



Onondaga County Legislature

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Clerk

DAVID H. KNAPP
Chairman

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Deputy Clerk

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE 2022 TENTATIVE BUDGET COMPTROLLER and BOARD OF ELECTIONS – OCTOBER 8, 2021 TIM BURTIS, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. May, Mr. Rowley, Mr. Ryan, Mr. McBride, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Ervin
ALSO ATTENDING: Ms. Tassone, Ms. Cody, Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Holmquist, Mr. Bush, Dr. Kelly; also please see attached

Chairman Burtis called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

COMPTROLLER: (3-3) Martin D. Masterpole, Comptroller

- Recognize Legislators Holmquist and Tassone for their well-deserved retirement
- Will not complain about this year's budget, not asking for any additions or subtractions – allows us to operate effectively and efficiently
- Asks for one additional person – \$1.88m to 1.915m slight increase for contractual raises, step increases and the one position
- One jump from past years is in professional services line – few initiatives to include review of audit staff – auditing the auditors – discussions and cooperation with CFO and Management & Budget have looked at options to make our office more efficient – Deputy Comptroller Britt has taken over Mr. Maturo's role of 30 years – documenting the process and reviewing to see if it makes sense to continue the same way – trying to make ourselves more efficient
- Other initiative is a huge digitization process for the office – files from 60s, 70s – includes payroll for state retirement – may have the oldest microfiche machine in the County – efficient staff to complete this digitization process
- Last year wasn't thrilled with the budget but cuts were restored within the first quarter - Single audit was processed to meet State's initial deadline – the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report ("CAFR") was much later than hoped but struggled because staffing levels weren't great – Bonadio also had staffing issues and wasn't able to give us the attention that they promised us for the upcoming year - *Corrected by Mr. Masterpole – his staff was delinquent in getting the work to Bonadio which caused a delay in the turnaround* - cautiously optimistic that single audit will be out in a timely manner – rolling out in 3rd quarter isn't ideal and not proud of it – 2022 will shoot to get it out in first quarter

Mr. McBride:

- Appropriate fund balance dip from \$207,224 to 0

Mr. Morgan:

- Personnel resolution that was passed by this Legislation approved a handful of positions which had to be paid for so this year's fund balance was used to pay for these positions – going forward these positions will be funded in the normal process

Mr. Ryan:

- Appropriated going forward on the 101 – Mr. Morgan said yes, positions will be funded on the 101 line

Mr. Burtis:

- Other expenses is up \$43k – agrees the microfiche should go away

Mr. Britt:

- \$35k for the microfiche and agreed with Mr. Morgan that part of the increase was in the audit fee

Mr. Morgan:

- I also thought it was for the increase in the audit

Mr. Masterpole:

- May find grant monies for this – if successful will be back to accept the grant funding – working on parallel paths for payment

BOARD OF ELECTIONS: (3-48) Michele L. Sardo, Republican Commissioner of Elections; Dustin M. Czarny, Democratic Commissioner of Elections

Ms. Sardo:

- This budget is pretty decent – no cuts – concerns that we aren't given four extra staff members that are needed and desperately need them – will probably end up with County wide primaries and a governor's race next year
- Absentee ballots have to be counted within four days of receipt – takes away from staff
- Training temps is a lot on the staff – permanent employees are trained once versus every year

Mr. Czarny:

- Have seen a virtual tidal wave of registration forms over the past three years – mainly due to DMV online registration from 7k in 2015 to 70k in 2020 – increases every year – year round work not just at election time
- Over 100k voter registration forms in 2020 – compared to 2018 we did 70k – previous years 30-40k
- Workload has doubled – least staffed BOE in the state by far - adding 4 would still be least staffed
- 1 fulltime employee for every 19k voters – average is 1 for every 8k voters in upstate – not just behind in terms of peers and volume we process
- Lack of resources given in Oneida and Madison Counties became a national embarrassment – fighting in OC to prevent this from happening
- Long-term health of employees – burnt out because of overtime – work has to be done – everything is timely
- Future has more burden – voter registration, no fault absentees – 4 employees will allow for transition to be ready

Ms. Cody:

- What titles are the four positions – answered by Ms. Sardo they are the lowest level clerk

Mr. McBride:

- Travel and training doubled

Mr. Czarny:

- Biannual conferences – training for commissioners and deputy commissioners
- Includes mileage for custodians that go from site to site – mileage fee is increasing

Ms. Luber:

- 2021 was cut because of COVID – assumed conferences would be a zoom
- Commissioners went to a conference in Albany so money added back - 2022 getting close to 2019 and 2020 budgets

Mr. Czarny:

- Only training throughout the year - one employee was out on pregnancy during 2019 so wasn't scheduled
- Conferences run by NYS mainly by held by NYS employees – deal with new election laws and how to use technology

Mr. May:

- Clarifying that four positions were cut from executive budget and the amount

Ms. Sardo:

- Yes, positions were cut - \$200k for everything to include health insurance

Mr. Ryan:

- How many would we have to add to get to the correct number – asking for only 4

Mr. Czarny:

- Would have to double staff to be comparable to other counties – have a great efficient staff
- Have used grant funding through 2020 – have a big bill coming up in the near future – 2008 purchased equipment that is getting to the end of life
- Intend to come to this body for \$2.5m – \$700k funding has to be used for training – this bill will be a burden
- May be able to get \$1m out of grants – next generation of voting machines will be certified in December or January

Mr. Ryan:

- 16 staff as of now – what state legislation may be coming next year that would add more work

Mr. Czarny:

- No fault absentees and same day registration – if passed then increase in absentee costs – will add 40 days of canvassing – absentee votes will have to be part of election night results

Mr. Ryan:

- Could you quantify – if action taken by the Governor is 4 sufficient?

Ms. Sardo:

- Four would help – have to count ballots within four days

Mr. Czarny:

- Four would be sufficient – not sure how much work – only can look at other states and see what has happened in those states

Ms. Sardo:

- Next year 10 sights of early voting from 6 this year
- Have to make sure scanners, Ipads are all working properly at four more sights

Mr. Czarny:

- Next year early voting will have extended hours

Mr. Ryan:

- Are you ok with \$84.6 number

Mr. Czarny:

- Will be possible that if we get the 4 full time employees – this year we have kept up with forms – this year used grant money to keep on two employees

Mr. Rowley:

- Two grants of \$1.2m - are they just for equipment?

Mr. Czarny:

- Shoe box grant is for equipment but prior years could use for temporary staffing
- Answered Mr. Rowley's question about the \$500k tier grant in 2021 - we have received this – can't be used for personnel

Ms. Sardo:

- Answered Mr. May's question regarding the next generation machines – prior machines have been in service for 12 years

Mr. Czarny:

- Third generation of the machines will be certified this year – had a rodeo of machines come into offices – will be competitive – 12 years ago there were only two vendors – other vendors are looking for certification
- Next year will be coming with a CIP of \$2.5m for these machines

Ms. Sardo:

- Also looking at a new registration system – had current system since 2006

Mr. Czarny:

- Have an annual cost for current system – will have more vendors and will be competitive

Mrs. Ervin:

- Amount that is being paid for training

Ms. Sardo:

- \$25 is paid for a three hour class

Mr. Czarny:

- Reached out to personnel to see if they should be paid minimum wage – anticipate that being a factor but not a huge factor
- 103 line anticipated the \$15 per hour and has recently increased
- Have used equipment to go from 2,000 inspectors to 1,000 – haven't seen a loss of customer service

Ms. Cody:

- New potential registration system – would this require a state wide system

Ms. Sardo:

- State is working on a process to recertify to make sure it works

Mr. Czarny:

- One discussion is to have ballots counted after election day – same day registration model isn't ready yet – only have county data and not state wide
- Work is done now post-election – have to make sure they haven't voted elsewhere – that is what takes 14 days – not sure it would be a huge increase until presidential year in 2024

Ms. Cody:

- How many voters per sight did we have for early voting?

Ms. Sardo:

- Very small turnout but still had to staff

Mr. Czarny:

- Cost per voter for primary was very high – not every early voting site was open

Ms. Cody:

- Can you tailor it for amount of voters?

Mr. Czarny:

- We can tailor the staffing – had primaries in the Towns of LaFayette and Camillus – had to open sites but had much less staff

Ms. Kuhn:

- Early voting is relatively new in NYS – compared to other states does it increase voting

Ms. Sardo:

- Voter turnout has increased in other states

Mr. Czarny:

- Has to have a cornucopia of legislation – single legislation will not increase voter turnout
- As early voting continues should see 1/3 on election day, 1/3 early voting and 1/3 absentee

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

TO: Onondaga County Legislators

FROM: Michele L Sardo
Commissioner of Elections

Date: October 7, 2021

Re: Budget Hearing 2022

The Onondaga County Board of Elections is expected to run efficiently and effectively without incident. In order for the Board of Elections to be successful we must maintain a high level of proficiency.

As commissioners we are responsible for controlling the cost and the budget. We are very knowledgeable as to what it takes to run the board successfully each year.

