

Budget and Capital Committee
May 12, 2008

Approved

**Budget and Capital Committee
May 12, 2008
3:30 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: N. Shinagawa, M. Hattery (arrived at 3:45 p.m.), P. Mackesey, J. Dennis, K. Herrera
Legislators: M. Koplinka-Loehr
Staff: N. Jayne, M. Lynch, J. Kippola, S. Martel-Moore County Administration; D. Squires, Finance; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office; S. Connors, B. Grinnell-Crosby, A. Cole, Health Department; P. Carey, DSS; E. Marx, Planning Department; A. Frith, D. Cooper, A. Smith, P. Jebbett, J. VanEtten, A. James, L. Mallery, WIC Program, A. Fitzpatrick, Personnel Department
Guests: F. Bonn, Convention and Visitors' Bureau; J. McPheeters, Chamber of Commerce; S. Stein, Strategic Tourism Planning Board; T. Ashmore, Ithaca Journal; A. Smith, SPCA; V. Kacapyr, WHCU

Call to Order

Mr. Shinagawa called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

The following items were added to the agenda:

Resolution No. – Contingent Fund Request for Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
Discussion – Room Tax

Mr. Shinagawa stated the resolution concerning the WIC program was not approved by the Health and Human Services Committee at its last meeting. He stated the resolution is also on today's agenda and asked if Legislators wished for it to proceed. It was the consensus of the Committee to have a discussion of this issue today.

Approval of Minutes of April 28, 2008

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Mackesey, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of April 28, 2008 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Report from the Finance Director

Mr. Squires reported he has submitted the County's annual financial statement to the auditors, and distributed copies of the "bottom lines" from all of the County's funds that are submitted separately. He reported the General Fund went up by five percent. He said the Airport Fund went down substantially because they have to advance funds for construction, and noted that fund cannot afford any further decline. Ms. Mackesey asked if this is a cash flow or a structural problem. Mr. Squires responded that it is a structural problem in the sense that the Airport does not have enough revenues to generate the local share for capital projects.

Mr. Squires said the Highway and Machinery Funds were up substantially; he finds this surprising given the amount of work was done in 2007. He said the Solid Waste Fund benefits from higher prices for commodities and the higher current metal prices. He also noted the

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County received a lot of interest earnings on capital projects that contributed to the debt service fund. Room Tax revenues are up because of the many new hotels on line and the high occupancy rates.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Whicher was not present. Ms. Jayne said she would read a statement prepared by Mr. Whicher during discussion later in the meeting of Rollover monies.

Report from the Public Information Officer

Ms. Lynch had no report.

Report from the Chair

Mr. Shinagawa spoke of the difficult budget challenges the County is faced with, specifically, identifying \$2 million of reductions in locally controlled spending. He said he has had discussions with Mr. Koplinka-Loehr and with County Administration to examine strategies that will work towards this goal. He summarized the following suggestions:

1. Reinstate a community advisory panel with a different purpose than when it existed before. He proposed the new panel be charged with looking at County spending and examine specific programs for potential cuts. He said he would prefer this Committee recommend individuals to serve on the new panel. At the next meeting this Committee will look at areas to prioritize and the panel will be limited to a specific list. He noted they would not be doing program analysis.

Ms. Herrera said she sees pros and cons to moving in this direction and said she would not want discussions to be focused on the survey that was completed by Legislators at the budget retreat. She said she was unclear on several of the proposals included on that survey and thinks the Legislature needs to become educated on each of them prior to asking for input from a community advisory panel. She questioned what was driving the items included on that survey and stated she thinks it is too late in the "pre-process" to undertake this type of task. Ms. Herrera said understands the gravity of the difficult choices that will be before the Legislature during the 2009 budget process.

Mr. Shinagawa said the list is being driven by the budgetary challenges the County is facing. He thinks it is helpful to bring the community into the process to weigh in on the issues, see what the Legislature is undertaking, and offer advice. He clarified the items listed on the survey at the retreat do not have to be the items presented to the advisory panel. Mr. Shinagawa said the panel should, however, be presented with a specific list because it would not be realistic to ask them to look at every County program. Ms. Herrera said she reluctantly supported the creation of the original Community Advisory Panel but it was clear at that time that group of community members and members of the business and non-profit community would be making recommendations to help the Legislature be more transparent and effective in its budget process. Ms. Herrera stated the proposal presented today sounds significantly different and said she will be watching the process closely.

Mr. Dennis said he would support this proposal and does not think it is too late in the process for this to be undertaken.

Ms. Mackesey said she would support a committee that would help the Legislature be transparent and that would help to clarify the process. She said she would be hesitant to support a community committee that looks at the substance of what goes on in County government, determines priorities, or involves itself in the actual budget numbers.

Mr. Shinagawa said he will put a specific scope of work in writing and asked for Committee members to recommend individuals to serve on the panel.

2. Revisiting the concept of a “hiring freeze” process that would allow for exceptions, a similar process was undertaken in previous years that would include a panel for reviewing vacancies. Ms. Mackesey said she would like to see a list of positions that are funded but not filled. Mr. Shinagawa will prepare a proposal and present to this Committee at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Hattery said he would support a hiring freeze as an emergency measure but does not think it is a good way to intentionally reduce the workforce.

Ms. Herrera said Legislators need to examine how equitable we are in budget decisions because there are times when emergency measures are instituted and it becomes very difficult to measure. She said she is interested in hearing from the Personnel Commissioner and other department heads what they feel is needed to meet their needs.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the Legislature has undertaken a similar process through various formats over the last several years and is part of an effort to reduce the County’s largest expense (i.e. payroll). She said department heads have the opportunity to look at vacant positions and many of them closely examine vacancies of whether it needs to be filled and if it needs to be filled at the same level.

Mr. Shinagawa encouraged members of the Budget and Capital Committee to make other suggestions for budget strategies.

**RESOLUTION NO. – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND --
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON LOCAL
ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES (ICLEI)
MEMBERSHIP**

It was MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Ms. Herrera, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the following resolution and submit to the full Legislature. Ms. Mackesey noted the County will be sharing membership with the City.

WHEREAS, Tompkins County joined the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 2001, which is a program for municipal governments to identify sources of greenhouse gas emissions within their jurisdictions and take actions to reduce such emissions, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County completed an inventory of the greenhouse gas emissions from County government operations in 2001 and a Local Action Plan to Reduce Carbon Emissions for County Government Operations in 2003, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County’s Local Action Plan to Reduce Carbon Emissions for County Government Operations established a goal to reduce the amount of carbon emissions from the operation of County government by 20 percent by 2008, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County completed an update to its carbon emission inventory in Summer 2007 to assess how County government is progressing toward its reduction goal using the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) software and technical assistance, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County is currently developing a new Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element to the County Comprehensive Plan that will incorporate the findings from the carbon emissions inventory, and

WHEREAS, a goal of the Tompkins County Sustainability Program is the “[R]eduction of green house gases and environmental toxins through energy reduction and conservation in county facilities and fleets...” by, in part, “[D]evelop(ing) a report that measures eCO2 emissions from 1998 to the present”, and

WHEREAS, membership in ICLEI will provide resources to assist Tompkins County in its greenhouse gas emissions reduction efforts and continue Tompkins County’s commitment to this effort, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee e and the Budget and Capital Committee, That Tompkins County renew its membership with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives,

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance is authorized and directed to make the following appropriation:

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|------------|-------|
| From: | Contingent Fund | 1990.54400 | \$800 |
| To: | Dues & Memberships | 1920.54400 | \$800 |

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-18

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RESOLUTION NO. - APPROPRIATING FUNDS FROM THE CAPITAL RESERVE FUND FOR NATURAL, SCENIC, AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCE PROTECTION FOR A PORTION OF THE HANSON PROPERTY IN THE LICK BROOK CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

MOVED by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Dennis. Mr. Marx stated the majority of the cost will be covered by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. At the request of Ms. Herrera, Mr. Marx will provide the full Legislature with a copy of the packet that was distributed to the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee. Mr. Hattery asked for the balance in the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Marx said he will provide this information.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 5, Noes – 0. MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Legislature established the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection by Resolution No. 217 of 2005, and

WHEREAS, the current balance in the Capital Reserve Fund is \$56,323, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Capital Reserve Fund is to support participation by Tompkins County in partnerships with other levels of government and private organizations to:

- protect and preserve the natural, scenic, and recreational resources found in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and Natural Features Focus Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- preserve and develop recreational trail corridors that cross municipal borders; and
- develop outdoor recreation facilities, within the focus areas, that are intended to serve all county residents, and

WHEREAS, the Interim Program Guidelines for use of the Capital Reserve Fund calls for proposed projects to substantially further at least one of the following objectives:

- Protect a stream buffer at least 330 feet in width.
- Provide public access to the Cayuga Lake shore.
- Protect land that is adjacent to permanently protected open space.
- Preserve land on an existing or potential intermunicipal trail corridor, and

WHEREAS, the Finger Lakes Land Trust has requested financial support from the Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of protecting a portion of the Hanson property (tax parcel 1.-1-3) in the Lick Brook Corridor Initiative and providing public access to the tract, and

WHEREAS, the Finger Lakes Land Trust has agreed to purchase the Hanson property for \$40,620, which is fair market value, and

WHEREAS, the Hanson property

- is identified as a Priority Protection Area in the Tompkins County Conservation Plan (Part 1, 2007);
- is adjacent to, and protects scenic views from the Finger Lakes Trail;
- borders protected land;
- protects a portion of the buffer along Lick Brook; and
- provides wildlife habitat and enhances outdoor recreation opportunities in close proximity to Ithaca, and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Planning and Public Works and the Planning Advisory Board have recommended that the County Legislature authorize funding of the Hanson property acquisition from the Capital Reserve Fund, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee and the Budget and Capital Committee, That a total of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) in funding from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection be appropriated for the purpose of securing the Hanson property in collaboration with the Finger Lakes Land Trust and others, and of providing public access to the tract, and

RESOLVED, further, That the County Administrator or his designee be authorized to execute any contracts or agreements related to this project.

SEQR ACTION: Unlisted

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RESOLUTION NO. – AUTHORIZATION TO PAY VACATION TIME IN EXCESS OF MAXIMUM – HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Herrera. Ms. Cole said this request is coming from the Health Department and not an employee. They are in a situation where a staff member has been out on long-term disability and a nurse who has been working part-time in the Department has been asked to provide coverage. She said because the work is very specialized it makes much greater sense to utilize an existing Health Department nurse rather than hire from the outside which would require the employee to undergo a significant amount of training. Ms. Cole said she was notified by Payroll that the individual performing these duties has met the vacation cap. The employee is unable to take vacation because of helping the Department out. She said this is a very rare occurrence and understands this action would set a precedent.

Mr. Squires said he has very strong reservations with the concept of this action and asked the Committee to postpone action until the County Administrator returns from vacation. Ms. Cole said she had alerted the County Administrator about this prior to the time he went on vacation. Ms. Herrera asked if a delay would place a hardship on the employee. Ms. Cole said the only affect that a delay would have is the number of vacation hours would continue to accumulate.

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Hattery, to Table this resolution with the understanding that the dollar amounts may be higher when it is presented again. A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 5, Noes – 0. MOTION TO TABLE CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the Health Department has been operating under special circumstances since the beginning of the year, including multiple Community Health Nurse staff out on medical leave, increased work demands including responding to the syphilis situation, and increased Home Care referrals, and being globally understaffed department-wide in the Community Health Nurse title, and

WHEREAS, the Department requests special permission to pay fifty-five hours of vacation time for one part-time (21 hours per week) Community Health Nurse who is providing additional assistance during this staffing crisis, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Health and Human Services, Human Resources, and Budget and Capital Committees, That the Department is authorized to pay out \$1,517.90 in accrued vacation time and \$576.80 in associated fringes to reduce the employees fringe balance below the maximum permitted in the Union agreement.

SEQRA ACTION: TYPE II-20

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RESOLUTION NO. - FUNDING FOR LANSING COMMUNITY LIBRARY CENTER

MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Shinagawa. Mr. Koplinka-Loehr said years ago when there was an inequitable funding system for rural libraries a committee was established (25 years ago) that met to come up with a more rational distribution of funding for the rural libraries. The funding was elevated at that time to the highest level that any one library was getting. He also said at that time the libraries were not asking for that to happen, nor is the Lansing Community Library making this request now.

Mr. Hattery said all rural libraries should be treated equitably in the next funding cycle.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 1 (Dennis), Noes – 4. MOTION FAILED.

WHEREAS, the Lansing residents voted to change the Lansing Reading room to the Lansing Community Library Center, making it a member of the Finger Lakes Library System, on December 11, 2007, and

WHEREAS, as of March 2008 Lansing Library has been chartered by the New York State Department of Education, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County funded the rural libraries \$5,000 a piece for a total of \$20,000 when they joined the Finger Lakes Library System to allow for that transition, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Government Operations Committee and Budget and Capital Committee, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation:

From: Contingent Fund 1990.54400 \$5,000

To: Lansing Community Library Center 7410.54400 \$5,000

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RESOLUTION NO. – CONTINGENT FUND REQUEST FOR SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Shinagawa. Ms. Kippola stated during the Expanded Budget Committee meetings for the 2008 budget, the SPCA was asked to produce a long-term plan and Ms. Smith has been meeting with towns and villages in her efforts to accomplish that task. Ms. Kippola said during the last budget process the Expanded Budget Committee earmarked \$15,000 out of the Contingent Fund (pending completion of the plan) and the Committee also increased funding by \$5,000. Ms. Kippola and Ms. Smith have held several

meetings and it has been determined that the SPCA is IN desperate need of an animal control van. The resolution presented would authorize funding for that purpose.

Ms. Mackesey said she does not think the resolution presented offers a long-term plan, and the following language contained in the resolution was noted: "WHEREAS, the SPCA will continue to develop a long range financial plan for feral cat control in partnership with the County, and will bring that plan forward for consideration during the County's 2009 budget process". She said she needs to see a long-term plan before she would be supportive of appropriating this money.

Ms. Herrera said she will not support this and did not support the contribution that was requested in the 2008 budget process. She said she needs to have a better understanding of feral cat control, receipt of a long-term plan, and clarifications made to the problem with the feral cat program with respect to the City of Ithaca.

Mr. Dennis suggested the use of an existing County vehicle that could serve this purpose.

Mr. Shinagawa said the Health and Human Services Committee received a memorandum in their agenda packet that provided justification for this. Ms. Herrera and Ms. Mackesey expressed support for the work of the SPCA but could not support this funding request without receiving the documentation that had been requested.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 2 (Dennis and Shinagawa); Noes – 3 (Hattery, Herrera, and Mackesey). MOTION FAILED.

WHEREAS, New York State Agriculture and Market Law requires Tompkins County to provide shelter for seized cats and lost, strayed or homeless cats, and

WHEREAS, by contract the Tompkins County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) has historically provided and maintained this shelter for seized cats and lost, strayed or homeless cats and

WHEREAS, the SPCA relies on both private and public funds to achieve its mission, and

WHEREAS, during the 2008 County budget process, the SPCA requested a \$28,216 increase, which would have doubled the 2007 amount in its line item in the County budget, due to a financial shortfall in the SPCA budget, and

WHEREAS, during the 2008 budget process, the Expanded Budget Committee earmarked \$15,000 in the Contingent Fund, plus increased the County's allocation from \$28,216 to \$33,216, until a date when a long term solution could be reached to assist in bridging a shortfall in the SPCA budget, and

WHEREAS, the SPCA will continue to develop a long range financial plan for feral cat control in partnership with the County, and will bring that plan forward for consideration during the County's 2009 budget process, and

WHEREAS, the SPCA has proposed a solution that will help in bridging the shortfall in 2008 through a purchase of one van by the County for the SPCA, thereby lowering operating costs significantly, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, upon recommendation of the Health and Human Services Committee and the Budget and Capital Committee, that the County amend the SPCA's contract to include the purchase of a van for up to \$15,500, and

RESOLVED, further, That the Director of Finance be authorized and directed to make the following appropriation:

| | | | |
|-------|------------|----------------------|----------|
| FROM: | A1990 | Contingent Fund | \$15,500 |
| TO: | 3520.54400 | Tompkins County SPCA | \$15,500 |

RESOLVED, further, That County Administrator or his designee is authorized to execute any documents and agreements pertaining to the proposal.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

Room Tax Revenues

Mr. Hattery said he has a Table on Room Tax revenues that he wants to have reviewed by a staff member and will then distribute along with background information in the next couple of days. His intention is to propose the County Legislature support a resolution asking the State Legislature to amend legislation to allow for the inclusion of the use of the Room Tax revenues for economic development purposes.

Ms. Herrera said the current wording in the Legislation is very clear and revenues are being utilized appropriately based on that wording. She cautioned that the County make sure that any proposed revisions to State Legislation be clear and as airtight as possible. She said the Room Tax has been a tremendous “boon” to the County’s economic development and has resulted in Tompkins County being envied by other counties in this regard.

Mr. Dennis said he would like to have a thorough discussion of this before moving a proposal to the State Legislature, specifically asking what is the definition of economic development.

Mr. Stein said it is clear that tourism is a sector of economic development. He said he had approached TCAD about a year and a half ago with regard to working with the County on this and was told they were not interested as this was an area that is not part of their mission. Mr. Stein said within the last month that has changed and during recent discussions with Michael Stamm, President of TCAD, Mr. Stamm indicated that he feels he can accommodate economic development/tourism needs within his program. Mr. Stein noted this is a significant change from what has been previously reported. Mr. Stein said he is not exactly sure what Mr. Hattery’s goals are but stated this may go a long way towards what he is trying to achieve.

Mr. Stein commented that the process to propose a change State legislation is long and complex, and while a change as suggested by Mr. Hattery is possible, it is unlikely to happen before 2010.

Mr. Hattery explained his intentions and said he would like to see funding for TCAT and for manufacturing and higher-tech development without raising the property tax. He said there is good reasons to think that funding for these items will be reduced in the future due to changes in State legislation.

No action was taken.

**RESOLUTION NO. – RECOMMENDATION TO DISCONTINUE SPONSORSHIP
OF WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
PROGRAM**

MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Hattery. Mr. Shinagawa clarified that an inaccurate statement was made at the Health and Human Services Committee meeting last week that approval by that Committee was required in order for this item to be maintained on today’s agenda. He said this resolution was originally included on this Committee’s agenda and can therefore be discussed.

Mr. Shinagawa asked what the transition process would look like this if the County moved in this direction.

Ms. Connors said when the State WIC Department Request for Proposals goes out they are going to actively look to have other people in the community apply if the County does not. Once an agency has been selected, they will fund the startup of the agency's program until they are fully functional. They would also maintain funding for the County's WIC program during the transition. The new agency would need to be fully functional, fully staffed, trained, and have equipment.

Ms. Herrera said she will not support this resolution. She said the current problem that has been cited in having relationship issues with the State is a management issue that Tompkins County can deal with. She said if this should come to a place where Tompkins County has an opportunity to bid on this she hopes we will do the best possible application because this is a good program and very much needed by residents. She said the people who are performing duties under this program are experienced and highly qualified and the County would be doing a disservice everyone in Tompkins County to move this into the non-profit community.

Mr. Shinagawa said this is a federal program that is administered by Tompkins County and thinks it can be administered effectively by a non-profit agency. They would also have to follow guidelines and benchmark or would face financial repercussions. He does not think it would be out of government purview because there would still be State and Federal oversight.

Mr. Hattery said a question has been raised that this program compliments other programs in the Health Department and asked Ms. Cole how the Health Department would respond to this. Ms. Cole said there is synergy in having adjacency of the programs, however, co-location is not essential and although there would be some changes, the program referrals would continue.

Ms. Mackesey asked if there is knowledge of what other agency would apply. Mr. Shinagawa said he could not cite any particular agency but believes that other agencies would apply if Tompkins County does not.

Ms. Fitzpatrick distributed an organizational chart of the WIC program and reviewed employee titles and possible employment placement within Tompkins County for each position if this resolution were approved. She said every situation is unique and while she would to her best to place involved employees in other positions within the County, she could not offer any guarantees.

Ms. Frith, WIC Director, said she has always known WIC to be a public health program that deals with nutrition and health assessment. She provided a brief historical overview of the WIC program and said as a health program she has always envisioned the program within a health agency. There are benefits because it was originally designed to provide services in medical institutions and in places where there were no medical institutions the county health departments took on the program. In cases where there were neither a strong medical institution or a county health department the programs were administered in a community action program that typically administered other health programs.

Ms. Herrera said the County would not have any control over the transition and in other places where there has been a transition there has also been a decline in services. She also spoke of the negative economic impact this action would have on the community.

Ms. Mackesey said she will not support this resolution; the WIC program is the safety net in terms of offering services to a very vulnerable population. She said not knowing who would administer the program and that the County would have no control over the program is very bothersome to her.

Mr. Dennis said he will support the resolution because he thinks the program can function under another agency and that agency would continue to receive the same level of funding. He thinks the current level of service could also be maintained. Mr. Dennis said the full Legislature should debate this issue and vote.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 3 (Dennis, Hattery, Shinagawa); Noes – 2 (Herrera, Mackesey). MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program has been sponsored by the County since 1980, and

WHEREAS, it is the Department’s recommendation to discontinue sponsorship of the program when a transition plan is approved by New York State Department of Health, and

WHEREAS, pending the approval of another entity as the sponsor of the WIC Program by the New York State Department of Health, we hope to transition by November 2009, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Tompkins County Board of Health and the Budget and Capital Committee, That the Department not seek renewal of the WIC Program from New York State Department of Health,

RESOLVED, further, That the Department work to ensure a smooth transition to the approved new sponsoring agency including consideration of an extension of the contract until award is granted.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

Rollover

Ms. Jayne distributed a 2007-2008 Rollover Report. She called attention to the 2007 amount certified for the Department of Social Services (\$2,553,102). She read the following statement about this from Mr. Whicher, County Administrator, who was not in attendance.

“The 2008 Rollover report is very alarming. DSS in some manner developed over \$2,000,000 in rollover. It is unlikely that this was from underspending and is most likely from unanticipated levels of reimbursement. Given the past accuracy of DSS budgeting, this outcome although at first pleasant, is cause for alarm. If, as I suspect, the State's new software, which we cannot monitor, has erroneously credited the County with inordinately high reimbursements, the County's financial position will greatly damaged when the error is corrected.

“For example, if it turns out that the County received \$2,000,000 in excess revenues in 2007 our real fund balance would not be \$11,000,0000 but rather \$9,000,000 and the year end performance would look a great deal different. This will then ripple into 2008 and 2009 putting the County in a severe financial pinch in a time when the State is about to reduce spending dramatically.

“Since I must have an accurate answer to this issue prior to formulating an approach to the 2009 budget, I have asked Norma to schedule a review with David, Tom, Patricia, Norma and me as soon as I return. I sincerely hope that this issue will not be as serious as I fear but I am not optimistic at this point”.

Ms. Carey said there needs to be a discussion about this prior to reaching any conclusion. She said there has not been enough time to analyze the information but will be meeting with staff and the County Administrator upon his return to discuss this and a follow-up report will be provided to the Committee.

Next Meeting

Mr. Shinagawa stated at the next meeting he would like this Committee to review the items that were included on the survey presented to Legislators at the budget retreat.

Concern was expressed by Ms. Mackesey over the list of ideas contained in that document and she did not think it was a list to use as a basis for any decision-making. She said there were very obscure items on the list that Legislators do not have a clear understanding of. Mr. Shinagawa and Mr. Hattery viewed the list as a starting point for discussion. Ms. Mackesey said if this list were to be released to department heads it would create a large panic amongst employees.

Mr. Shinagawa said when this list was presented, Legislators weighted the options for the purpose of developing a top ten list. Mr. Dennis said County Administration was to compile this information and produce a chart that would be made available to Legislators. He said if there is going to be discussion of a list, all of the involved parties should receive information.

Ms. Herrera does not think the results of the survey would accurately reflect and the positions of any Legislators because of the vagueness of items contained in that list. She said she needs further explanation of many of the items.

Ms. Jayne said it is her understanding that the list contained many strategy ideas not weighted ideas.

Ms. Martel-Moore said there is a list that will be provided to department heads at a meeting to be held May 14th. She provided the Mr. Shinagawa with a copy of the information that will be distributed to department heads by the Chair of the Legislature and Ms. Younger.

Ms. Cole said departments went through an extensive exercise two years ago to produce cost-cutting ideas and that has never come forward. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked how the list under discussion was generated. Ms. Jayne the list is a compilation of many of the suggestions by departments over the years. Ms. Fitzpatrick said before any list is circulated that contains ideas about positions there needs to be clarification of what exactly is being considered because a panic amongst employees will result. Ms. Mackesey said it is imperative that this is handled delicately because she would like to avoid a panic among staff.

At this time the Committee had a discussion about asking that the list presented today not be released to departments and that this Committee take the lead in guiding the process, beginning with creating a new list.

Mr. Shinagawa said at the next meeting the Committee will look at suggestions from various lists, previous discussions, ideas from individual legislators and will spend that meeting discussing strategies of potential spending reductions for the purpose of developing a document.

Members opposed circulating the document presented today to Department Heads at the May 14th meeting.

Ms. Carey said as a department head she feels there is a “secret list” and the presumption that department heads are not aware the County is in a bad situation is inaccurate. She is disappointed by the development of a list without asking for the opinions of department heads of what they can do to help.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr returned at this time. He said at the Department Head meeting this week they will be looking at various discussions for strategies for budget reductions. He stated he knew the Budget and Capital Committee was working towards developing strategies to bridge the gap, however, in planning for the Department Head meeting last week, several people from Administration suggested using the list that was presented at the Retreat. He did not think that would be appropriate and asked Ms. Jayne and Ms. Younger to look at suggestions that had been made over the last two-year period during budget processes. His understanding is that this is the list that will be circulated to department heads along with having an initial dialogue and request for input.

Ms. Herrera said the Committee’s response is that putting out a list like this sends the wrong message, particularly because the framing of the information had not yet been determined. She said Legislators and department heads know there are hard choices that need to be made. The list gives credibility and quantity to some things that Legislators know nothing about. She asked on behalf of the Committee, not to present the list to department heads at the meeting this week.

Ms. Mackesey said she does not want to demoralize County employees with wording that is not ready and asked that department heads be communicated with about the situation along with a request for ideas.

Mr. Shinagawa suggested that “themes” be presented to department heads instead of specific ideas.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr said while he understands the opinions that have been expressed by the Committee, efforts are being made to not disrespect that department heads have provided ideas for several years, some which have been implemented and others have not.

It was the consensus of the Committee that the document presented is not ready to be circulated amongst department heads. Mr. Koplinka-Loehr stated had intended to annotate the list and make it much smaller, however, he has learned the document was already sent electronically to all department heads. The Committee expressed extreme disappointment by this.

A special meeting will be held on May 29th for the purpose of developing budget strategies.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.