

MINUTES
BUDGET AND CAPITAL COMMITTEE
JANUARY 26, 2009 3:30 P.M.
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM

APPROVED

Present: N. Shinagawa, Chair; P. Mackesey; M. Hattery

Excused: J. Dennis and K. Herrera

Staff: C. Covert, Clerk of the Legislature; N. Jayne, Administration; J. Mareane, County Administrator; J. Kippola, Contracts Coordinator; S. Stein, Strategic Tourism Planning Board; S. Wiggins, Strategic Tourism Planning Board; D. Squires, Finance Director; B. Kominos, Personnel Department; P. Meskill, Sheriff; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer

Guests: Press; Ithaca High School Students; Legislators Robertson and Chock; and M. Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Legislature

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Changes to Agenda

Mr. Shinagawa requested the discussion and action on the resolution concerning the Hotel Room Occupancy State Tax Law Amendment be postponed until all Committee members were present and Jean McPheeters, Chamber of Commerce President, and David Sparrow, Chair of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, were available to attend.

Approval of Minutes

December 16, 2008

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

December 22, 2008 and January 12, 2009

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of the December 22, 2008, and the January 12, 2009, meetings as corrected.

Chair's Report

Mr. Shinagawa said he did not have a report. However, he announced that he would be attending the New York State Association of Counties conference in February.

Report from the Finance Director

Mr. Squires said he provided the Committee Chair with a copy of the official Statement for financing the Health Department. He was able to separate this particular issue out as it was under \$10 million which creates a different market called "designated and qualified" under the tax code. However, in the stimulus package it is proposed that the amount be raised to \$30 million per year which Mr. Squires said would be a "good thing" for counties.

Mr. Squires distributed and reviewed the sales tax adjustments report and said he anticipates at best the 2009 first quarter to be flat as there was a large adjustment made in the first quarter of 2008. He said he has notified the towns of this information.

Ms. Mackesey briefly spoke about the discussion held at the last TCAT (Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit) meeting and their dependence on State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA) reimbursement and the County's financial assistance to keep the operations running. Mr. Squires said the

County is the only one of the three partners that puts money up front. He said TCAT spends \$1 million per month. During January 2009, the County distributed to TCAT \$1.3 million. The first STOA payment will not be received until the end of February or early March. Because of the market conditions, Mr. Squires elected not to include revenue anticipation note financing. He believes it to be the County's position to loan TCAT money on a quarterly basis not in a lump sum. The County's cashflow is somewhat limited too until tax collections are received. In the past STOA payments have been predictable, but does not feel State Aid is as predictable in today's environment. Federal funding is dependent on when their grant funding is approved and then released and at times it is behind in releasing their funds. The one problem TCAT has is they are not a government entity and in order for them to get money from a bank, they need a guarantor. He expects a meeting with the three financial officers of the three partners will be held soon.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Mareane spoke briefly about the Federal stimulus package which is now available for review. The government wants to get money into the economy as quickly as it can. The County has been encouraged by the State to prepare a list of projects as soon as possible that can be started in 90 days, 180 days, and 2 years. Mr. Marx the Planning and Public Works Commissioner is coordinating that effort. A special Tompkins County Council of Governments meeting has been scheduled for February 2 to discuss this issue as well. All municipalities have been invited to this meeting and Dan Lamb of Congressman Hinchey's office will also be present.

A large part of the Federal stimulus package is a plan to help States. One area of the plan is to increase the Federal share of Medicaid costs over the next two years. In cases like New York State, it is likely the State will be required to share that portion with counties. He believes the County could be in line to receive Medicaid savings over the next two years. It is important to know that this is a two-year deal with early estimates being between \$3.5-\$5 million spread over the two-year period. One concern is the State using this to justify cuts to counties, however, the County is beginning to put together information reminding the State of concerns with sales tax, human service programs, etc.

With respect to the State budget, Mr. Mareane said he has not heard any new updates recently. He believes the State is waiting to see how it will be affected by the Federal stimulus package.

Report from the Public Information Officer

Ms. Lynch announced the Citizens Guide to the Budget is now available.

Airport

Resolution – Ground Transportation Fees

Mr. Shinagawa briefly explained the ground transportation fees for taxi cabs, limousines, and courtesy vehicles have not increased in five years and this resolution would allow for a 15% increase over that period of time to make up for the rate of inflation. He also commented that Mr. Nicholas, Airport Manager, was not available to attend this meeting because of an Air Service Board meeting being scheduled at the same time.

