

*Public Hearing*  
*2013 Budget*  
November 20, 2012

The Public Hearing on the 2013 Budget was called to order by the Chair at 6:00 P.M. Eight Legislative members were present, Legislator Monell being absent.

There were 9 people in attendance along with Treasurer James McFadden and Budget Officer Chuck Shager.

The Clerk read the legal notice as published in the official newspapers.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Budget Officer, Chuck Shager.

Chuck Shager, Budget Officer, spoke. "To the residents of Tioga County and the Honorable County Legislature I present to you tonight the proposed county budget for 2013.

"During the past year, we have made great strides in getting through the flood of 2011, with road and bridge repairs, building cleanup, financial reimbursements from the state, FEMA, and our own insurance providers, emergency preparedness for the future, all while trying to operate under the 2% property tax cap enacted by the state.

"Many state and local governments nationwide have seen an erosion of their finances, and we are no exception. Our fund balance at the end of 2013 is anticipated to drop by 50% since the end of 2010. Our county, along with most of New York State, has seen limited economic rebound. At the same time the demand for government services such as unemployment benefits, social services, mental health and Medicaid has increased. Employee benefits have also raised especially health insurance and retirement costs.

"Through October 2012, the Sales Tax Revenue the County receives increased 7.26% from 2011. Though it cannot be documented it is believed the increase is attributed to products being purchased to rebuild the County after the flood of 2011. This is a large increase and it is difficult to project whether this revenue level can be sustained in the coming year.

"Despite these challenges, local officials along with department heads were asked to reduce their budgets. As a result, we are presenting a budget that decreases spending by over \$2 million dollars and increases revenue by \$600,000 in the general fund. Throughout this process we have looked at becoming more efficient in the way we operate while still providing both valuable and mandated services for the citizens of Tioga County.

"General Fund expenses have decreased from \$71,547,147 in 2012 to \$69,472,318 in the proposed spending plan. This represents a decrease of 2.93% or \$2,074,829. The largest decreases were in Mental Hygiene, Public Health, DSS, IT, Buildings and Road Equipment.

"The budget will see an increase in General Fund Revenues of \$684,829 or 1.53%, from \$44,935,249 in 2012 to \$45,620,079 in the 2013 proposal. Most of this increase in revenue is from sales tax collections.

"There have been significant appropriations in other areas of the budget, such as the Capital Fund. The County plans to meet our infrastructure schedule by replacing five bridges in 2013, including the Pennsylvania Ave Bridge which was destroyed in the 2011 flood.

"The total proposed spending plan of \$91,397,811 is a decrease of \$3,839,982 or 4.04% over the current year. It is proposed that an appropriation from the fund balance (the county's savings account) in the amount of \$2,951,446, be used to minimize tax increases. In 2012; \$6,015,000 was appropriated from the fund balance. It is estimated that this will bring the unappropriated fund balance at the end of 2013 to roughly \$7,000,000. This reduction in the fund balance is warranted at this time, but it cannot be sustained in the future. Therefore the County needs to continue to look at ways of presenting cost efficient services and using technology to assist in offering these services to the residents of Tioga County. In this budget there are 28 vacated unfunded positions, up from nine in 2012, and future budgets may require staff reductions.

"The county tax levy will increase by \$290,632 or 1.35%, to \$20,900,794. Tax rates will vary from town to town due to state established equalization rates. The composite tax rate for all taxing districts has decreased \$2.29 to \$11.18 per \$1000 due to an increase in net assessments. Within the County an owner of a \$100,000 home will pay between \$856 and \$872 in County Property Taxes.

"The other tax that appears on your bill is the recycling tax. The tax levy for recycling in the solid waste budget has decreased from \$931,408 to \$918,144, a decrease of \$13,264 or 1.43% for 2013. Appropriations have increased \$16,264 or 1.39% from 2012. However, revenues have also increased \$29,528 or 20.73%. The proposed composite rate for all taxing districts will drop from \$0.566 to \$0.494 per \$1000 of assessed value.

"I have suggested to the legislative body to pass an override on the 2% property tax cap. Under this proposed budget we are under the cap by a significant amount, but the terms of this law are constantly under review and changing. By passing this override, the County is protected from any changes that occur in the law that are as yet unknown to us.

"I would like to thank the County Legislature, department heads and all county employees for working very diligently to formulate this 2013 budget. A special thanks to Mary Hogan in the County's IT department for her effort in assisting me in putting this budget together.

"I would like to point out the projected 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."

George Penney spoke. "As a citizen I am very well pleased with what has just been done."

There being no further comments, the hearing was adjourned at 6:10 P.M.