

ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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JONATHAN R. HEPPNER, Majority Leader
KENNETH J. RONK, JR., Minority Leader
VICTORIA A. FABELLA, Clerk



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MINUTES

NOVEMBER 10, 2021

PUBLIC HEARING

6:00 PM

Powered by Zoom. Meeting ID: 819 4825 4906, And By Telephone (646) 558-8656

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIR: 6:01 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG AND MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION:

Led by Legislator Parete.

ROLL CALL:

Present: 16

Absent: 7 (Legislators Archer, Bartels, Fabiano,
Heppner, Litts, Petit, Ronk)

(Note: Legislator's Litts & Ronk arrived at 6:04 PM)

6:00 PM - CALL OF THE PUBLIC HEARING BY CLERK: Tonight's Public Hearing is on the Proposed 2022 Ulster County Budget and the Proposed 2022 – 2027 Capital Program

PUBLIC COMMENT: There were (3) speakers signed up for public comment. (See transcript)

1. Cheryl Schneider
2. Joseph Maloney, Saugerties
3. Pat Pellicano

Motion by Legislator Litts, second by Legislator Bruno to adjourn the public hearing. All in favor.

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PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED: 6:16 PM

NEXT MEETING:

The next Regular Meeting of the Ulster County Legislature will be held **Tuesday, November 16, 2021 at 7:00 PM.** Further Meeting details shall be forthcoming.

The Proposed 2022 Ulster County Budget and Proposed 2022 – 2027 Capital Program will be voted on at a Special Session of the Legislature on Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 6:00 PM. Further Meeting details shall be forthcoming.

Ulster County Legislature
2021 Budget Public Hearing

Meeting Transcript
November 10, 2021

Chairman Donaldson

All right. I'd like to call this meeting to order. We'll stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and please John Parete could you lead us in that tonight?

Legislator Parete

Can I lead – say that again? My hearings not going good.

Chairman Donaldson

Can you lead the pledge to the flag?

Legislator Parete

Yes. Raise your hand, stand up like we all do. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Be seated. And I bet you thought I couldn't do that hugh.

Chairman Donaldson

I figured I'd throw you a curveball.

Legislator Parete

You put me on the spot. That's alright. I'll sneak up on you one of these days.

Chairman Donaldson

I know it. Alrighty. Call the public hearing to order Madam Clerk.

Clerk Fabella

Let's call the roll. Archer.

Clerk Fabella

Bartels.

Clerk Fabella

Bruno.

Chairman Donaldson

He's here. He raised his hand.

Legislator Bruno

Here.

Clerk Fabella

I got him. Cahill.

Legislator Cahill

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Corcoran.

Legislator Corcoran

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Criswell.

Legislator Criswell

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Delaune.

Legislator Delaune

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Donaldson.

Chairman Donaldson

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Fabiano.

Clerk Fabella

Gavaris.

Legislator Gavaris

Present.

Clerk Fabella

My pen will not write. Give me one second here. Okay I am good.

Clerk Fabella
Greene.

Legislator Greene
Here.

Clerk Fabella
Haynes.

Legislator Haynes
Here.

Clerk Fabella
Heppner.

Clerk Fabella
Litts.

Chairman Donaldson
I believe Litts is here.

Clerk Fabella
I thought so. Do we have Legislator Litts?

Jay Mahler
They are getting their entrance sorted.

Clerk Fabella
Okay. Lopez.

Legislator Lopez
Here.

Clerk Fabella
Legislator Maio.

Legislator Maio
Here.

Clerk Fabella
Legislator Parete.

Legislator Parete

Yes.

Clerk Fabella

Legislator Petit.

Clerk Fabella

Legislator Roberts.

Legislator Roberts

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Ronk.

Chairman Donaldson

They're in the other room.

Clerk Fabella

They'll get on. I'll get them when

Chairman Donaldson

They are actually in the Library.

Clerk Fabella

I'll get them when their visible.

Clerk Fabella

Uchitelle.

Legislator Uchitelle

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Walter.

