

**Ways & Means Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
(Budgetary Admendment, Day #1)**

DATE & TIME: November 20, 2023 – 11:00 AM
LOCATION: Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, County Office Building
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chair John Gavaris
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Amber Feaster & Natalie Kelder, Legislative Financial Analyst,
Tyron Rogers, IT Legislative Specialist
PRESENT: Deputy Chair Kenneth Ronk, Legislative Chair Tracey Bartels, Legislator
Roberts
ABSENT: Legislators Cahill, Criswell
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Legislators Phil Erner, Manna Jo Greene, Gina Hansut, Chris Hewitt, Jonathan Heppner, Aaron Levine, Joseph Maloney Kathy Nolan, Laura Petit, Eric Stewart, Abe Uchitelle; Comptroller Gallagher & Deputy Comptroller DeMarco – UC Comptroller’s Office; Deputy Budget Director Quesnell - Department of Finance; Director Juras- Budget and Innovation; Director Erichsen – Emergency Management; Tanya Garment -Resident; Department Budget Director Victoria Reid; DIAC Comptroller Charles Dinstuhl; Department County Executive Johanna Contreras; Department County Executive Amanda Lavalley; Chief Diversity Officer Esi Lewis; CSEA/IS Kirk Jones; UC Fire Advisory Board Frank Banks; CSEA, Tina Buono; Director of Research & Operations Laura Norstrom; District Attorney David Clegg; IS Director Alan Macaluso

Chairman Gavaris called the meeting to order at 11:03 AM

Chair Gavaris introduced legislators and department heads to discuss their 2024 County Executive Recommended Budget amendment requests:

Budget Director Juras

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 1: Correction to Financed Debt** – At this time of budget preparation the County had not gone out to market for its 2023 bond and Ban Issuance. The Sale closed on 11/15/23. This amendment reflects the funding necessary to pay for our debt financed.

Budget Director Juras stated reason for this amendment is to reflect the proceeds of the bond sale that they had on November 1st and closed on November 15th. There was an estimate provided in the budget when the County Executive released her budget, but because it was after the submission deadline, Budget Director had new information, and had to go ahead and request that there be an amendment to reflect that change.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 2: I Park Lease Funding** – Adding a real property lease expense for I Park 87 to move certain county departments into the I Park complex. Full annual cost is \$300,000. This amendment will add funds for 9 months. This timeframe was determined after the work letter was agreed to by the lessor after CE budget submittal.

Budget Director Juras stated that this lease was approved by the County Legislature back in August. There was some additional setup cost and more work that needed the lessor to agree to, which is why it was not included in the budget. He asked for a partial year funding of this based on the fact that he is anticipating they will not be in I Park 87 until May 2024

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 1: Galeville Bridge Replacement Correction** – Amending the Capital Improvement Program to adjust Galeville Bridge Replacement to reflect expenses based on bid documents. A resolution was passed in November of 2023 to reflect these costs.

Requesting an amendment due to the fact that bid documents were opened after the County Executive submitted their budget. The resolution was sent to the Legislature in November with these costs reflected the total increase is 1.35 Million in construction in 2024.

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 2: Bridge Substructure Repairs Correction** – Amending the Capital Improvement Program to adjust the Bridge Substructure Repairs Project to reflect expenses for Leggs Mills Bridge and Rosendale Bridge based on opened bid documents. A resolution was passed in November of 2023 to reflect these costs.

Requesting an amendment per bid documents being opened after the County Executive summary of Budget Director Ken Juras budget with actual costs regarding Leggs Mill and Rosendale Bridge. The resolution was sent to the Legislature in November with these costs being reflected, the total increase is 2.5 to 6 million in construction in 2024

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 3: Bridge Substructure Repairs Correction** - Amending the Capital Improvement Program to add construction for the Bridge Superstructure Repairs Project to 2024. Bridges to be considered at this time are the Watson Hollow, High Falls, Coxing, Saugerties Reservoir, and Tuttle town Bridges.

This amendment is to fix an error with construction being left out in 2024. This is a total add of \$1 million in 2024 and inflation for years 2025 through 2029.

Unidentifiable Speaker expresses concern about inflation factors and their impact and escalates far exceeds what it is now. Budget Director Ken Juras responded that this cost was for past year CPI construction materials.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 3: Public Health Engineer Replacement** – The CE Budget included the new position as a Senior Public Health Engineer and it should have been an Associate Public Health Engineer.

Budget Direct Juras requesting a change in the Florida Department Health, requesting a Associate Public Health Engineer to be added to the current staff, they have the County Executives Budget incorrectly listed as a Senior Public Health Engineer and is seeking to correct that.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 4: Truth & Reconciliation Funding** - To rectify a clerical error omitting funding for the Truth and Reconciliation Program. This program was to be included behalf of the County Clerk and County Executive. The Ulster County Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an initiative focused on exploring and addressing the complex history of racial dynamics and slavery in Ulster County, New York. This Commission delves into historical research to uncover and educate the public on the true history of slavery in the region, and additionally seeks to reconcile the lingering effects of this past by connecting descendants of both slaves and slave owners and develop strategies to rectify the ongoing impacts.

Ken Juras stated this is to correct a clerical error from the budget department. There is the Truth and Reconciliation same program was intended to be funded in the County Clerk's budget. It was Erroneously not included in the County Executives budget this amendment will correct that error.

Legislator Petit

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 4: Removal of Open Space and Recreation Program** – To remove the Open Space and Recreation Program from the Capital Improvement Program. The Program has yet to be established but has appeared in historic Capital Improvement Programs. The Program is designed for open space protection, farmland preservation, and expansion of public recreational opportunities. The County established an Agricultural Service Administrator position in 2024 which is designed to create a program similar to this.

Legislator Petit stated this amendment is to remove the open space and recreation program from the capital improvement budget, which would have an impact of negative \$2 million. This has been in the capital improvement for multiple years. So it one of those capital wishes, its not necessarily for planning to actually put forward like it is with bridges and other infrastructure.

Legislative Chair Bartels that this has been in capital improvement for a number of years and asked when it was first put in. Legislator Petit addressed Natalie or Amber to answer asking if it was 4 years ago, Natalie or Amber's answer could not be heard.

Legislator Maloney recalls this and but doesn't know what year this started. He asked if the info was exactly the same as pasted years with no change. Unidentifiable speaker answered yes.

Legislator Petit stated that the program has not been established yet, but it has appeared in the historic capital improvement program. So once again, this is a wish list ad she agrees with Chair Bartels about at some point there needs to be a separation between their capital wish list and the actual capital projects that are coming up.

Unidentifiable speaker expresses concern about carrying forward unused ARPA funding for open space preservation, suggesting it may not be affordable in the capital plan.

Legislator Joseph Maloney questions the need to keep the \$2 million in the wish list, as it's not budgeted for and may not be feasible in the future.

Discussion continued ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 5: Temporary Assistance Positions** – To replace the three (3) proposed housing specialist positions with three (3) SWE positions which will primarily focus their roles and responsibilities around housing.

Legislator Petit's concerned with this amendment is that they are creating another department with a department head or Director that would be making close to \$80,000 a year who will be overseeing and reporting back to the Director of Social Services. She would rather, instead of putting management positions in, put in worker positions and have these three people dedicated to rehousing. Legislator Petit believes there were also two or three physicians were requested by the Director of Social Services initially but were not put into the budget.

Unidentifiable Speaker felt strongly about this amendment and explained why, the positions that are created are different than suite positions and are necessary. She has had conversations with Legislators Petit, Erner about who are calling her or calling legislators or calling the Commissioner. There is various people who are basically serving as caseworkers at all levels for people who aren't able to get the help they need. She worked with Legislator Nolan to put in an amendment to the budget to also give DSS, allowing them to swap some positions for the suite positions that they asked for in the housing unit, because the number of people in emergency housing has gone up, unfortunately since DSS initially put in their budget proposal. So they agree that the positions are necessary. This speaker also explains that social welfare examiners will be acting as caseworkers, managing cases on their own, and being more flexible due to county funding.

Unidentifiable Speaker explains that the new position will have a broader lens and flexibility to help clients, rather than just fitting them into existing programs and funding sources. The team will serve not only existing homeless populations but also the general county population with housing issues.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 6: Outsourcing Grant Writing** - To defund two (2) Grant Positions and increase Misc Contractual Expense to outsource the County's grant writing function. The County has been unsuccessful in its attempt to hire internal personnel to perform this function.

Legislator Petit states she's having problems finding people to take these jobs. It was brought up by Legislator Criswell that it would make more sense to pay a stipend to a grant writer having a \$1500 per grant.

Ronk suggests raising salaries for staff to attract top talent, potentially through a one-year trial.