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Mr. Hattery, to approve and submit the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval. As the resolution referenced an "Attachment A" (fee schedule) that was not included with the agenda packet and not available at this time, Ms. Mackesey withdrew her motion. MOTION WITHDRAWN. The Committee agreed to have a special meeting prior to the Legislature meeting on February 3rd to consider this resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. - AUTHORIZING AN INCREASE TO GROUND TRANSPORTATION FEES – ITHACA TOMPKINS REGIONAL AIRPORT

WHEREAS, Local Law No. 4 of 2002 – Rules and Regulations and Minimum Standards, Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport – authorizes the Airport manager to assess and collect fees from ground transportation providers who operate on airport property, and

WHEREAS, Federal case law has overwhelmingly upheld airports’ rights to charge a fee to commercial ground transportation providers for use and upkeep of airport facilities and the privilege of deriving business from said airport facilities , and

WHEREAS, the airport wishes to increase the fees established by the County Legislature by Resolution No. 41 on March 2, 2004, to allow for five years of inflation, and

WHEREAS, the airport conducted a 5-week survey of ground transportation usage during November and December 2008 to determine how the established fees should be applied, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Facilities and Infrastructure and the Budget and Capital Committees, That the increased Ground Transportation Fees shown on “Attachment A” be approved for the period from January 1, 2009, until December 31, 2013,

RESOLVED, further, That annual surveys be undertaken to ascertain the appropriate fees to be charged for courtesy vehicles, taxi cabs, and limousine services using airport property.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Personnel Department

Resolution

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, to approve and submit the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval. Mr. Shinagawa asked what the financial impact of this was; information was not available to answer this question.

A voice vote resulted as follows on the resolution: Ayes – 3 (Mackesey, Hattery, and Shinagawa); Noes – 0; Excused – 2 (Herrera and Dennis). RESOLUTION CARRIED.

RESOLUTION NO. - AUTHORIZING TOMPKINS COUNTY TO PAY THE DIFFERENCE IN PAY BETWEEN MILITARY PAY AND BASE COUNTY SALARY TO COUNTY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES WHILE PERFORMING ORDERED MILITARY DUTY

WHEREAS, the New York State Military Law provides certain rights to public officers and employees absent on military duty as members of Reserve Forces or Reserve components of the Armed Forces of the United States, and

WHEREAS, County officers and employees on authorized military leave are entitled to all the rights and privileges set forth in said Military Law, and

WHEREAS, despite the rights and benefits afforded by said Military Law, calls to active duty often impose financial hardship on those summoned and their dependents, and

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 313 of 2002, Resolution No. 231 of 2004, and Resolution No. 126 of 2007, this Tompkins County Legislature authorized the payment of supplemental benefits to County officers and employees called to serve their country following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States through December 31, 2008, and more recent decisions by the Federal Executive, and

WHEREAS, there may be renewed need for activation of military personnel, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations, and the Budget and Capital Committees, That effective January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009, the Tompkins County General

Fund will pay the difference between base County salary and military pay for up to 90 work days per calendar year, when the employee is called to active military duty. If military pay is equal to or in excess of County base salary, no payment will be made,

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance will establish and notify Department Heads and affected employees of the procedures by which the differential shall be paid.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Room Tax Discussion

Mr. Hattery said a number of people requested a statement regarding how the use of the funds would be limited as economic development is a fairly broad category. He has drafted a statement and sent it to Mr. Shinagawa for his review and comment before distributing it.

Committee Goals

Mr. Shinagawa asked if Committee members had any thoughts or suggestions for goals for the 2009 budget committee to consider.

Budget Calendar – 2009

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr spoke briefly about the schedule of budget forums and asked that consideration be given to having three or four central questions that small groups could discuss.

Mr. Hattery spoke about the fiscal environment and believes Administration has what it needs for contingency plans, but asked that if there is anything the budget committee or the full Legislature needs to be aware of, that it be done sooner rather than later. Mr. Mareane said in the next few weeks, Administration will be assessing and understanding the details as they become available both at the State and Federal levels. Once a clearer picture is known, he will be exchanging information of where the County is and what the options are.

Ms. Mackesey commented on people's anxiety concerning economic security and jobs, and asked if there was some way to communicate regularly such as press releases that keeps them informed as much as possible.

Ms. Robertson spoke of the importance to continue the meetings with the County's State and Federal Representatives. In addition, she asked about the fuel lines in County Departmental budgets. Ms. Jayne said she has a data file she is currently working on and that only two departments had permanent funding put in their budgets: Sheriff and Highway Division. The funding in the remaining departments was handled as one-time funding.

Ms. Jayne reminded the Committee of the survey and asked that comments be given to her so that she is able to send out to others for feedback.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:17 p.m.