

2012 SARATOGA COUNTY BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
December 1, 2011 5:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Frank Thompson called the public hearing to order.

Vice Chairman Thompson introduced Supervisors present for the hearing: Patricia Southworth, Ballston; Alan Grattidge, Charlton; Phil Barrett, Clifton Park; Anita Daly, Clifton Park, Richard Lucia, Corinth; Mary Ann Johnson, Day; Jean Raymond, Edinburg; George Hargrave, Galway; Arthur Wright, Hadley; Mindy Wormuth, Halfmoon; Paul Sausville, Malta; Thomas Richardson, Mechanicville; Frank Thompson, Milton; Preston Jenkins, Moreau; John Collyer, Providence; Tom Wood, Saratoga; Joanne Yepsen, Saratoga Springs; Matt Veitch, Saratoga Springs; Ed Kinowski, Stillwater; Jack Lawler, Waterford. Excused: Bill Peck, Northumberland.

The Clerk read the notice of Public Hearing.

Spencer Hellwig, County Administrator, gave the budget overview. He said this has been the most challenging budget process for the County in recent memory. Due largely to forces beyond our control, including state mandates that will cost \$61.5 million, or 120% of our property tax levy next year we are now forced to take unprecedented steps to cut costs and raise revenues. In fact, even with the current proposed property tax increase from \$49 million to \$50.7 million we're still \$10 million short on covering the state's mandates.

We began in September with a \$32 million deficit. My Tentative Budget closed that deficit by cutting \$16.5 million through a variety of cost saving measures including discretionary spending cuts, eliminating raises for non-union employees including all department heads and supervisors, extending this year's hiring freeze, de-funding vacant positions, and cutting funding to all outside organizations. The Law & Finance Committee made \$105,000 in additional cuts, including laying off active employees. The remainder of the deficit was to be closed by increasing the sales tax by 1% and drawing down the County's already low fund balance by \$10.3 million.

These were painful choices to make. Unfortunately, less than a week before the budget workshop we were informed that we would not have the necessary support from the state legislature to sponsor the Home Rule Legislation required to authorize an increase to the sales tax rate.

As a result, we find ourselves in the position we are in tonight. At the budget workshop on November 18th, this Board passed a number of amendments that are even more painful than where we began, but which were designed with the thought of sharing the pain across the board. The property tax was increased. Funding for supported organizations, including worthy educational opportunities for the County's children, was eliminated. Retired County workers, many of whom are on fixed incomes, are being asked to pay their own Medicare premiums. Current County employees who have already given up a cost of living adjustment are also being asked to contribute to their health insurance. Our already low capital budget for paving and upkeep of County roads and infrastructure was cut even further. And next year we will continue to review all available options to control our operating costs.

As a result of the amendments passed by this Board on the 18th, including the elimination of the proposed sales tax increase, appropriations in this budget were reduced by \$11.4 million. Revenues were reduced by \$9.2 million. The net savings of \$2.2 million represents a reduction in the amount of fund balance we will have to use to balance the 2012 budget. That amount would decrease from \$10.3 million to \$8.1 million. Based on the current projected year-end fund balance of \$12.5 million that

leaves us with an unreserved unappropriated fund balance of about \$4.4 million next year, which is far below the level recommended by the State Comptroller.

County Administrator Hellwig reviewed the Rules for Participation.

The Clerk read the correspondence received from the Saratoga County Fair Manager Jeff Townsend.

Vice Chairman Thompson called the speakers in the order they signed up:

Frank Griffen, 6 Frederick Lane, Ballston Spa said he is Vice President of the Saratoga County Agricultural Society. He spoke on the fair, the past attendance, and asked for the Fair funding be reinstated.

Dennis Brobston, 28 Clinton Street, Saratoga Springs thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He said a letter was sent to the full Board and asked for that letter to be part of the minutes. He read the letter which gave a brief history of SEDC and what their mission has been. He thanked the Board for their contribution and hopes the Board will consider more funding to SEDC if the economy improves.

Christopher Laing, 335 Brownville Road, Gansevoort offered facts from the NYS Comptroller's Office. He made comparisons with neighboring counties and gave results.

David R. Woodcock, 14 Harris Road, Corinth thanked the Board for allowing him to speak. He said he is a retired County employee. He told the Board how the cut of the Medicaid Part B reimbursement and contributing to health insurance will affect not only his household but all retirees of the County. He said when he retired he was given certain benefits and he expects to keep them. He took the job and retired from that job based on the benefits that were offered and it's not fair to change them.

Brandon Myers, 188 Haas Road, Schuylerville told the Board that the one thing he is not hearing enough about is the unfunded Mandates and said the Governor is not doing enough about it. He spoke about the difficulties every household is facing and told the Board he is against any tax increase. He urged the Board to address the State Unfunded Mandates as that is the real problem.

