

Tompkins County Legislature
Regular Meeting Minutes – Approved 11-9-17
Monday, October 30, 2017 7:00 PM
Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Will Burbank	Member	Present
Carol Chock	Member	Present
James Dennis	Member	Present
Rich John	Member	Present
Anna Kelles	Member	Present
Dooley Kiefer	Member	Present
Daniel Klein	Vice Chair	Present
Michael Lane	Chair	Present
Leslyn McBean-Clairborne	Member	Present
Martha Robertson	Member	Present
David McKenna	Member	Present
Glenn Morey	Member	Present
Michael Sigler	Member	Present

Public Hearing - Review of the tentative 2018 Tompkins County Budget and the 2018-2022 Tompkins County Capital Program

Mr. Lane, Chair, called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. concerning the tentative 2018 Tompkins County Budget and the 2018-2022 Tompkins County Capital Program and asked if anyone wished to speak.

Prior to the first speaker, Mr. Dennis, Chair of the Expanded Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, read the following statement:

“For those who are here to discuss the County’s commitment to the Office of Human Rights, I’d like to provide some clarity and assurance.

“First, the recommended budget for the Office of Human Rights Budget is exactly the same, to the penny, as was requested by the Office.

“In fact, the Budget funds all of the so-called Over-Target Requests, which means requests to spend in excess of the baseline budget issued by the County Administrator in May.

“Simply put, the Department got what it asked for.

“The Office will be fully funded...and fully staffed. There are four positions provided for in this budget-including the Director.

“This means that Tompkins County will continue to be the most generous County in New York State with respect to funding a Human Rights Office.

“We will remain one of only 13 of the 57 counties outside New York City to fund a Human Rights Office. Seventy-five percent of the counties do not have an Office at all.

“And of those who do, we spend nearly twice as much on a per capita basis than any other county in the State.

“Between 2014 and 2016, our average annual spending was \$2.77 per capita. The next highest-spending County, Nassau, spent just \$1.58 per capita. We spent nearly twice as much per capita as the next highest spending County. Only two other counties in the entire State spent over \$1.00 per capita.

“And according to data compiled by our own Office of Human Rights, there are just 28 people employed by Human Rights Offices in all the counties outside of New York City. Four of them work for us. So one out of every seven County human rights employees in New York State works for Tompkins County.

“The bottom line is that whether measured by budget or staffing levels, we stand head and shoulders above any other County in New York State in terms of our commitment to our Human Rights Office.

“As budgets are the way governments demonstrate their priorities, I think it’s clear that the County continues to value the Office and Mission of Human Rights.”

Gibrian Hagood, Ithaca, spoke of his personal experience with a housing discrimination issue that he was assisted with by staff in the Office of Human Rights. He also stated he believes it is important for a person of color to lead the County’s Office of Human Rights.

Amanda Kirchgessner, Tompkins County resident, said spending money on the Office of Human Rights does not mean the County cares about human rights and there are many needs that exist in the County. She asked that the Office of Human Rights be allowed to do its work.

Karen Baer, Town of Ithaca, spoke of her ancestry and hope for sustained grassroots support for human rights promotion and protection and a government that is responsive to the voice of the people.

Liz Brundige, Town of Caroline resident who has worked with the Office of Human Rights on various issues, spoke in support of the Office of Human Rights under the leadership of Karen Baer and its current staff.

Taili Mugambee, Tompkins County resident, spoke on behalf of the Ultimate Re-entry Organization and in support for funding in the 2018 budget for alternatives to-incarceration initiatives.

Ruth Yarrow, Ithaca, spoke in support of the Office of Human Rights under the leadership of Karen Baer and said it is one of the most important functions of the County at this time particularly because of the disparity in incomes and finding housing.

Dick Franke, Town of Ithaca, spoke in support of social justice and referenced a document entitled Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing produced by Karen Baer the Office of Human Rights.

Elan Shapiro, Ithaca, spoke of concerns he has heard from staff and others who work with the Office of Human Rights that are not consistent with what he has heard from the County and said he would like more transparency and clarifications.

Fran Spadafora Manzella, Town of Ithaca, spoke of her work since 1990 with the Office of Human Rights and expressed support for the work done by the Office under Karen Baer since she became

Minutes
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Monday, October 30, 2017

the Director in 2013.

Kate Cordona, Ithaca, read a statement by the Ithaca SURJ Coordinating Team, supporting the Office of Human Rights.

Jeffrey Bergfalk, The People's School, spoke in support for the Office of Human Rights.

Jamila Walida Simon, Groton resident and said she is the Chair of the Human Rights Commission and spoke in opposition to the actions taken by the County concerning the Director of Human Rights.

No one else wished to speak and Mr. Lane closed the public hearing at 7:46 p.m.