



Tioga County Worksession Minutes **October 19, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.**

Legislators Present:

Legislator Brown
Legislator Ciotoli
Legislator Flesher (*Arrived at 10:22 a.m.*)
Legislator Mullen
Legislator Roberts
Chair/Legislator Sauerbrey
Legislator Standinger
Legislator Weston

Legislators Absent:

Legislator Monell

Guests:

None

Staff present:

Peter DeWind, County Attorney
Cathy Haskell, Legislative Clerk
Amy Eiklor, Deputy Legislative Clerk
Jackson Bailey, Budget Officer
Ellen Pratt, Sustainability Manager (*Departed at 10:06 a.m.*)
Elaine Jardine, Planning Director (*Arrived at 10:02 a.m.*)
LeeAnn Tinney, Director of ED&P
Linda Parke, Personnel Officer
Alexander Freyvogel, Benefits Manager
Gary Hammond, Commissioner of Public Works
Shawn Yetter, Commissioner of Social Services
Heather Vroman, Public Health Director
Jeremy Loveland, Chief Information Officer (*Arrived at 10:02 a.m. & Departed at 11:07 a.m.*)

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Sauerbrey opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with a **Public Hearing on Local Law Introductory No. E of 2023** for consideration of the following:

- **A Local Law Establishing the Tioga County Mandatory Source Separation Law and Repealing Local Law No. 1 of the Year 2020**

Legislative Clerk Haskell took roll call and read the legal notice as published in the Tioga County designated newspapers. Public Hearing adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

Chair Sauerbrey opened the **Fourth Special Legislature Meeting** at 10:06 a.m. for Legislature consideration of the following:

- **Authorize to Update and Renew Existing Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft Inc.**
- **Authorize Contract with Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield to Administer Health Insurance Benefits**
- **Amend Resolution 133-23; Create and Fill Two (2) Highway Worker (Seasonal) Positions – Public Works**

Legislative Clerk Haskell took roll call. Legislator Mullen led in the prayer, pledge, and voting process. Special Meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m. with regular Worksession immediately following.

2024 Budget Update – Budget Officer Bailey: Mr. Bailey distributed a budget packet to the Legislators and reported the following budget items:

- **Fringe:**
 - Fringe Benefit Estimates for 2024, which includes health insurance, HRA deductible, and Medicare Part B - \$10,478,037. The total increase from 2023 to 2024 is estimated to be \$828,037.
 - Health Insurance Fringe for 2024 is estimated to be \$673,909 higher than 2023.
 - HRA Deductible (Utilization %) is estimated to be \$154,128 higher than 2023.
 - Mr. Bailey reported the employee health insurance premium increase for 2024 is 9.8%. Benefits Manager Freyvogel stated that rate was negotiated down to 8%.
- **Tax Cap Analysis:**
 - Real Property Tax Levy for 2024 is estimated to be \$25,872,346, which is an increase of \$633,593 from 2023.
 - Tax Base Growth Factor for 2024 is 1.0056, which was 1.0068 in 2023.
 - Tax Levy Base Before Adjustments (Exclusions) for 2024 is estimated to be \$26,296,389.
 - Proposed Tax Cap % change for 2024 is estimated to be 1.16%.

- **2024 Summary of Preliminary Budgets by Fund:**

- Total appropriated Fund Balance for 2024 is estimated to be \$7,270,549.68. That number was \$3,713,459.67 in 2023.

Chair Sauerbrey asked if that figure was the highest number appropriated for Tioga County. Mr. Bailey stated that was the highest total he can recall within the last 15 years.

- **2024 Capital Budget Summary & 2023 Estimated Capital Fund Balance:**

- Mr. Bailey reduced the 2024 truck storage facility budgeted amount from \$2.5 million to \$500,000, per the decision of the Legislature at the October 5th meeting.
- Waverly Mental Hygiene facility budgeted amount for 2024 is \$1 million.
- Current 2023 year to date Capital Fund Balance is estimated at \$14,784,332.
- Estimated Capital Fund Balance at year-end 2023 is estimated to be \$11,860,772.

- **2024 ARPA Fund Projects:**

- The estimated amount of ARPA funds to be carried over to 2024 is \$6,421,182.24.

Mr. Bailey reported ARPA funds must be appropriated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. For reporting purposes, ARPA funds need to show designation, though they can be transferred to other accounts for other projects. At year-end 2023, Mr. Bailey will reanalyze ARPA fund expenses and bring forward a resolution to carry the funds over to 2024.

Legislator Ciotoli asked what would happen if ARPA funds were designated for a project, but the project did not come to fruition. Chair Sauerbrey stated that the funds would be designated elsewhere. She reported the radio communication project makes up the bulk of the remaining unspent ARPA funds, at \$4 million.

- **Estimated General Fund Balance:**

- Beginning General Fund Balance on 1/1/23 was \$41,068,170.
- Estimated General Fund Balance at year-end 2023 is \$28,607,342.

