



Tioga County Worksession Minutes **November 9, 2023 – 1:00 p.m.**

Legislators Present:

Legislator Brown
Legislator Ciotoli
Legislator Flesher
Legislator Monell
Legislator Mullen
Legislator Roberts
Chair/Legislator Sauerbrey
Legislator Standinger
Legislator Weston

Legislators Absent:

None

Guests:

None

Staff present:

Peter DeWind, County Attorney
Cathy Haskell, Legislative Clerk
Amy Eiklor, Deputy Legislative Clerk
Jackson Bailey, Budget Officer
Linda Parke, Personnel Officer
Gary Howard, Sheriff
LeeAnn Tinney, ED&P Director (*Departed at 1:53 p.m.*)
Porshea Moore, Alcohol & Drug Peer Advocate (*Departed at 1:41 p.m.*)

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Sauerbrey opened the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

2024 Budget Update – Budget Officer Bailey: Mr. Bailey reported the budget is currently set to Level 4, the Tentative Budget. He reported that there was one final revision request that came in from DMV. They are requesting \$500 from a chair line (A1411 520070) be moved to an office equipment line (A1411 520200), plus an additional \$300 appropriation to the office equipment line for the purchase of a safe. Mr. Bailey asked the Legislators if there any objections to the revision. There were no objections.

Mr. Bailey presented his 2024 Tentative Budget Brief, which he will present at the Public Hearing on November 14th. Mr. Bailey presented the following 2024 budget highlights:

- Tioga County remains under the Tax Cap for the 12th consecutive year.
- Tioga County remains in compliance with its General Fund Balance Policy.
- All 2023 programs are to be continued in 2024.
- Total 2024 Tax Levy \$26,296,389.
- 2024 Mandated Service costs are estimated at \$25,800,950, which makes up about 98% of the Total Tax Levy.
- Medicaid costs make up approximately 32% of the Total Tax Levy.
- 2022 Fiscal Stress Monitoring Level from the Comptroller's Office remains at no designation.
- Tentative total appropriations are estimated at \$103,02,57, which is 3.5% higher than 2023.
- Top costs for Tioga County are salaries, health insurance, Medicaid, sales tax distributions, handicapped education, pensions, college tuition costs, and bonds/debts. Legislator Mullen stated he would like an emphasis on college tuition in the presentation as many constituents are surprised to learn the immense cost of community college tuition that Tioga County pays on behalf of its residents.
- Outside agency funding remains the same with the exception of Tioga Opportunities, who will receive an additional \$2,814 in 2024.
- Mr. Bailey would like to give an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) update in the budget presentation. By the end of 2023, Tioga County anticipates that \$3 million of the roughly \$9.3 million it received, will be spent. The remaining \$6.3 million left consists of an allocation of \$4 million for the emergency services radio communications project. ARPA funds must be allocated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.
- Total 2024 estimated revenue from various funding streams is estimated at \$95,257,025. Legislator Mullen stated a portion of that funding stream is from casino revenue, which is considered State Aid, therefore, can be taken away at any time. Legislator Mullen explained that Tioga County receives such a minimal amount of casino revenue and what little is received, Tioga County has acted conservatively.
- 2024 appropriated fund balance is estimated at \$7,770,550.
- Combined composite tax rate for 2024 is \$6.99 per \$1,000 of taxable value. The average assessed \$100,000 home will pay around \$699 in County tax.

- Future budget challenges for Tioga County may include maintaining services, managing reductions in State or Federal Aid, advocating for mandated relief, maintaining, or creating new funding sources, staff turnover/retention/hiring, support for outside agencies, maintaining sales tax distributions, meeting Capital equipment needs, and communication upgrades.

Mr. Bailey will conduct his 2024 Tentative Budget presentation at the Public Hearing on Tuesday, November 14th at 10:00 a.m. in the Hubbard Auditorium.

Homeless Presentation – Alcohol & Drug Peer Advocate Porshea Moore: Legislator Flesher introduced Porshea Moore, Alcohol and Drug Peer Advocate from Mental Hygiene. Legislator Flesher and Ms. Moore both sit on the Alternatives to Incarceration Board, where homelessness was discussed at their last meeting. Legislator Flesher found Ms. Moore's knowledge and experience highly informative and asked her to speak to the Legislature about the subject.

