



JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

JAMES J. ROWLEY
Chairman

DEBORAH KAMINSKI
Assistant Clerk

Onondaga County Legislature

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WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MINUTES – JUNE 28, 2022 BRIAN F. MAY, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Burtis, *Ms. Abbott, Mr. Olson, Mr. Kinne, Mrs. Ervin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Ryan

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Rowley, Ms. Gunnip, Ms. Cody, Mr. Garland; also see attached

Chair May called the meeting to order at 11:37 a.m. *The minutes of the previous meeting have been distributed. There are no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes are approved.*

1. **ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY:** Chairman James J. Rowley

a. **Confirming Appointments to the Onondaga County Water Authority (Douglas R. Wickman, Anthony Geiss, Jr., John Bianchini, Kenneth Gardiner)** (Sponsored by Mr. Rowley)

- 2 reappointments – John Bianchini and Ken Gardiner
- 2 appointments replacing Mr. Luber and Mr. Dougherty; resumes provided for replacement; non-political and professional engineers; both agreed to serve

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Mrs. Ervin, to approve this item. Ayes: 3 (Burtis, Olson, Ervin) Abstentions: 2 (May, Kinne) Absent: 1 (Abbott); MOTION CARRIED.

2. **REGION 7 FISH & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD:** Legislator Tim Burtis

a. **Confirming Reappointment to the Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board (Stephen Wowelko)** (Sponsored by Ms. Abbott)

- Stephen Wowelko is involved and represents Onondaga County well; willing to serve

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis, seconded by Mr. Olson, to approve this item. Ayes: 5 Absent: 1 (Abbott); MOTION CARRIED.

3. **ADULT & LONG TERM CARE:** JoAnne Spoto Decker, Commissioner

a. **Authorizing a 2022 Senior Household Stimulus Program in Onondaga County and Amending the 2022 County Budget (\$5,500,000)** (Sponsored by Dr. Chase)

- Inflation rising, affecting those on fixed incomes - senior population; will serve ~27,500 senior households (estimation)
- Will have final tally in November this year; tied to senior Enhanced STAR exemption – rebate check
- Using eligibility from the state enhanced program; no question on population or determining eligibility

*Ms. Abbott arrived at the meeting.

- Enhanced STAR - fairly stable population from last year; do not see much flux year to year
- December timeframe for checks; last year received information late November; hope to get these out for year end
- Cost to administer: will use existing staff's time; purchase check stock; continue to reduce check production and using electronic payment; no price included for admin costs; will be within ~\$5,000
- Enhanced STAR qualifications – 62 or older and make \$92,000 or less for household income

- Program rolled out in State of County for seniors on fixed income; NYS program allows for ease of determination
- May see future programs before, in or after budget that will address a larger population (equity with other households); has not been determined; difficulty with equity is where to start, and application process would be disaster
- Could look to achieve equity through tax rate this fall with budget process
- Notion of determining eligibility out of scope for governmental entity that does not do it every day
- Seniors have to apply for Enhanced STAR for this program to run legitimately, have to identify population
- Seniors will be encouraged to ensure they apply for the benefits

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to approve this item. Ayes: 5 Abstentions: 1 (Kinne); MOTION CARRIED.

4. LEGISLATURE:

a. Confirming Appointment of Tamara L. Barber as Deputy Clerk of the Onondaga County Legislature (Sponsored by Mr. Rowley)

- Resume sent out; qualified candidate

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Mr. Burtis, to approve this item. Ayes: 4 Abstentions: 2 (Mr. Kinne, Mrs. Ervin); MOTION CARRIED.

b. 2022 Transfer Resolution (\$100,000) (Sponsored by Mr. McBride)

- Money in Legislature contingency budget; transfer to move out of contingency line for Legislative Initiatives
- One project being considered for fraction of the money; this is to move the money to help towns/villages; starts process
- Put in budget for flooding issues - focusing on that, but broad enough to stretch beyond
- Current request to mitigate issues as a result of flooding
- Flooding in towns and villages last year was horrific; crosses into county infrastructure and issues; idea to assist municipalities in areas with county interest to do so, as it trickles into consolidated sewer district
- Overflow can cross jurisdictions with no result, causing conflict and finger pointing; tax payers dealing with damage
- Grant money is not targeting engineering studies, but mitigating damage occurred
- Project is town of Onondaga - road washed out with flooding; in process of repairing; looking to reimburse some costs
- Public easement in a town or county can work, but private property can be problematic

