

*Public Hearing*  
*2016 Budget*  
November 18, 2015

The Public Hearing on the 2016 Budget was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 P.M. Six Legislative members were present, Legislators Case, Monell and Sullivan being absent.

There were 3 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 2016 budget presentation.

“Honorable Members of Tioga County Legislature and the Citizens of Tioga County

“I present to you the proposed Tentative County budget for 2016.

“The overall gap between the proposed county expenditures and revenues has decreased by \$2,978,210 from the prior year. This is primarily related to the 2015's Capital Fund's bridge projects. There is still a deficit in the 2016 proposed budget. I propose using a total of \$2,665,744 to bridge this gap.

“Departments again were asked to keep their costs neutral for the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row. Decisions were made to patch roofs rather than replace them and additional sacrifices were made. Any increases seen were obligated and necessary. Fortunately the largest increase the county's Health Insurance was offset by the NYS Retirement's decrease. The deficit amount would be estimated to be an additional \$1,000,000. if not for this relief.

“You may wonder how or what has kept us afloat when charged with staying under a state imposed property cap. Four major factors have contributed. First the legislature proactively established reserves or savings to help bridge the gap. Second was the dissolution of the Consolidated Health Fund that infused a fund with additional revenue. Third in 2013 we borrowed for the needed bridge replacements and energy improvements.

“The fourth contributing factor and most significant of all is the ongoing collaboration of department heads, staff and legislature. They continue to diligently hold the line on spending any way possible. They collectively hunt out

additional revenue opportunities with grants, shared services, and economic development efforts.

“Reliance on state and federal funds has proven to be the Achilles heel as it continues to dwindle each year for rural upstate counties. Alternate sources of revenue for the county helps us all become less dependent on state and federal funding.

“Depleting the fund balance, continued borrowing for infrastructure needs, or cutting non mandated services is not feasible or sustainable. More than 86% of the County services and associated costs are for mandated services. There are few options left on the county level other than cuts to the outside agencies, town and villages. I am pointing out simply the reality of the counties’ position based on factual numbers and forecasting the historical trends the county has seen.

“The cap will be a continued constraint. Our revenue stream will improve with increased Sales Tax, Occupancy Tax and Casino funds. At this time it is difficult to measure or predict the positive fiscal impact to the county or if this will be enough to bridge the gap.

“In 2016 the county continues to share sales tax with the towns and villages and distributes over \$4,600,000 in the budget. Some counties retain 100% of the sales tax or have needed to reduce the distribution percent to balance their budgets. We continue the same level of funding to outside agencies at a net cost of \$689,363. We need to continue to measure the value of services they provide in relationship to the funding we provide.

“2016 marks the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive budget year Tioga County has stayed under the State imposed property tax cap. The 5 year average increase in the tax levy has been 1.8% each year.

“New York State had announced a Property Tax rebate initiative this past year. We qualified in 2015 and citizens have seen rebates ranging from \$20 to \$100.00. Tioga County’s efficiency plan was recently approved and residents are now eligible again for this tax rebate. The county’s increased portion of the 2016 tax bill will be refunded to residents. I encourage taxpayers to hold the fire districts, town, villages and schools to the same level of success and accountability for their portion of your annual tax bills.

“The county tax levy will increase by \$436,400 or 2.00%, to \$22,161,628. The tax levy for recycling in the solid waste budget has increased by \$18,084 or 1.80% to \$1,023,742.

“The total tax levy increase is \$454,484 or 2.00% to \$22,730,886. Under this proposed budget we are under the tax cap and will not have rollover funds moving into 2017 budget year.

“The Composite Tax Rate is \$8.49 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value. The average assessed \$100,000 home will pay \$849.00 in county taxes. Tax rates will vary from town to town due to the state established equalization rates and the town's apportionment percent.

“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 Mary Hogan, Terie Huesby, and Bethany O'Rourke for their parts in the budget process.

“The proposed tax levy cannot be increased after tonight's hearing without an additional public hearing. If you have comments to present to the Legislature regarding the proposed budget, the floor is now open.”

There being no comments, the hearing was adjourned at 6:23 P.M.