Mr. Bailey reported that with the budgeted appropriations, the estimated Fund Balance percentage is 20%, which is within Tioga County's Fund Balance Policy of 12%-28%. Mr. Bailey reiterated that going forward at the current appropriations, the Fund Balance would not be sustainable.

Mr. Bailey reported that at the conclusion of the meeting, the budget will move from the Legislative Level (Level 3) to the Tentative Budget Level (Level 4). Mr. Bailey will report back to the Legislature at the November 9th Worksession where he will give his review of the budget presentation that will be presented at the Tentative Budget Hearing on November 14th.

Strategic Plan Update – Planning Director Jardine: Planning Director Jardine projected a list of observations and themes that the Strategic Plan consultant, TransPro, compiled from meetings with Department Heads. Ms. Jardine presented the following:

- ***Overarching need for a county-wide communication/marketing strategy:*** Ms. Jardine stated that Tioga County and its many accomplishments do not get much press coverage in the local news. A possible solution is regular communication, such as Press Releases, in the Pennysaver or the Tioga County Courier. This could be a way to communicate taxpayer value and what services are available to residents. Ms. Jardine asked the Legislature if a county-wide communications strategy should be a function of the County Administrator's job duties and included in the Strategic Plan. The Legislature did not feel comfortable giving a concrete answer to that question at this time.
- ***Need for greater clarity around employee benefits and wage study:*** Ms. Jardine stated that Department Head feedback indicated confusion around the recent compensation study. She reported that Department Heads felt like the study should be shared with them because of the recruitment and retention issue within Tioga County. Ms. Jardine reported surrounding counties sometimes pay 15%-25% higher salaries than Tioga County. Chair Sauerbrey noted Ms. Jardine's comments and asked her to move forward with the next observation.
- ***Evaluate if the Remote Work Policy needs to be updated/extended:*** Ms. Jardine reported that Department Heads are aware that the Remote Work Policy is set to expire at the end of 2023. They asked whether the Remote Work Policy will be renewed or updated. Several departments indicated that remote work is a perk that they can offer their employees, though they hope to incorporate the possibility of more than two days of remote work per week.

Chair Sauerbrey explained that when the Remote Work Policy Pilot was created, it did not contain an end date. The resolution that was passed did include an end date of December 31, 2023. It is Chair Sauerbrey's intention to renew the current Remote Work Pilot program for another year. Within the year, Chair Sauerbrey hopes to work with Chief Information Officer, Jeremy Loveland, on a reporting system and a framework that can be given to Department Heads to evaluate the effectiveness of their employees that work remotely.

Chair Sauerbrey stated Public Health Director, Heather Vroman, is the only employee that sends her a remote work log. Legislative Clerk Haskell pointed out that the completion of the remote work log to the Department Head is a requirement listed within the Remote Work Policy. Ms. Vroman reported that her staff keeps an internal tracking log for remote work because of State Aid. Ms. Vroman rarely works remotely,

and she sends her log to Chair Sauerbrey because Chair Sauerbrey is considered her Department Head, and she is following policy.

Legislator Mullen stated that remote work is the way of the future. Potential employees may look at that option as a perk for working for Tioga County. He agreed with Chair Sauerbrey that a more concrete framework should be developed in order to evaluate effectiveness. Chair Sauerbrey wanted to make it abundantly clear that the consultants should not be the ones driving what is included in the Strategic Plan. It is the decision of the Legislature. Legislator Fleisher agreed with Chair Sauerbrey and cautioned against creating Department Head expectations. Chair Sauerbrey again stated that the goal is to extend the Remote Work Pilot Program for another year and develop a more concrete framework throughout 2024.

- ***Tioga County needs to evaluate the need for an overarching recruitment strategy to promote positions and intangible benefits of working for Tioga County:*** Ms. Jardine explained potential strategies could be hiring a recruiter to get more applicants, which would free up departments and take pressure off Personnel. According to Ms. Jardine, Departments Heads are looking to Personnel to recruit positions, while Personnel sees their role as completing the new hire documentation. Ms. Jardine asked the Legislature how the recruitment and retention issue should be addressed.

Legislator Standinger stated this a universal problem, and an effective tool is advertising, particularly on social media and local publications. Ms. Jardine replied that she believes departments are already doing that and departments are looking for a recruiter to take on that role. County Attorney DeWind asked for clarification on what Ms. Jardine was asking. Ms. Jardine explained that the departments relayed the need for a recruiter and the consultants are asking the Legislature if hiring a recruiter should be included in the Strategic Plan. Legislator Mullen stated he is willing to look at the options, but he does not want to be forced into giving an answer today. He said that he does not believe Personnel is responsible for recruiting. Legislator Mullen stated he feels like the Legislature is being painted into a corner with giving an answer today. Ms. Jardine replied that she can give the Legislature time to think about it, but the consultants are expecting an answer by the end of the month. Chair Sauerbrey stated the Legislature is not ready to discuss that question and give an answer today. Legislator Ciotoli agreed and said the question requires a deeper dive and leads to many other discussions.