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Ms. Abbott, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

c. Amending the Rules of the Onondaga County Legislature (Sponsored by Mr. Rowley)

- Purpose to align rules with County Charter; County Law has not approved yet
- Legislative Counsel reviewed changes, purpose is to make clarifications; no substantive changes; changes include making them gender neutral
- Legislative Counsel has not spoken to Law Department about their concerns, but expect will discuss between now and session to address concerns
- No intention of taking a vote today
- One point of concern from Law Department – general opinion that Legislature has right to own Legislative Counsel; debate whether Legislative Counsel can help prepare resolutions and Local Laws; Charter indicates can do that
- No substantive changes to how the Legislature does things; making current, modern, gender neutral

d. Calling for a Public Hearing Regarding Videoconferencing by Onondaga County Public Bodies Pursuant to New York State Open Meetings Law (August 2, 2022, 12:56 p.m.) (Sponsored by Mr. Rowley)

- Setting date for public hearing; local law allows for videoconferencing for extenuating circumstances – not business or travel, but (i.e.) family member sick and must travel to take care of them

- Applies to not only Legislature, but includes countywide agencies and public bodies

A motion was made by Mr. Burtis to approve this item.

- Extenuating circumstances defined as serious reason to miss meeting
- (i.e.) Person is sick in hospital (or at home) and is mentally okay, would be able to use this
- Local Law on file - extraordinary circumstances defined in NYS law, but room for legislative input on circumstances
- Governor Hochul extended the state of emergency into July, so this would cover videoconferencing when the state is no longer in a state of emergency
- This sets public hearing date to start legislative process

Ms. Abbott seconded the motion. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

5. FINANCE: Donald Weber, Real Property Tax Director; Steve Morgan, Chief Financial Officer

a. A Resolution Indicating the County of Onondaga's Ongoing Intent to Require a Contract for Payment in Lieu of Taxes for Solar and Wind Energy Systems Pursuant to Real Property Tax Law Section 487(9)(B)

- Solar farms are required under NYS law to notice county when putting one in; county required to respond within 60 days if requiring PILOT payment
- This resolution puts on record that Onondaga County will always require a PILOT payment
- Real Property will no longer have to respond within the 60 day window
- This is a new policy– currently when noticed about solar farm being put in, a letter is sent to Real Property, and they respond with a letter within 60 days requiring a PILOT payment
- If Real Property does not send a letter within the 60 day window, the solar farm will be tax exempt; this resolution would negate having to send the letter, in case something gets lost in mail
- Solar Farm would have tax exemption on property taxes, aside from the land; this would be for the panels themselves
- (i.e.) Property of 40 acres assessed at \$100,000, then assessor increases by \$1 mil for solar, the additional \$1 million would be exempt if the county does not require PILOT payment
- State rolled out formula on how to assess these projects and properties, but it is tied up in court
- State law makes solar farms exempt, which has been on books (NYS Real Property Tax Law 487)
- Every local municipality has ability to require a PILOT payment, to let it be exempt, or rescind exemption entirely
- Different everywhere - some towns and schools opted out completely
- Solar company would have to go to school to enter PILOT, as well as local towns; this is for county's portion
- Can possibly come up with a unified PILOT, but schools can do for themselves
- 15 years for PILOT
- Handful of earlier projects went through OCIDA, instead of negotiating individually (town, county, school)

A motion was made by Mr. Kinne, seconded by Mrs. Ervin, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

b. Approving and Directing the Correction of Certain Errors on Tax Bills

- Manlius – cell tower panels removed years ago; cell company did not notify the town; can refund up to last 3 years
- Other 2 parcels owned by NYS; tax exempt; will write taxes off

A motion was made by Mr. Olson, seconded by Mr. Burtis, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