Ms. Moore reported that she began working with the homeless community by accident through her position at Mental Hygiene and has developed a sense of trust with many. She stated Tioga County does not have a homeless shelter, but the Tioga County Open Door Mission does house a minimal number of homeless men. Ms. Moore explained that the organization has certain stipulations for men wishing to utilize their shelter. For example, individuals must be sober for thirty days, pass a drug screening, work in the shelter for 32 hours per week, and not suffer from certain mental health disorders. The living area is open, but small and residents share the same space.

Ms. Moore reported there are dozens of homeless "camps" in Owego and many more throughout Tioga County. The homeless face various barriers such as lack of transportation, lack of identification, lack of resources, lack of food, lack of mailing address, and lack of money, among others. Many individuals utilize gas station bathrooms and don't have access to showers. Some organizations can provide food, but the food has to be something that doesn't need to be cooked or refrigerated. Canned goods are difficult as many don't have can openers. The Tioga County Open Door Mission applied for a mobile food pantry grant, but they were not selected. Ms. Moore explained that most homeless individuals would not choose to live this lifestyle and are embarrassed to ask for help.

Chair Sauerbrey stated that she has heard that many homeless suffer from addiction and mental health issues. Limited help is available through Social Services, but individuals must fill out the required paperwork, which is difficult and lengthy for some. Ms. Moore agreed and said many homeless do not have health insurance or identification, which limits their access to treatment. She reported not all have addiction or mental health issues. Some were not able to pay rent and were forced to stay in tents. Legislator Standing asked Ms. Moore what her best estimate is for the number of homeless individuals in Tioga County. Ms. Moore replied that she estimates there are a couple of hundred. Chair Sauerbrey reported Catholic Charities estimated at least one hundred.

Ms. Moore explained in the past, she has taken clients to social services for housing assistance, and they were put in the local hotel. Some clients came out successful and were able to obtain jobs and transition back into the local community. Due to various factors and

constraints, many homeless are now transferred to other locations, such as Rochester or Syracuse. They are eventually transferred back to Tioga County, some of which with more problems than when they left. Ms. Moore reported there are also many individuals coming into Tioga County from the Binghamton, Rochester, or Syracuse areas as Tioga County is a smaller community. Ms. Moore has heard from these individuals that they are encouraged to come to smaller areas where they are less likely to be dismissed and more likely to be taken care of by the community.

Legislator Roberts asked if the homeless would be receptive to asking for help should Tioga County have a homeless shelter. Ms. Moore responded yes; she believes those in need would be willing to seek help if it was available. Various resources, such as help with obtaining health insurance, resume, and job assistance, would greatly benefit the homeless. Legislator Roberts inquired how the homeless crisis began for some individuals. Ms. Moore explained that everyone has a different story, but due to certain circumstances, such as domestic violence, addiction, fires, conflict, or starting over, some individuals lost all of their identification and important documentation.

Legislator Mullen asked if there was a way to establish an address for homeless individuals, so they have a way to obtain important documents via mail. Ms. Moore stated that she is allowed to use her work address or the Tioga County Open Door Mission's address for some clients. There has been some discussion with the Open Door Mission about utilizing a property in Lockwood as a central mailing location. However, that brings about a transportation issue. Also, a centralized mailing address requires someone to distribute the mail.

ED&P Director Tinney asked Ms. Moore if there was an organization or entity that would be willing to accept donated property for a homeless shelter. Ms. Moore replied that she believes there could be an organization out there willing to accept property. However, there is so much red tape involved, like permission from nearby residents, permission from various government entities, and insurance requirements. Chair Sauerbrey stated that could be a huge undertaking for an organization as rules would need to be in place and enforced. Ms. Moore agreed and said she uses a three-strike concept for her clients, and they must abide by her rules. Clients are not to disrespect her, are expected to show up on time for appointments, and respect law enforcement. She explained that it takes a certain type of person to show compassion yet enforce the rules. With no further questions, the Legislators thanked Ms. Moore for the information.

Farmer Brown Solar Project – ED&P Director Tinney: ED&P Director Tinney stated the Farmer Brown Solar Project was discussed at the ED&P Committee meeting earlier in the week. Ms. Tinney explained that this particular PILOT is located in and negotiated by the Town of Owego. For disbursement of payment, this PILOT was to include equal thirds to the three taxing jurisdictions: Town of Owego, Tioga County, and Owego-Apalachin School District. There has been a change in Owego-Apalachin School Board members, who are now asking for an increase in their share of payment. They are requesting to receive 60% of the total disbursement. The Tioga County Legislature passed Resolution No. 59-23 in February 2023 which authorized Legislative Chair signature on the Farmer Brown Solar, LLC PILOT agreement with the understanding that the three taxing jurisdictions would receive equal third payments.