Ms. Vroman, who is a member of the Strategic Plan Committee, asked if there could be a potential workforce recruitment and retention group formed as opposed to hiring a recruiter. She suggested the group be comprised of Legislators and Department Heads. Legislator Mullen reported an Employee Recruitment and Retention Committee was established last year and he would not be opposed to reconvening or re-evaluating that committee. Chair Sauerbrey reported in the last week or so that she has come up with a couple of ideas that may help with recruitment. At the suggestion of Legislative Clerk Haskell, Chair Sauerbrey asked Chief Information Officer Loveland if the website could be updated to include job openings on the front page that are highly visible to the public. Chair Sauerbrey also contacted Personnel Officer Parke about the potential for a job fair. If she planned a Tioga County job fair, Chair Sauerbrey would ask departments to promote the job fair on their social media pages or promote it on WEBO.

The Legislators did not like the idea of hiring a recruiter but would be open to discussion on the formation of a committee.

- ***Tioga County should consider implementing an annual employee engagement survey to identify how engaged the workforce of Tioga County is over a period of time:*** Ms. Jardine explained the survey could ask employees what they value about their job and role within Tioga County. The Legislature was not ready to give an answer on that topic.
- ***What role will the future County Administrator have in the implementation of the Strategic Plan?*** Ms. Jardine stated the Strategic Plan is the Legislature's plan and asked who the "owner" of it should be. Chair Sauerbrey stated that at no time, did the Strategic Plan Committee ask for Legislative input or speak to members of the Legislature. The consultants did not ask the Legislature what their goals or objectives are, and they were not invited to any meetings. Ms. Jardine replied that Legislator Roberts is on the Strategic Plan Committee and attended meetings. Chair Sauerbrey stated that Legislators were not invited to meet with the consultants like Department Heads were and they were not invited to brainstorming sessions. Chair Sauerbrey expressed her frustration at the lack of Legislative input throughout the process. Commissioner Yetter stated it was never the intention of the committee to intentionally leave the Legislature out of the process. Ms. Vroman agreed and apologized for the oversight.

Chair Sauerbrey explained that the job duties of the County Administrator position were developed, approved by the Legislature, and sent to New York State for approval. She stated that the County Administrator position is newly created, and the hiring process will not begin until January. That process could take upwards of six months, or longer. Once in the position, the County Administrator will train for a year and the Strategic Plan will not be their first priority once they are hired and acclimating to the job. Ms. Jardine stated she believes the Strategic Plan needs an "owner" as this plan will not be as department oriented as the last plan. Instead, it will focus on Tioga County as whole. Chair Sauerbrey does not believe the plan should live with the Legislature as the responsibility would probably fall to the Chair of the Legislature alone. She stated the position of County Administrator is not meant to oversee Departments Heads.

Legislator Standinger stated the process for developing a Strategic Plan is long and difficult. The consultants typically have a generic template they follow to develop the plan and check the boxes. Ms. Jardine does not place blame on the consultants for the way the development process was rolled out. ED&P Director Tinney stated the time for Legislature input is now. The consultants are developing a draft plan with the information gathered from Department Heads and will be presented to the Legislature for their input. She explained that the Legislature has the final say in what is included, or not included, in the Strategic Plan. Chair Sauerbrey and the Legislators were not ready to commit to an answer today.

Chair Sauerbrey reported TransPro will present the draft plan to the Legislature in December. She made it clear to the consultants that the Legislature will need time to digest and review the plan before they adopt it. Chair Sauerbrey emphasized that the Legislature has a right and obligation to spend the necessary time needed to review and analyze the plan before its adoption. Ms. Jardine explained that the consultants

will give her the draft plan by the end of October, which will then be reviewed by the Strategic Plan Committee first. After their review and comments, Ms. Jardine will forward the draft plan to the Legislators in early November. Ms. Jardine asked that the Legislators thoroughly review the draft plan and be prepared with questions or changes for the consultants when they present in December. Chair Sauerbrey stated it was her understanding that the Legislature would still be able to change or update the plan after the consultant's presentation in December. Ms. Jardine agreed that changes could still be made after the consultant's presentation. Ms. Haskell asked Ms. Jardine when she expects to bring forth a resolution to adopt the plan. Ms. Jardine replied she expects to present a resolution in January, but mentioned the contract with TransPro expires at the end of 2023.

Approval of Worksession Minutes: On motion of Legislator Standinger, seconded by Legislator Mullen, the October 5, 2023 minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Items: Currently, we have none.

Other: Currently, we have none.

Executive Session: Eight Legislators were in attendance with Legislator Monell being absent. County Attorney DeWind and Legislative Clerk Haskell remained in attendance. Motion by Legislator Flesher, seconded by Legislator Ciotoli, to move into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the appointment and promotion of particular individuals at 11:17 a.m. Motion carried. Motion by Legislator Flesher to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Ciotoli. Executive Session adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Thursday, November 9, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Eiklor

Deputy Legislative Clerk