c. INFORMATIONAL: 1st Quarter Reporting

2022 First Quarter Indicators

Key Economic and Fiscal Indicators**Inside this issue:**

Indicator	Period	2022	2021
Unemployment Rate: Onondaga County	Q1	3.8%	6.4%
Employed Persons by Month (in 000's): Onondaga County	Q1	211	207
Employed Persons yr-over-yr (in 000's): Onondaga County	Q1	5.1	(9.8)
Overall Consumer Confidence: New York State	Q1	68	82.5
Consumer Price Index (all items) - Inflation Rate	Q1	8.0%	1.9%
Weighted Average County Interest Rate	Q1	0.19%	0.08%
Reconciled Quarterly Sales Tax Collections % Chg CYTD	Q1	14.5%	5.5%
Auto Sales CYTD: Onondaga County	Q1	5,950	7,055
Gasoline Prices per gallon paid by Onondaga County	Q1	\$3.13	\$2.35
Retail Gasoline Prices per gallon in Upstate NY	Q1	\$3.84	\$2.59
Onondaga County Clerk Fees CYTD	Q1	\$626,676	\$613,177
Lis Pendens CYTD	Q1	271	95
Existing Home Sales CYTD: Onondaga County	Q1	861	845
Average Median Home Price YTD: Onondaga County	Q1	\$222,773	\$196,926
Onondaga County Filled Positions	January	2,935	2,826
Average Monthly Public Assistance Caseloads YTD	Q1	4,119	4,410
Average Monthly Medicaid Caseloads YTD	Q1	39,686	37,500

CYTD = Cumulative Year-to-Date (January - Period listed)

- Warning signs – overall consumer confidence in state down from last year; higher than national at 59%; inflation is 8%
- Lis Pendens – 95 now 271; not lien but foreshadowing on legal action; foreclosure on properties
- Economy in uncharted territory; expect recession in next 18 months; will continue to monitor finances
- Bringing spending plan in September; good news – sales tax, which offsets other items, year over year - 14.5% growth

2022 First Quarter Budget Forecast					
	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Adopted	2022 Modified	2022 Dpt_Projected
Revenues					
Property Tax Levy	149,779,388	156,419,220	156,254,668	156,254,668	156,254,668
Deferred/Uncollectible	(14,000,592)	(12,689,177)	(15,036,495)	(15,036,495)	(15,036,495)
Prior Year Collections	11,453,950	12,875,663	12,396,375	12,396,374	12,396,374
Pilots/Interest & Penalties	10,342,233	9,818,312	10,517,544	10,517,544	10,517,544
Room Occupancy Tax	2,618,961	1,700,808	4,466,508	4,466,508	4,466,508
Abstract Charges	12,799,457	10,775,161	11,053,758	11,053,758	11,053,758
Sales Tax - County Portion	269,873,525	323,082,905	300,284,775	300,284,775	339,237,054
Sales Tax - Non County	90,244,932	108,978,535	100,094,925	100,094,925	114,427,461
State Aid	78,670,376	87,300,212	99,024,380	99,024,380	91,104,056
Federal Aid	80,694,994	80,325,210	96,040,208	96,040,208	86,176,506
Interdepartmentals	54,459,248	52,205,332	57,454,849	57,454,849	57,454,849
All Other	37,564,705	37,180,344	37,542,064	37,554,064	34,515,166
Total Revenues	784,501,178	867,972,525	870,093,559	870,105,558	902,567,449
Appropriations					
Mandated Programs	220,128,826	217,947,172	263,337,721	263,437,575	232,784,361
Wages	151,777,495	146,502,052	164,375,619	164,375,618	166,330,000
Benefits	86,332,337	74,308,985	71,545,476	71,545,476	71,545,476
Contracted Services	64,862,481	70,669,774	73,931,531	74,446,905	67,902,444
Interfund Transfers	47,525,761	51,247,592	58,225,524	58,225,524	58,225,524
Debt Service	17,655,913	17,873,125	17,980,861	17,980,861	17,980,861
Sales Tax - Non County	90,241,999	108,978,535	100,094,925	100,094,925	114,427,461
Interdepartmentals	48,157,088	45,934,438	50,121,559	50,121,559	50,121,559
All Other	31,271,496	37,376,943	70,480,343	71,045,719	72,374,398
Total Expenses	757,953,396	770,838,616	870,093,559	871,274,162	851,692,084
Fund Balance					
Appropriated Fund Balance					
Prior Year Project Close Outs	(1,643,098)				
Total Fund Balance	(1,643,098)	0	0	0	0
Local Dollars	(24,904,683)	(97,133,909)	0	1,168,604	(50,875,365)

- Ended with \$97 mil surplus - doubled fund balance in a year; main factor was sales tax, which grew 20% year over year; accounts for \$60 mil of \$97 mil surplus
- No state cut; concerned in 2020 and 2021 that state would pull back on reimbursements for municipalities
- Federal gov't did stimulus package, and state did not have to cut; forecasted a cut in 2020 and 2021; another \$20 mil
- Additional savings in Medicaid due to stimulus funds - reimbursement from federal government
- 2021 – strong performance; pandemic created environment have not navigated before in regard to finances
- Recommendation to Executive to contract as much as possible; might get murdered on revenue front
- Revenue shortfall not nearly what was anticipated
- 2022 budget - left quite a bit in; \$86 mil in additional spending over 2021; thoughtful in process
- Baseline approach in budget will serve county well; stabilized and in position to withstand recession that may come