Joy Houle, 118 McLean Street, Ballston Spa said she is the Director of Brookside Museum. She said she understands the Board's task is a difficult one and told what Brookside Museum does for the community. She said it is the home of the Saratoga County Historical Society and houses artifacts. She asked the Board to reconsider their decision as they are willing to share the pain but hoped not to be cut completely.

Greer Obermayer, 6 Berkshire Drive, Ballston Spa is a Sophomore at Ballston Spa School. She spoke on Brookside Museum and the importance of the Museum and the programs offered there. She asked the Board to reconsider the proposed cut and asked the funding be restored.

Deanna Stephenson, 7 Cindy Lane, Clifton Park urged the Board not to raise the property taxes and instead look for alternatives.

William Goslin, 14 Skaarland Drive, Burnt Hills said people in the County are struggling to make ends meet. He urged the Board to show their leadership and make tough cuts. He urged the Board to go to Albany and fight the unfunded mandates.

David Chew, 18 Alger Street, Saratoga Springs said the unfunded State Mandates are the problem and said 27 States have declared them illegal. He volunteered to assist the Board to step on the Governor's words and take on the illegal unfunded Mandates. He asked the Board to be the leader in this fight.

Ben Potiker, 24 Ponderosa Drive, Clifton Park said with the amount of people in attendance there should be a second hearing. He urged the Board not to raise the sales tax, live within their means, privatize Maplewood and stand up to Albany with unfunded mandates.

Karen Klotz, 232 Maple Avenue, Saratoga Springs asked the Board to reconsider the Part B Medicare reimbursement. She said she retired from the County with the expectation and under a contract that the County would pay for these benefits. She urged the Board not to balance the budget on retiree's backs.

Grady Aronstamm, 8 W. Circular Court, Saratoga Springs said he didn't think it was fair to ask retirees to pay for their health insurance.

Lisa Donovan, 319 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa urged the Board to stop the unfunded Mandates and told the Board the solution is not to raise the property tax. She urged the Board to sue the State with regards to the mandates to put pressure on Albany.

David A. Johnson, 2560 Route 9, Lot 45, Malta urged the Board to find a better solution than taking away the Medicare Part B reimbursement from retirees.

Amanda Clemens, 5752 Parkis Mills Road, Galway said the employees will be affected in a negative manner if they are asked to pay for their health insurance or lose their Medicare reimbursement. She urged the Board to continue to fight for the 1% sales tax increase.

Michael Nickson, 51 Skylark Drive, Ballston Spa, Labor Relation Specialist of CSEA, urged the Board to immediately start labor discussions with CSEA to specifically explore cost saving measures. He spoke of the Health Insurance plans offered by the county past and present and CSEA's strong opposition to any changes to current employees and retirees.

Sandra Arnold-Spaulding, 255 Porter Road, Porter Corners is a retired County employee who took advantage of the early retirement offered by the County in 2010. She made the decision to retire early with the understanding that she would have health insurance. She said she can not afford with her current retirement package to pay for her health insurance.

Cynthia Redshaw, 15 Hyde Boulevard, Ballston Spa said she has been involved with Brookside Museum for 20 years. She said the amount of funding that is received by them is a trivial amount to the County but is 10% of the Museum's budget. She told the Board of the importance of Brookside and the role they play in the County. She urged the Board to return the funding to Brookside.

Kathlyn Rooney, 91 Church Avenue #311, Ballston Spa is a volunteer at Maplewood Manor. She said there is a caring and compassionate attitude among the employees at Maplewood and conditions are as good if not better than other nursing homes that she visited. She asked the Board to re-think the idea of privatizing this facility as it would be a detriment to the residents and employees of the facility.

Dan Neddo, 480 Hudson River Road, Waterford said picking on the union people is ridiculous and what is going on in Albany is also ridiculous. He spoke on Globalfoundaries and the fact there are no local workers there.

Jeanne Obermayer, 6 Berkshire Drive, Ballston Spa said she is President of the Board for the Saratoga County Historical Society and Brookside Museum. She gave an overview of the operations of the museum and its funding. She said leaving the funding out for this organization is problematic.

Steve Tokos, 23 Northwood Drive, Malta said the Board has been kicking the can down the road and not faced the budget deficit by spending more than it has taken in. He criticized the IDA for exempting Globalfoundaries. He questioned the County's budget procedures and the taking away of health insurance benefits of the county employees/retirees. He asked the Board to treat the employees with dignity and respect.

Anne Clothier, 2 Arnold Road, Malta, Director of Education at Brookside Museum, read a few letters from students that have participated in programs at the museum. These programs allow students to learn in a fun way. She is asking the Board to reconsider and support the museum.

Ron Revers, 165 County Rt. 75, Mechanicville said this Board should not stoop to the level of the other counties in the state and sell Maplewood. It is not the Counties' fault and more importantly not the residents' fault that the facility is losing money; it is the State's fault. He asked the Board not to take the money away from retirees or ask them to pay for their health insurance. You don't thank good hard working people by taking away benefits. He urged the Board to sit down with employees and ask them where they can help save.

Tino Liggero, 13 Lakeview Road, Saratoga Springs said he was there as an advocate for Maplewood Manor as his mother is a resident there. He said he spoke with Congressman Gibson's office who offered to write grants to help the facility. He asked any employee of Maplewood or family members of residents of the facility have any ideas please share them so a grant may be prepared. He asked the Board for their ideas and help with the grants.

Jerry Lundgren, 7B Cass Court, Ballston Lake said he is a retiree of Saratoga County. He said he enjoyed working for the County. He said he is now on a fixed income and has told the members of the Board what that income is. He told the Board he can not afford any changes to the benefits. He said he is hoping the Board finds a way to restore the Medicare Part B reimbursement to retirees.

Ryan Gregoire, 9 Cornflower Court, Malta said he has been a life long resident of Saratoga County. He said he has treasured the prosperous County he has come to call his home. He said the cuts to Brookside are miniscule compared to the total County budget. He told the Board what Brookside meant to him. He urged the Board to go to Albany and fight Governor Cuomo.

Rocco Ferraro, 15 Friar Tuck Court, Clifton Park, Director of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, gave a historical outline of CDRPC, the programs offered and the funding/dues they receive.

Susan Slovic, 1 Goodman Court, Burnt Hills said she was there to show support for Brookside and said she has been a member for 10 years. She spoke on the importance of Brookside and the services that are provided. She asked the Board to restore the funding to Brookside.

Paul Wagner, 19 Pebble Beach Drive, Clifton Park said his wife is a patient at Maplewood Manor. He said there is a rumor that Maplewood is going to be privatized and he expressed his concern about the residents and staff of the facility.

Gayle King, 10 Merchant Road, Gansevoort said she is a Board Member of Brookside Museum. She said her children have participated in the programs at Brookside. She said the Historical Society has preserved over 400 years of history. She urged the Board to restore the funding to Brookside.

Pia Kellogg, 22 Greenfield Avenue, Ballston Spa is a 35 year employee of Maplewood Manor and has been a life long resident of the County. She said the Board has known since 2005 that the facility was in trouble and now the sale of the facility has come up. She asked the Board if they thought about the employees, the residents and the retirees when they thought about the sale, contributions and cuts. She said the residents read about the facility in the paper and wonder if they will be out on the street. She said it is unfair to the residents and the employees of the uncertainty of the budget and the facility.

Pete Bardunias, 651 Waite Road, Clifton Park said he is the President of the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce. He said he wanted to be part of the team to come up with ideas to help with the economy and are holding their dues at the 2011 rates for 2012. He offered any county employee with placement assistance if needed.

Sharon Zavadil, 206 Ballston Avenue, Ballston Spa said she was there to speak on the pastoral care at Maplewood Manor and said it is dear to her heart. She read a letter from family member of a resident from 2003.

Cindy Baker, 84 Sweet Road, Stillwater said she was there to support Chaplain Lena's position and asked the Board not to eliminate the position. She said her mother was in Maplewood Manor and found comfort in the nursing staff at Maplewood and in Chaplain Lena. She said there is no replacement for her and there are no other options as it needs to be an onboard chaplain. She urged the Board to make cuts someplace else and not Maplewood at all.

Lena Romano, 36 Chapman Street, Ballston Spa said she has been the chaplain for Maplewood for six (6) years. She said she is speaking on behalf of the residents of Maplewood Manor and they have a right to these services.

Ann Hauprich, 249 Malta Avenue, Ballston Spa said the work done by Brookside Museum is priceless and hopes the Board listens to what has been said about the museum. She read an editorial by Charles Hogan that was published in the Ballston Journal in 2008. She spoke in support of Maplewood Manor's chaplain position and said for some residents this is the only spiritual connection that is received.

Ray Rogers-Harrington, 207 Circular Street, Saratoga Springs said he is a Board Member of the Brookside Museum and a teacher at Saratoga Springs School District. He said he has taken students to Brookside and now the museum is bringing programs to the school districts. He asked the Board to reconsider and restore the funding to the museum so the children may continue to have a cultural education.

Joel Reed, 99 Allen Road, Porter Corners said he is the Executive Director of the Saratoga Arts Council. He said they have taken over the First Night Celebration and with the support of the Board their first time running the event was a success. He said they waited as long as possible to send the

items to print which included the County as a sponsor. He hopes the Board will reconsider and support the First Night Celebration at any level.

