

**STEBEN COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE**

***Budget Workshop***

*Wednesday, November 7, 2018*

*11:35 a.m.*

*Legislative Committee Room  
Steuben County Office Building  
Bath, New York*

**\*\*MINUTES\*\***

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Scott J. Van Etten, Chair Gary B. Roush	Gary D. Swackhamer, Vice Chair	Kelly H. Fitzpatrick
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jack K. Wheeler Tammy Hurd-Harvey	Mitchell Alger	Pat Donnelly
<b>LEGISLATORS:</b>	Carol A. Ferratella John V. Malter	Hilda T. Lando Robert V. Nichols	Robin K. Lattimer
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Brian C. Schu		
<b>OTHERS:</b>	Mary Perham		

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Van Etten called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

**II. BUDGET REVIEW**

Mr. Wheeler stated we made the changes we discussed at the last budget workshop. Many of those were minor things that were cleaned up. We had received a request from the United Way for \$12,500 to help fund the purchase of COMET which is a proprietary software package that would allow multiple users/organizations to track outcomes for school-aged children to see where they are on the track for school readiness, which is part of their "Kids on Track" program. Mr. Wheeler stated his recommendation is that this is an outstanding program, but that we should revisit the request at another time.

Mr. Malter asked would the County get any data that we could use from that program? Mr. Wheeler replied no, not really. Chemung County has a full sanitarian function with their health department and they can enter information into the program. We could be a partner, but it is nothing that we would use. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked you are recommending waiting until the program is up and running and invested in so we can see how it is working? Mr. Wheeler replied correct.

**MOTION: REMOVING THE REQUEST OF \$12,500 FOR THE UNITED WAY COMET PROGRAM FROM THE 2019 BUDGET MADE BY MR. SWACKHAMER. SECONDED BY MS. FITZPATRICK. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Mr. Wheeler stated earlier this morning you heard a presentation from Cornell Cooperative Extension regarding a request for an additional \$19,000 to start Regional Agricultural Teams. Mr. Nichols stated you will get more bang for your buck with the regional agricultural teams. Since Carl Albers and Jim Grace retired from Cooperative Extension, they do not give the quality of information and services that they did before. He stated he is in favor of their request, but the presentation request was based on staff retiring. You need to have in the back of your mind that even though those individuals may be eligible for retirement, there is no guarantee that they will retire.

Mr. Van Etten stated even though you are committing the \$19,000 for 2019, this is a long-term committee for the future. Mr. Nichols commented if you go forward with this, you are looking at a program with a life of 10, 20 or 30 or more years. Mr. Wheeler stated if you decided in the future to cut funding, they would be cutting local staff.

Mr. Nichols stated we never got into anything like this before because we had Mr. Albers and Mr. Grace and we had everything we needed. Since they retired, Cooperative Extension has been struggling to get the same quality of information out to the farmers; and they have tried. Mr. Swackhamer stated historically they have had to hire their own specialists.

Mrs. Lando stated she is on the Cooperative Extension Board of Directors and we had a hiring team to try to replace Stephanie Mehlenbacher. We cannot afford to pay for that level of expertise. She stated we know how successful this regional program is as we have had the grape program for 50 years. It works. Mr. Malter commented it comes down to being a shared service.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked if we make this appropriation and no other county wants to form a regional agriculture team, then what happens? Will this funding cover jumping on board with another team? Mr. Wheeler replied when the proposal was presented to him and Chairman Hauryski two weeks ago, the cost to join another pre-existing team is about the same as it is to start a new team. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented agriculture is the biggest industry in the County and it is important to invest in and support that. She stated Ms. Podsiedlik's presentation was very well done and she thought through the scenarios for the next few years. She cannot see how we could not support this.

**MOTION: INCREASING THE 2019 APPROPRIATION FOR CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION BY \$19,000, FOR A TOTAL BUDGET OF \$409,000 MADE BY MS. FITZPATRICK. SECONDED BY MR. ROUSH. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Mr. Malter asked if they are able to start these new regional agricultural teams, is there room in the new building if they get a potato specialist? Ms. Lattimer commented they will make it work.

Mr. Wheeler stated with this additional appropriation, the change to the bottom line is the County cost is \$1,416,203. As we have sufficient room in our sales tax and interest earnings, he would propose an increase of \$715,000 in anticipated sales tax revenue and an increase of \$710,000 in anticipated interest earnings. That would bring us to \$1.425 million additional revenue and would drop the tax levy \$8,797.

Mr. Wheeler commented there was a significant error of \$33 million in the assessed values in the Town of Bath as it relates to the school tax. When the former assessor entered the sales price from the sale of the Health Care Facility, it was entered as \$37 million instead of \$3.7 million. When the reval was done in the Town of Bath, that \$37 million sales price was carried over and the school tax went up with that. The new owners did not pay that amount and on the last day of the warrant, they submitted the correction. Mr. Wheeler stated we will be waiting for the LA-22 form to be corrected. We should have that corrected form in the next couple of days.

Mr. Swackhamer asked how does our sales tax look for the end of the year? Mr. Wheeler replied it is up 7 percent right now. Mr. Donnelly commented it increased \$3 million and 49 percent of that is ours. Mr. Van Etten asked are we safe taking the interest? Mr. Donnelly replied yes.

**MOTION: APPROPRIATING \$715,000 IN SALES TAX REVENUE AND \$710,000 IN INTEREST EARNINGS TO THE 2019 BUDGET AND FORWARDING THE PROPOSED 2019 BUDGET AS PRESENTED TO THE FULL LEGISLATURE FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL MADE BY MR. SWACKHAMER. SECONDED BY MS. FITZPATRICK. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Mr. Swackhamer asked for the future, with the additional costs for the District Attorney, Sheriff and Probation, will we be able to maintain our budget? Mr. Wheeler replied right now, yes. If the State cuts reimbursement you

will have a multi-million dollar hole. Mr. Van Etten commented it is nice to be flat, but should we post for the future expense and do a 1 percent increase? Based on the surplus we are carrying, do we have so much room that it would not be prudent? Mr. Wheeler replied this gets you back to close and not just building fund balance. If the State cuts the funding stream, you will be paying for it. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked do we have room in the budget if that happens? Mr. Wheeler replied yes. We have the Contingent Fund, vacant positions, etc. We are still budgeting conservatively.

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MS. FITZPATRICK. SECONDED BY MS. SWACKHAMER. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 4-0.**

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman  
Deputy Clerk  
Steuben County Legislature