- Strong reserves; identified where need to be to provide services; have 1 time projects and initiatives that will not repeat

Revenues

- Main highlight is sales tax: projecting 5% growth this year, which is over 20% growth from 2021
- Budget anticipated 2% growth on top of 9% in 2021; starting with strength; ending year more than double what was anticipated and projected
- Receiving 2 sales tax payments this week; ~16% year over year; do not expect to maintain that level; will be in single digits; couple payments this week, July and August; then bring over budget in line with what seeing
- Driving \$39 mil of almost \$51 mil surplus
- Other main area in revenue is decrease in state and federal aid; product of mandates being down; mandates projected \$30 mil under budget; state and fed aid is product of spending
- Other revenue down is JobsPlus contract going away

Expenditures

- Mandates - \$30 mil down related to Medicaid savings; enhanced Medicaid reimbursement tied to Federal Health Emergency; every time feds extend health emergency (monthly basis), it continues the enhanced fed aid to Medicaid
- Enhanced Medicaid goes to state, and state shares portion with county; did not expect it to still be in place
- Other mandates – 2020 was \$220 mil, 2021 \$217 mil, now projecting \$232 mil; would be surprised if they end there
- Mandates have not spiked as anticipated
- Expecting over \$10 mil in Temporary Assistance (TA) account, another \$6 mil in Day Care, and \$5 mil in Special Children's Services; not seeing demand for these services; they are in line with pre-pandemic levels
- Continue to anticipate it, plan for it; in position to provide programs; what is spent has to be paid for due to mandates
- Wages – projected over budget; strictly result of DSBA contract settlement - have to pay 2020, 2021 retro and 2022; offset with overall savings in salary; also increase of salaries with JobsPlus
- Roughly trying to fill 200 positions; better than in April at almost 300; civil service lists are starting to come out and departments are working them; starting to get funded positions filled
- Contractual services – down, due to JobsPlus contract going away; salaries will move in; lose a little revenue
- Utilities – projecting couple million deficit from adopted; strictly related to utilities; huge spike in February; have seen it come down, but projecting significantly over budget
- Anticipate coming back in fall or earlier for legislative transfers to support increase; utilities under All Other line
- Fuel – little pressure, but utilities driving All Other account
- All Other line amount includes onetime expenses – addition of \$40 mil in contingency
- Ended 2021 strong; projecting to end 2022 strong as well

Sewer Fund

- Legislative action needed; overall projecting close to \$5 mil deficit driven by utilities and chemical costs
- WEP largest utility user; chemical costs 20-30% higher; contracts signed and chemical costs spiked
- Will try using money within other accounts that have surplus, but will dip into WEP fund balance (\$28 mil) if necessary

Fund Balance Analysis

as of 6.17.2022	
2021 Revenue	\$ 867,972,520
Less: Sales Tax Pass Through	(108,978,535)
Less: Interdepartmental Revenue	(52,205,332)
Total Revenue for Fund Balance Calculation	\$ 706,788,654
Current Fund Balance Goal 10%	\$ 70,678,865
Unreserved Fund Balance 12/31/20	\$ 103,938,275

Appropriated in 2021

Adopted Budget	
2021 Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 97,133,907
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Unreserved Fund Balance - 12/31/21	\$ 201,072,182
Less: Encumbrances	(1,167,376)
FB Adjustments 2021	-
Appropriated in 2022 Budget	-
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Unassigned Fund Balance - Estimated	\$ 199,904,806
Amount of Fund Balance as a %	28.3%
Amount of Fund Balance over (under) 10% Goal	\$ 129,225,941

