

*Public Hearing*  
*2017 Budget*  
November 16, 2016

The Public Hearing on the 2017 Budget was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 P.M. Seven Legislative members were present, Legislators Monell and Mullen being absent.

There were four people in attendance along with Budget Officer Rita Hollenbeck.

The Clerk read the legal notice as published in the official newspapers.

Rita Hollenbeck, Budget Officer gave the 2017 budget presentation.

"Honorable Members of Tioga County Legislature and the Citizens of Tioga County.

"I present to you the proposed Tentative County budget for 2017.

"The tax cap continues to be a major constraint. The NYS Tax Cap Calculation for 2017 allowed a mere 0.16% increase. This equated to approximately \$36,288.00 potential tax levy increase for the county. Expenditure increase for salaries alone were 10 times this allowed tax levy increase.

"Departments again were asked and did their very best to keep their costs neutral. Most increases were due to contractual obligations for both employee salaries and the Count's contracted services.

"The overall gap between the proposed county expenditures and revenues has decreased in 2017, though there still remains a deficit. I propose using a total of \$1,077,033 to bridge this gap. This is a decrease of \$680,511 or 38% from 2016.

"I will continue to preach that reliance on the fund balance, additional borrowing for infrastructure needs, or cutting nonmandated services is not feasible or sustainable. More than 86% of the County services and associated costs are state mandated. Non mandated services that are left have been trimmed all they can. Previous financial forecasting of historical trends predicted insufficient fund balances to continue operations while staying within the state imposed tax cap in four short years. Several circumstances have changed and I will be updating the four year financial plan out to the year 2020.

"There is good news here. First I applaud the Legislature's vision and understanding as they supported economic development, shared services and aggressively applied for and secured additional state grants. This alone accounts for over \$700,000 in additional revenue for the 2017 proposed budget.

"Department Heads and the Legislature have a common goal of holding the line on spending while maintaining services to our taxpayers. The 2017 proposed budget has a 1.07% decrease to the General Fund expenses. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year we have had a 1% decrease in the General Fund appropriations.

"We actually ended 2015 with a surplus to the General Operating Fund Balance. As we approach year end 2016 I am projecting less of a deficit or draw on fund balance than anticipated.

"The 2017 budget and beyond will recognize increased sales tax, occupancy tax, and gaming funds. The additional sources of revenue are compliments of Tioga Downs, Crown Cork & Bottle, and Nichols Cross Dock. At this time it is difficult to predict the overall fiscal impact to the county, but these local efforts have narrowed the budget gap while creating jobs in Tioga County. I believe the additional revenue will have a maturity date though, and should not be relied on to heavily. While the stream lasts, I strongly recommend the additional revenue be set aside to rebuild depleted capital reserves and maintain strong funds balances.

"In 2017 the County continues to share sales tax with the towns and villages. I'll remind everyone that some counties have needed to reduce this distribution or eliminate it altogether to help balance their budgets. We estimate distributing over \$4,600,000.00 in the proposed 2017 budget.

"We continue the same level of funding to outside agencies at a net cost of \$689,363. We value the services they provide and there would be a negative trickledown fiscal impact to all budgets across the county if the services were cut, not to mention the impact to our citizens.

"2017 marks the sixth consecutive budget year Tioga County has stayed under the State imposed property tax cap. The six year average increase in the tax levy dropped to 1.58% each year.

"Now for the best news. There will be no tax levy increase for the 2017 proposed budget. The 2017 county tax levy will remain level with 2016. 0% is better than 2% when it comes to taxpayers in our county. I would challenge all other taxing entities across this county to renew their efforts for shared services, cost containment and efficiencies.

“The county tax levy for 2017 is \$22,161,628 and Solid Waste’s is \$1,023,742. The total combined County Tax Levy is \$23,185,370.00

“Under the proposed budget we are under the tax cap and will have minimal rollover funds moving into the 2018 budget year.

“The Composite Tax Rate is \$8.99 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value. The average assessed \$100,000 home will pay \$899.00 in county taxes. Tax rates will vary from town to town due to the state established equalization rates and the town’s apportionment percent.

“The county continues to qualify in 2017 for Property Tax rebates. Prior year rebates have ranged from \$20 to \$100. Tioga County’s approved plan for past year efficiencies has certainly proven to contain county government spending. The Tax Rebate initiative allows a year to year increase of the residents’ tax bills to be refunded if applicable criteria are met and the government entity is eligible. Since inception Tioga County has been eligible.

“I would like to thank the County Legislature, department heads and all county employees for their participation in the annual budget process. Special recognition and thanks to the Treasurer’s staff, Personnel and Real Property for their added participation in the budget process.

“The proposed tax levy cannot be increased after tonight’s hearing without an additional public hearing.”

The Budget Officer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2017 budget highlights.

“If you have comments to present to the Legislature regarding the proposed budget, the floor is now open. “

There being no comments, the Budget Hearing was adjourned at 6:24 P.M.