Ms. Tinney explained that when PILOT projects first came about in New York, there was no guidance or formula established by New York State on how assessors were to value the properties. Recently, New York State has established a formula assessors are to use, which includes allowance for depreciation. This will impact the taxes paid on the property and in turn, impact the existing PILOT payment schedules. There will come a certain point that a company, by way of PILOT, will have to pay more than if they were to pay what the property is assessed for under the new calculation from New York State. Taxing jurisdictions are not committed to collect more than if the company were not under a PILOT payment agreement.

Legislator Roberts stated should the Legislature agree to the change in percentage, it would set a precedent to all other PILOT agreements. Legislator Monell asked if the school is unwilling to change their mind about accepting payments in thirds, whose issue does this become. Ms. Tinney replied that it is the Town of Owego's issue as they are the entity negotiating. In her opinion, Chair Sauerbrey would not be in favor of changing the payment percentages. On a straw poll vote, all Legislators agreed to leave the payment amount at equal thirds.

Jail Medical RFP – Sheriff Howard: Sheriff Howard reported an RFP for jail medical services was issued in September. Three companies responded to the RFP with proposals. Sheriff Howard explained all three companies toured the jail facility and spoke with medical staff. The following three proposals were submitted:

- CFG - \$1.6 million
- Prime Care - \$1.2 million
- CBH - \$843,000 (current vendor)

Sheriff Howard gave the three proposals to County Attorney DeWind for his review. Sheriff Howard reported the current contract with CBH ends at the end of 2023. Legislator Monell inquired what Tioga County currently pays for jail medical services. Sheriff Howard replied that Tioga County currently pays around \$800,000 per year and is able to extend the current contract with CBH. Sheriff Howard is asking the Legislature to decide based on the proposals so a resolution can be presented in December.

Legislator Monell stated it makes sense to stay with CBH, pending review of the proposals by County Attorney DeWind. On a straw poll vote, all Legislators agreed to continue with CBH, pending any significant findings in the proposals. A resolution to award the contract is anticipated to be presented at the December 12th meeting.

Approval of Worksession Minutes: On motion of Legislator Monell, seconded by Legislator Mullen, the October 19th, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Items: Currently, we have none.

Legislative Support: Legislative Clerk Haskell has typed the Legislative Support minutes.

Resolutions: Ms. Haskell reviewed the agenda and resolutions for the November 14th, 2023 Legislature meeting with discussion occurring on the following:

- **Authorize Contract between Riverside Forensic Pathology, PLLC and Tioga County:** Ms. Haskell reported this contract contains no rate increase as Administrative Coroner Bennett was able to successfully negotiate with Riverside Forensic Pathology.
- **ARPA Funding for Catholic Charities Veterans/Men's Transitional Housing Project:** Chair Sauerbrey reported this housing project is for a five-bedroom transitional home for men or Veterans in need.
- **Request and Transfer of Contingency Funds & Modify 2023 Budget – Assigned Counsel:** Legislator Mullen pointed out this resolution is due to the rate increase which went from \$75 per hour to \$158 per hour.
- **Authorize Appointment of Public Defender:** Ms. Haskell reported Public Defender, George Awad, will retire at the end of 2023. This resolution is to appoint Thomas Cline to the position of Public Defender. Mr. Cline will replace Mr. Awad for the remainder of his term, which will continue through December 31, 2025.
- **Appointment of Republican Election Commissioner – Board of Elections:** Ms. Haskell reported Lin Layman is retiring as Republican Election Commissioner and her Deputy, Kelly Johnson, will be appointed to replace her. Ms. Haskell received the Republican Party's Recommendation Certificate for the approval of the appointment. Board of Elections is actively recruiting for the impending vacant Deputy Commissioner position.

Other:

- **State of Emergency Declaration:** Chair Sauerbrey reported that she signed a new State of Emergency Declaration on November 8th. This State of Emergency pertains to New York City housing vouchers for homeless and/or needy individuals relocating to upstate counties. She also issued new State of Emergency Orders, which will be extended every five days until further notice.

Executive Session: Nine Legislators were in attendance. County Attorney DeWind, Personnel Officer Parke, and Legislative Clerk Haskell remained in attendance. Motion by Legislator Monell, seconded by Legislator Flesher, to move into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the appointment and promotion of particular individuals at 2:27 p.m. Motion carried. Motion by Legislator Monell to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Flesher. Executive Session adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. *Date change due to holiday

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Eiklor

Deputy Legislative Clerk