- Fund balance - legislative policy goal is 10% of general fund revenues
- Gearing up to issue debt for year; first rating call with Moody's – credit rating upgraded from AA3 to AA2 - hopefully will garner more competitive rates
- SMP affirmed AA stable rating - identifying strong performance through pandemic and ability to manage
- Will continue to look at county operations and spending; ensure not adding to expenses that cannot fund in long term
- Goal to ensure investments made are strategic and 1 time; have to be thoughtful and methodical in monitoring operations
- Invest in base operations for level of services required and expected to offer; as well as big investments that will pay dividends and not reoccurring; have structural surplus not deficit
- Public Assistance caseloads down Q1 and Medicaid caseloads up – typical understanding of how programs ebb and flow is out the window
- TA impacted by significant resources pushed to localities - enhanced unemployment stimulus checks, rental assistance (pushed out millions), childcare; supports out there and potentially impacting core TA program
- May see that creep back up as other programs wane, especially rental assistance (possibly getting another round)
- Medicaid – loosened requirements; redetermination not done as frequently
- State wants (i.e.) HEAP, Medicaid, child care administered as easily as possible; not trying to change behavior
- TA - trying to change behavior; ensure if a person is able bodied, they can work, or look for work; may not be living wage, but other supports available would bring family to livable situation

ROT

- Flat – typically room tax and property tax slotted in at budget; getting towards third quarter, will modify
- Think will end year exceeding expectations in ROT; this is only general fund portion, but total budget this year was \$8 mil – good chunk is budgeted in OnCenter revenue funds to support OnCenter; will see surplus there

Housing market concerns

- Possible that the country is in position for another housing crisis
- (i.e.) if market falls out, and people own a home for more than what it is worth, will be back in same position as last time - can impact county finances; do not know that it will happen; not sure if people are overleveraged like last time
- Continue to look down the road to make decisions now that will protect county in future

ARPA, cash and debt

- Nothing ARPA related in forecast; received second tranche couple weeks ago; in financial statements
- Cash position in place never seen before; general fund cash at end of 2020 was \$5 mil, and now \$156 mil
- County investing in T-Bills amongst other places; before end of year, think T-Bill will garner 4%; generate serious

interest income to fund; money market deposits garnering more and more attractive rates

- Debt anticipated - \$66 mil; half that money has already been spent, and other half is anticipated spending this year
- Issuing \$9 mil in BANs, because a portion of work done at stadium is taxable (occupied and run by private entity)
- Issuance bigger when including BANs; certain portion of total issuance can be taxable and issue it nontaxable, which is called flooding; will continue to flood for next few years to redeem the BANs
- Used \$9 mil in cash surplus; potentially will see more of that going forward
- 2022 projection does not yet anticipate the \$5.5 mil for the senior program

Sheriff's budget – NYS no longer paying half of mental health costs

- It is not back yet; still an issue this year; baked in, but issue is level of hospitalizations
- Have some control over it - Ms. Rooney and team working to ensure reduce expenses; renegotiated contract with vendor and have better terms than last year; vendor will pay up to certain amount, then county will split overage
- Will see smaller impact than last year; have some ability to control costs
- On NYSAC's radar; will see if they get any traction in the next legislative cycle
- Sleight of hand did not pick up on; tucked in budget and did not see until too late

How to spend down fund balance

- Using fund balance now and senior stimulus is 1 step; want to use dollars in thoughtful way that will not become annual expense; Legislature can expect to see more of this
- Upgraded rating because of level of savings; NYS metrics are more than 10% of revenues for fund balance; no right or wrong; mindful that 10% may not be enough; may need to look at legislative policy going forward
- \$5.5 mil stimulus for seniors a start; will see in budget process to try to assist the community going forward

*Ms. Abbott left the meeting.

6. **COMPTROLLER:** Martin Masterpole, Comptroller

a. **INFORMATIONAL: ACFR**

- Opioid settlement money – went into grant; footnoted in financials; not collected yet
- Large alleged theft in Sheriff's office – finding out if and how to account for; not accounted for yet; could be retro
- Sales tax up \$79.1 mil, including city share; fund balance discussed; strong financial position; Moody's rate increase
- In full agreement with everything pointed out in forecast
- Senior stimulus – issue ~20,000 live checks per year; in prep for December issuance, will be doubling live checks in a month; lot of man hours, but check cost not much

ATTENDANCE

The meeting was adjourned at 1:19 p.m.

COMMITTEE: **WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**
DATE: **JUNE 28, 2022**

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
JoAnne Decker	ALTCs
Donna Weber	Prop Tax
Ryan Phantais	NYS State
Kristi Smiley	FinCpr
Tenisha Murphy	CE Office
Steve Morgan	CEO
Ben Yau	Law
Kate Felice	Law
Tim Frateschi	Leg
Darcie Loniak	Leg
Tim Beebe	Leg
John DeSantis	Leg
Brian Donnelly	CE
Marty Masterpole	Comp.
Phil Britt	Comp
Deke Haddad	Comp.
Bill Ryan	Comp