not currently captured that would actually drive the monthly costs of operating the system down. It is believed that approximately \$5,800/yr. is not being captured through reimbursements and other revenues. Currently there is a cost of approximately \$3,600/yr. to replace all phones which includes maintenance and a system that is adaptable, if we choose to go at some point, to a newer technology like voice over IP. Mr. Lent said if we get into a failure situation with the current system, the vendor has already said that repairs are unlikely given the age and condition of the current phone system.

Mr. Thompson asked what the maintenance costs would be at the end of the 72-month term? Mr. Lent said \$1,228/mo., which is less than what is being paid currently for maintenance on the entire system.

Mrs. Wormuth asked if at the end of the 72-months would the county own the system? Mr. Lent said, yes.

Mr. Sausville said, given that we know that these ideas are going to be placed on the table for consideration by Law and Finance, it would be helpful to have a write up or summary ahead of time, so that everyone has the facts and figures to evaluate.

Mr. Sausville said given the cutbacks that the county is experiencing and the stress that it will be putting on our employees, it will be extremely important that we manage employees in the most efficient and effect way possible. We need to have some resources in our budget for management training, so when we go into these tough times moving forward, we are applying the very best management principles that we can offer. Mr. Sausville asked if there was a sum of money that can be used to train Department Heads to get everyone on the same page, so that we are productive and efficient.

Mr. Hellwig said there is a labor Attorney on retainer that provides training on a variety of subjects.

Mr. Sausville said the county has a responsible to ensure that every manager in the county and every employee in the county is on the same page with regard to the way we are managing our departments.

Ms. Daly said the Personnel Committee is going through the writing of a Department Head evaluation. This is not going to be in a way that it just looks at the department head, but it allows the department head to come up with a plan for the department; on how to make the department more efficient and to better serve the constituency.

Mr. Veitch asked if there was a way that the Capital Program could be bonded for this year? We are looking at a tax increase in the county if we continue on this road with this budget. We need to find a way to fund what we need for next year and bonding may be a possible alternative in terms of the capital program. Mr. Hellwig said, for clarification, the net cost to the county is \$6.8 million for the \$18 million worth of capital work.

Mrs. Wormuth said, we need to look at costs and ways to be creative. We need to look at assets that we do have and how utilize them as we move forward. It is going to be a combination of all of those things, and not just any one thing that is going to solve it.

Mr. Kalinkwicz recommended the following personnel requests:

District Attorney	create 1 Criminal Investigator	This position would be totally funded by the Federal Gov.
BOS	create 1 Legislative Clerk	\$62,360
County Clerk	Steno Sec to Confidential Secretary	\$670
Public Health	Create(1)Public Health Educator	\$0
Public Health	Create(1)Public Health Compliance Officer	\$0

The following positions were recommended for abolishment:

Maplewood Manor	Abolish (1) Dietitian 3X	Remove when vacant
Maplewood Manor	Abolish (1)Pastoral Care Associate	Remove when vacant, move duties to Leisure Time Act Aide
Public Health	Abolish Supervising Public	\$0

Public Health	Health Nurse(Vacant)	\$11,980 savings
Public Health	Abolish Public Health Nurse(Vacant)	\$0

Mr. Grattidge offered an amendment to change the full time Legislative Clerk to Part Time, and to eliminate the two part time positions at Maplewood Manor as suggested by the Department Head.

Mr. Wood said it is his hope that the Deputy Clerk position would be reviewed again and at some point some of the savings by going to a Part Time Legislative Clerk could offset some of the costs of the Deputy Clerk Position. The desirability of having a Deputy Clerk is that in the event that the Clerk of the Board was not present and services were needed.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Ms. Daly to approve an amendment to the recommendations to change the full time Legislative Clerk to Part Time Legislative Clerk and to eliminate the two positions at Maplewood Manor as recommended by the Department Head. Unanimous.

Mr. Thompson called a meeting of the Vacancy Review Committee for Thursday, November 17th at 1:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Wood to approve the request to upgrade the county telephone system. The motion passed. Mr. Veitch was opposed.

A motion was made by Ms. Daly, seconded by Mr. Peck to keep the full time recommendation of the Public Health Educator and Compliance Officer, upon review with the with the Director of Public Health. Unanimous.

On a motion made by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Mrs. Wormuth the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom