

Law and Finance Committee Minutes
2022 Tentative Budget
October 19, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Jonathan Schopf; Committee members Phil Barrett, Joe Grasso, Kevin Tollisen, Matthew Veitch, Sandra Winney, Tom Wood; Chairman of the Board Todd Kusnierz, Supervisors John Lant, Thomas Richardson, Darren O'Connor, Bill Peck and Tara Gaston; Steve Bulger, Ridge Harris, Matt Rose, Audra Hedden, Christine Rush, County Administrator; Michael Hartnett, County Attorney; Scot Chamberlain, Stephanie Monaco, Human Resources; Jason Kemper, Planning; Roger Schiera, Bill Fruci, Elections; Carl Zielman, Ed Tremblay, Emergency Services; Chris Schall, Auditor; Andrew Jarosh, Stephanie Hodgson, Treasurer; Sandi Cross, Christine Sokol, Aging; Tina Potter, Social Services; Tom Speziale, Public Works; Daniel Kuhles, Public Health; Eileen Bennett, IT; John Warnt, Purchasing; Craig Hayner, Charles Foehser, Shauna Sutton, County Clerk; Michael Zurlo, Rick Castle, Richard Emery, Sheriff; Karen Heggen, District Attorney; Michael Prezioso, Cari Abatamarco, Mental Health; Rebecca Robarge, Youth Bureau; Press.

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

Overview of Tentative Budget

Mr. Bulger thanked everyone involved in the budget process and gave an overview of the proposed 2022 budget. Mr. Bulger said the County is in a good financial position which is a credit to the Supervisors and leadership team for many years of conservative budgeting and fiscal prudence. Mr. Bulger said the proposed budget for 2022 is \$381 million, which includes up to a \$12 million Capital Facilities Bond that would be spread out over a ten year period, and this year they will finish with a \$56 million fund balance which comes from a combination of previous balance, estimated sales tax revenue, unspent department budgets from this year and ARPA funds. Two areas with significant investments are Public Health and Public Safety with the anticipated purchase of body cameras for the Sheriff's Department and the resulting film storage and reviewing requirements, mandates for the jail and the transition to a full service Public Health Department. \$3 million has been set aside for the Public Health transition. Investments are being made through HR for training County employees to ensure County departments deliver the best services to its constituents. Saratoga County has the lowest ratio of County employees to residents of any county Mr. Bulger has come across in his research. Mr. Bulger said the county workforce will be expanding with 45 new positions with a total personnel cost of about \$3.7 million which represents about 1% of the budget. Facilities upgrades will include a project in the County Clerk's Office, security upgrades at the DSS building and Building #1, a records management program upgrade. Mr. Bulger said a \$26 million capital budget is proposed for infrastructure investments and the Capital Planning Committee signed off on \$11.4 million which has been targeted for a capital facilities bond. The County debt is approximately \$60 million which is 3% of the County debt limit. Sales tax revenue is projected to be \$145 million for 2021 and they are projecting a fiscally conservative \$141 million for next year. Mr. Bulger said that, as a result of Supervisors' involvement in the budget process, there are significant increases in the budget for open space and

trails, including trails maintenance and forest land maintenance. \$1.5 million has been set aside through the Capital Plan for the next extension of the Zim Smith Trail. \$2.75 million is proposed for outside agency funding which includes \$1.3 to Cornell Cooperative Extension, as required by law, and \$1.1 million to Hudson River Black River Regulating District. Another \$2 million in ARPA revenue is proposed to be used for a nonprofit fund to be overseen by the Law and Finance Committee, where nonprofits across the county can apply for funding. Mr. Bulger said they are estimating the property tax levy to increase to \$67 million and are anticipating the property tax rate to go down again next year due to growth in assessments and new construction which will keep Saratoga the lowest property taxed county in the State. Mr. Bulger said that another \$17 million of ARPA money is proposed to be dedicated, under ARPA guidelines, towards broadband, sewer expansions and facilities expansions and improvements. Mr. Bulger said the County will be participating in a new opioid settlement that will bring in approximately \$800,000, a portion or all of which will go towards mental health services as will be determined by the Board.

Law & Finance Committee Recommendations

Mr. Veitch thanked everyone for a great job on the budget and recommended two items be added to the not for profit agency list, \$30,000 to the New York State Military Museum for exhibits and \$250,000 to the Saratoga Springs City Center for lost revenue due to COVID. Mr. Schopf said the committee is only taking recommendations today and amendments will be done during the budget workshop. Mr. Barrett thanked everyone for the work on the budget and said he thinks it's a great balance between doing everything we can to continue to enhance the quality of life we have in Saratoga County and also increasing the funds necessary to properly maintain the trail system. Mr. Barrett asked what the timeframe is on the nonprofit program from the time of approval. Mr. Schopf said it wouldn't roll out until the next calendar year to time it up with the budget year. Mr. Barrett said the nonprofit program is a tremendous investment and strengthens our community and that he is very pleased with the tax rates and the significant investments in public safety. Mr. Grasso commended Mr. Bulger and the budget process, said he appreciates the collaborative effort and the increased investment in County facilities, County staff, outside agencies, and open space, trails and farmland protection, while also keeping the taxes low. Mr. Wood and Mrs. Winney also thanked everyone for their hard work on the budget. Mr. O'Connor thanked everyone and said he was grateful for the allotment for the body cams for the Sheriff's Department and he thinks it's a needed and valuable expense. Mr. Richardson asked when they will be discussing the funding applications for the nonprofits, pointed out two items that are important to him (the Historic Hoosic River Partnership and the Mechanicville Area Community Center), said there may be a numerical error on the Community Center request listed at \$15,000 as he thinks it's actually supposed to be \$20,000, and commended those who were part of the budget process. Mr. Schopf said there will be opportunities to address specific outside agency requests during the workshop sessions and through the amendment process. Mr. Veitch asked how the outside agency funding will be awarded. Mr. Schopf said they are going to roll out a program after the budget process and once they get the website application set up. Ms. Gaston asked for copies of the calculations for the lost revenue and the recommendations for the ARPA funding for next year. Mr. Bulger said they will be provided to everyone. Mr. Bulger said they have also set aside funding in the budget for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution celebrations.

On a motion made by Mr. Barrett, seconded by Mr. Veitch, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Bridget Rider
Deputy Clerk of the Board