Legislator Walter

Here.

Clerk Fabella

Wawro.

Legislator Wawro

Here.

Clerk Fabella

For right now we have 16 present and seven absent.

Clerk Fabella

Tonight's public hearing is on the Proposed 2022 Ulster County Budget and the Proposed 2022 to 2027 Capital Program.

We currently have one speaker and that is Miss Cheryl Schneider.

Chairman Donaldson

Miss Schneider and would you like to speak?

Cheryl Schneider

Why, yes. Thank you for asking. Um, my name is Cheryl Schneider. I have been a resident of the County for over 25 years. I am a business owner. I'm a woman. I own a home. I've been an employer.

Um, I've been through three economic upheavals starting with 9/11. And then the stock market crash 2008 - 2009. And I would say it's an economic upheaval now. With what's happened with COVID. Also, at the same time, the cost of living has increased hugely. Together, we all stood and did a collaborative ritual that has been done in this country forever. Since we've been the United States of America, the Pledge of Allegiance, liberty and justice for all. We are falling short on liberty and justice for all. Unless justice for some means, you know at the end, we can take them through probation at a restorative justice center. After we've done all the harm again and again and again. We have a huge problem. We are going to see massive amounts of homelessness come January 15th.

We have an economic divide. I have just so much time. I don't even know where to start. But we can start with the agencies that are funded by this county that are given millions of dollars a year and then they ended up paying their people a minimum wage, which is not a living wage. And yet you guys said \$15 an hour is a living wage. No, that's a poverty wage. \$20 an hour is a baseline wage. Have you seen rents in Ulster County?

Chairman Donaldson

Miss Schneider could you please speak on the budget though.

Cheryl Schneider

Speak to the budget? Yeah, it's all for the haves and not for the have nots, we I think you have to flip it completely around. I don't give a darn way any consultants tell you, they just give the same template to county after county after County. You guys are on the (inaudible) you are on the edge of making change in this budget is the same old stuff. It's wrong. It's unconscionable. Those of you who claim to be Democrats, you know, I'm not part of any party. I'm not funded by any organization. I'm not speaking on behalf of anybody. This is just a human being taking a look at this saying this budget is all wrong. This budget is imbalanced. This budget is a travesty. You don't want to be like everybody else, because you're going to be judged. You're all going to be like you know, this is a moment. This is a I don't know what you want to call it. Come to mommy come to Jesus, come to your heart and soul moment and put the money where the mouths are. And that's when we say about your budgets. And command and control center who's in there and who were the people were commanding and controlling against? Single pane of glass

because the tech bro boys love it. You know, you should be giving people enough money to live and eat and have health care. Take it out from under the Ulster County Sheriff's Department. Mental health should be under mental health shouldn't even be under our health department because they don't know anything about mental health. And it should be independent self-standing, and stop paying the people who deliver the services a wage that puts them in line for the same services your helping people try to get it's insane. And this is not the 80s Come on people grow up, put on your pants and be big boys and girls. I'm done. Thank you.

Chairman Donaldson

Thank you. Does anyone else wishing to speak? Yes. Joe Maloney.