Brian Telesn, 33 Torrey Pines, Clifton Park thanked the Board for running the most fiscally sound budgets in the Nation. He said the Board was elected as leaders to make tough decisions and was glad the Board pulled back from the sales tax increase. He said he was glad the State passed the tax cap. He said he knows that it is difficult to make decisions about Maplewood Manor and the Landfill but these are items that need to be looked at.

Margie Van Meter, 175 Washington, Saratoga Springs she is on the League of Women Voters and said she is there to urge the Board of Supervisors to schedule another public hearing as she is sure there are more people who would like to come and speak.

Daniel McIntyre, 45 Kilmer Road, Middle Grove said he was there to speak to the Board about ticks and Lyme Disease and other diseases ticks carry. Many animals carry these ticks that require people to perform body checks and ultimately medication if one of these is contracted. He said this will be a national epidemic.

Stacey McVaigh, 76 Wineberry Lane, Malta said she is an employee of the Department of Social Services. She read a petition that was circulated and signed about the proposed health insurance contribution.

Janice Mastromarchi, 6 Clark Street, Middle Grove said she was at the hearing to speak on behalf of Maplewood Manor. She said her husband started in a facility in Schenectady and was able to move him to Maplewood Manor. She said the difference between the two facilities is great. There is more for residents to do at Maplewood. Privatization is not the answer because this will affect the residents. She asked why the Board hadn't done more to do more about the reimbursement rates and urged the members to reach out to Congressman Gibson for his help.

Laura Lee Linder, 2115 Route 67, Charlton said she has been a 30 year County resident and has been a 4H leader for 25 years. She gave a brief history of her work experiences including being the current Town of Charlton Historian and spoke about what that meant. She said the County Historical Society stores the County's artifacts and asked the Board not to take that for granted and restore the funding to Brookside.

Christine Valosin, 237 Co. Rte. 76, Stillwater said she has been a museum professional for many years and asked that the Board restore the funding to the Historical Society. She said if you pull funding you are pulling the pins from a very important resource of this County. There is true economic benefit from the cultural organizations.

Jim Baisley, 22 Barkwood Lane, Clifton Park said he is not a county employee just a resident that is interested and feels this is a wake up call from the County. He hears a lot of what the county employees do and said the employees are the lifeline. He said if you raise the sales tax you will make a lot of extra money and you will spend it. He said you need to cut the budget and not affect the employees. He said the property taxes have been very low and by raising them a little that may help.

Nick Berardy, 4645 Route 50, Gansevoort said he is very fortunate to be able to work at Maplewood for the last 14 years and is proud to work there. He said selling Maplewood is the wrong thing to do. Those people have been tax payers. The budget proposes to cut a dietary position and pastoral care for

\$60,000 and in the same sentence create a position across the street for \$20,000. He said everyone needs to get together and save Maplewood.

Claire Murphy, 11 Dugan Hill Road, Malta said she is speaking on behalf of the Historic Preservation Review Commission of Malta. She said without Brookside there is no repository for artifacts of the County. She said there is a tremendous amount of construction going up and with every ground breaking there is an opportunity for historical finds. There needs to be a place to store those finds. The museum is a critical asset to the County.

Maria Lopez, 116 Division Street, Amsterdam is an employee of Maplewood Manor. She asked the Board to find another way to balance the budget and look other places than Maplewood Manor. She said this is the best nursing home she has worked in. The State was there and they passed with flying colors. She said they are dealing with lives and not artifacts; remember you will need a nursing home some day and hopes you will be able to afford one when the time comes. She urged the Board not to close or sell Maplewood as she loves her job and the residents.

Angela McFarland, 365 Milton Avenue, Ballston Spa said she owns four (4) Saratoga County based media and just partnered with a fifth. She said she is a sales person and tends to see things black and white and can't see why these outside organizations would be cut when they generate revenue for the County. She said she has a real issue with business going to out of county businesses. She said it is shameful that the Board turned their back on the Ballston Journal. She is asking for full disclosure.

Marcia White, President & Executive Director of SPAC, said SPAC generates \$100M to Saratoga County in the three month SPAC season every year. She asked the Board not to cut the \$18,000 appropriation to SPAC. These are extraordinarily difficult times for everyone. She said the funding is for the Jazz Festival that brings many tourists to the region which creates a tremendous boost to the economy. In 2012 the Festival will be the 35th anniversary and expects there to be 15,000 or more. In order to reach their goal and the audience they need the funding to reach these people.

Katie Purcell, 17 McLean Street, Ballston Spa said she didn't come to speak but to listen and then felt compelled to speak. She said she wished the Board felt as passionate about their employees as Brookside feels about their artifacts. She said what the Board needs to think about is not why the employees cost so much but of why the employees are worth so much and she hopes the Board considers that.

Vice Chairman Thompson asked if there were any other speakers. With there being none, Vice Chairman Thompson closed the hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Hargrave, Clerk