We need to keep this budget in place for the following reasons:

- 2022 is a Federal year along with a gubernatorial election. We expect to have a full county primary
- Next year boards are required to have an early voting polling location for every 30,000 voters. In our county we will now have 10 sites instead of the current 6 which will increase the cost to run early voting.
- Starting in 2022 NYS is mandated to open and canvass absentee ballots within 4 days of receiving them. This will add 40 days of canvassing before Election Day.

We will need to increase our staff with 4 full time employees. Temporary employees are helpful but every year we have to train the temps which takes 4 to 5 weeks to do and it removes our permanent staff away from their work load.

The Board of Elections has a year round calendar of elections that we run or assist with. We have village elections in March along with petitions filed at the same time. School elections we do not run but program ballots for, these are in May while we program 2 other village Elections a week before our primary election. Throughout the summer months we hold inspector classes that run thru August with added classes for extra inspectors in September and October. This all puts pressure on the board to make sure every election we run or assist with is done professionally and effectively.

The 4 full time staff we are asking for will help with the work load of increase in registration, absentee applications and ballots, along with the cure process for absentee ballots.

October 8, 2021
Budget Committee Hearing
Onondaga County Legislature

The Board of Elections will have many challenges over the 2022 calendar year in meeting the budget laid out by the County Executive. As we have shown in our annual report, the Onondaga County Board of Elections is already understaffed when compared to the rest of the state. Currently, the Onondaga County Board of Elections averages 1 full time employee for every 19.2k voters. The rest of New York averages 1 full time employee for every 8.5k voters. This is by far the worst ratio in the state. In addition, Onondaga County budgeted \$9.28 per voter in 2021. This was one of the most frugal budgets in the state which averaged \$19.78 per voter.

We made up for these funding inadequacies over the last several years by heavily relying on grant funding. The CARES grant and the ITC grant specifically helped with staffing shortages during the 2020 Election along with liberal use of our shoebox grant funding. We were able to stretch some of the ITC grant funding into the early part of this year to pay for extra staff to deal with registration and mail check processing. However, these grant funding options are not available for 2022. While Shoebox funding is available for temporary staff in 2022 that grant funding may be needed in 2023 to offset the costs of purchasing additional voting machines. Our Commissioners made a bi-partisan determination that 4 additional staff members were needed to adequately accomplish the goals and requirements laid out for us by the New York State Legislature and the New York State Board of Elections. We asked for four additional staffing members to deal with the ever growing workload. With the ease of registering online through DMV, we have seen registration through this method increase by a factor of 10. This has tripled the amount of forms we must process each year and the rate is accelerating. This is putting strain on our already low staffing structures. Other boards have added staff since 2019 to deal with these staffing needs. We have not.

In addition to the increase in registrations, the Board of Elections will face more strains on our staff in 2022. Early Voting sites will increase to ten minimum sites in 2022. Absentee ballots will now be canvassed before Election Day adding 40 days of ballot canvassing while our staff is preparing Early Voting and Election Day operations. No fault absentees and Same Day registration will likely be passed by voters this fall adding more responsibilities to our staff. Without permanent staffing increases, we will have to compensate using Shoebox funds in 2022 to bring in inefficient temporary staff. The need for constant re-training and the short term nature of this staff does not allow us to adequately cover the long term needs of the voters of Onondaga County.

Finally, if we are forced to use Shoebox money for temporary staff we are only passing a larger bill down the road. Our ImageCast machines originally purchased in 2008 are reaching the end of their life. Our extended service agreement runs out in the middle of 2022. We need to consider a capital improvement to replace these ImageCast scanners. This will cost

approximately \$2.5 million for a complete conversion to modern tabulators. The Board of Elections will have approximately \$1 million in grant monies to off set some of this purchase. However, if we spend this grant money as we do now to cover staffing and training that number will be reduced.

Thank you,
Dustin M. Czarny
Onondaga County Elections Commissioner (D)

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: WAYS & MEANS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

DATE: OCTOBER 8, 2021

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Jessica Adler	FinOps
Phil Britt	Comptrollers
Marty Masterpole	Comptrollers
Pete Headd	Comptrollers
Dustin Czarny	BOE
Mary Kuber	BOE
Allison Nanno	BOE
Yvette Velasco	LAW
Michele Sardis	BOE
Shannon Murray	WBP
Dave Snyder	WEP
PAUL Smith	
RUSTAN FERRELA	
Megan Murphy	DUB
Marybeth Russo	CE
MARTY VOSS	DOT
Ayanwa Moore	DOT
James Fensken	DOT
Kim Hall Brian Kelley	↳ Parks
Tina Leatherland Ted Fox	
Jennifer Fricano	Fin Ops