Joseph Maloney

Thanks Chair, Joe Maloney, Saugerties, full disclosure, I was once a legislator. I have some comments on the budget, fairly specific to sales, tax projections and some positions. Some of these things that I'm going to point out have probably been talked about and been discussed, and they'll definitely be taken into consideration. We're talking about the executive's budget. And I will point out that it becomes the people's budget once the legislature puts their stamp on it. And I hope they do put their stamp on it because this budget I think needs the legislative stamp. Sales tax projections are, are pretty high. And I think that's dangerous when you think about these stimulus checks and the double unemployment checks, ending supply chain issues, five and a half percent inflation, the price of fuel. You don't have to be an economist to think that we may have a real recession coming. So even if we were able to hit that sales tax projection, which I still believe is high. Shouldn't we be preparing for what is to come even if it's next year and the year after? With regards to 59 positions? I don't know how much specifics. I was there. We didn't always get a lot of specifics. I wouldn't doubt that you didn't get a lot of specifics. How many are new? How many are vacant? For how long if they were existing? Has the Exec provided a priority list with such info and more? Were there other positions requested by the elected officials and department heads? If so why didn't they make it? I'll also remind everyone something I used to say a lot is that we may have you know that something sunsets that a position sunsets when the grant runs out, or the ARPA money runs out, but we rarely fire people. We don't like to fire people. Once. Once they're there, they're doing God's work and we'll end up keeping them. Has the legislature considered a Ways and Means Subcommittee to go through all of these positions with department heads with the executive team and really figure out whether we need these 59 positions? I suggest we do that. There's three positions in there that to spend the ARPA money I think they should have been filled if already if they were going to be filled. I don't know who we're going to find at this point. I don't know if that was the way to go anyways. We have five county wide elected officials, a legislature department heads, you know, economic development, tourism and innovation team planning a team of lawyers, certainly, we can all do our jobs and figure out the best way to spend that type of money in Ulster County. And I hope it's not on positions and salary, hope it's on infrastructure and things that our kids and grandkids benefit from years from now. I'm sure a lot of those conversations are happening. And I understand it takes 12. And we don't always, it's sometimes it's hard to get to 12. But I really hope the legislature puts their stamp for fund appropriation stamp on this budget. One last thing. I've heard a lot about Samadhi. And I know that is in the budget. You know, I know some people that live in the city of Kingston, and watching a nine-year old young woman talk was heartbreaking. I have four children, myself, and I could see my kids in a situation like that. And I don't think it's proper to just blindly put money -how many legislators have gone down there

and knocked on doors and talk to these neighbors. I don't know if there's a way to take grant the grant funding and put it in contingency until that operation is moved out of that location. But I truly believe that that is a good service that is being provided, but it is in the wrong place. And I don't think we can just sit back and fund it and continue to put those children in that situation over there. And I hope that's taken into consideration. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman Donaldson

Thank you, Joe. Is there anyone else that is listening in that would like to speak?

Clerk Fabella

Mr. Chairman, we did have one person join in. And that was Pat Pellicano. And that person we did not specifically screen like we normally do to ask. So, Pat Pellicano if you

Chairman Donaldson

Can she speak (inaudible)?

Pat Pellicano

Hello there, sure I can speak. Appreciate it. I haven't had a you know, a large chance to read most of the budget, but just based on the Ulster County websites debrief of you know of what's in it, it just seems like there's not a whole lot that's allotted to housing. I see 1.5 million to (inaudible) of housing in 2 million over the next two years or something. You know, that's almost in the same amount that they have allotted for the trails and recreation. Meanwhile, you know I live in Kingston, and just a situation with Chiz's, and how, you know, we have this housing deficit. There's just so much more work that can be done and needs to be done for people to live a dignified life in Ulster County, and more money to, to housing is just, it's just paramount. Because housing leads to all sorts of other quality of life issues. I just heard the last gentleman talk about Samadhi. And I know a lot people that go to Samadhi. And I see someone shaking their head and I do not know why. But you know, somebody is moving, but it also provides an important outlet for people that have, you know, been on the receiving end of drug companies pushing, you know, opiates, and just everything is interrelated. So, I think, yeah, just housing is kind of very important. And that's all.

Chairman Donaldson

Thank you. There's no one else that is on it. I don't see anyone else that has phones.

Legislator Litts

Mr. Chairman, I'll make a motion for adjournment.

Chairman Donaldson

Right. Well, before we adjourn the meeting made sure that everybody knows the next meeting of the Legislature will be held on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 7pm. And the proposed budget and proposed capital program will be voted on the special session of the Legislature on Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 6pm. Further details will be forthcoming and entertained and motion to adjourn. Legislator Litts.

Legislator Litts

So moved.

Chairman Donaldson

Seconded by Legislator Bruno. All those in favor?

Committee Members

Aye. Aye.

Chairman Donaldson

All right, hasta la vista.

Legislator Litts

Be safe take care.