Legislator Maloney expresses skepticism about the effectiveness of creating new grant writing positions without a clear plan for how they will communicate and coordinate with different departments.

Legislator Petit suggests that evaluating the effectiveness of the grant writing positions would require a logistical plan and a way to measure legacy costs.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 7: Overall Budgetary Reduction** – To reduce the overall County Operating Budget by the amount of Appropriated Fund Balance proposed. This reduction is equal to a decrease of 3.95% overall.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 8: Tax Levy Increase** – To Increase the property tax Levy by 2% to make the budget slightly more balanced.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 9: Auto Mechanic Raises** - This amendment changes the title of 56301198 to an AUT MECH / HEP to match what it is currently filled at and budgeted for in 2024. This amendment also increases the grades and rates of pay while moving these employees who are budgeted for 8 hours to be paid off the 8-hour contracted schedule. Specifically, this amendment moves the AUT MECH / HELP from a grade 6 on the 7-hour schedule to a grade 10 on the 8 Hour Schedule, moves the AUT MEC II from a grade 10 on the 7-hour schedule to a grade 14 on the 8-hour schedule, and moves a LD AUT MEC from a grade 12 on the 7 hour schedule to a grad 15 on the 8 hour schedule.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 10: Off-Site Fire Training Funding** – To add funding for off-site fire training within the Fire Coordinator.

Legislator Joseph Maloney expresses frustration with lack of logistical planning for grant writing, suggesting a special committee or subcommittee meeting to address the issue.

Unidentifiable Speaker mentions successful grant writing through outsourcing in other towns but notes lack of details on any proposed solutions.

Unidentifiable Speaker emphasizes the importance of having a clear and focused approach to grants, rather than relying solely on free money.

Legislator Joseph Maloney expresses concerns about the lack of transparency and accountability in the grant-writing process.

Legislator Joseph Maloney proposes reducing county budget by 3.95% by investing \$60 million from reserves.

Legislator Petit suggested if cannot get an overall budgetary reduction of 3.95% then she recommended raising the property taxes.

Department heads discuss reducing budgets to lower taxes, with a focus on reducing personnel costs.

Legislative Chair Bartels suggests a 10% tax reduction, but others are skeptical due to lack of departmental input and potential for future tax increases.

Legislator Petit explains the Auto Mechanics Amendment No. 9, which would reduce compression in auto mechanics due to upgraded grades in new cat last year, while another speaker expresses opposition to the idea, citing compression issues with deputies.

Firefighters in Ulster County seek funding for Swiftwater rescue training.

Chair of the Ulster County Fire Advisory Board Frank Banks requests additional funding for emergency management training, including ice rescue and Swiftwater rescue, to expand current training capabilities and distribute funds across multiple jurisdictions.

Legislative Chair Bartels seeks specifics on how on how the funding will be distributed and how many people will be affected, including the cost of individual classes and the number of volunteers involved.

County fire departments struggle to provide specialized training due to limited resources and funding.

Discussion ensued.

Legislator Levine

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 11: Board of Elections Raises** – To grant the Department Request for all personnel within the Board of Elections.

Legislator Levine proposes 5% salary increase for Board of Elections personnel to address regional pay discrepancies.

Legislator Levine is asked to carry a resolution to amend the county charter, which he agrees to do.

Legislator Joseph Maloney expresses concern about losing rank-and-file employees due to lower pay compared to neighboring counties.

Legislator Joseph Maloney expresses concerns about low salaries for county employees, while Speaker 18 raises concerns about unequal salary increases.

Discussion continued ensued.

Legislative Chair Bartels

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 12: Funds Balance Policy Compliance** – To utilize assigned fund balance in the Road Machinery Fund and the County Road Fund in order to maintain compliance with the County’s adopted Fund Balance Policy for these two funds.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 13: Attrition Savings** –This amendment reclassifying the proposed Attrition savings account into payroll reduction accounts at the department, office, and/or unit level.
- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 5: Separation of Bridge Projects** - Bridge Substructures are a primary structural element for all bridges. Ulster County is aware that it owns several bridges which have deteriorating substructure which support superstructures that are in fine condition. In 2024, two (2) bridges were repaired (Rosendale and Leggs Mills). The Capital Improvement Program should separate out which bridges are intended to be repaired for each of the years included. These repairs are expensive and materials contain lag times so the information should already be known. The Capital Improvement Program should be reflective of the correlating Resolution which is forthcoming establishing the project(s).

Legislative Chair Bartels in regard to the Separation of Bridge Projects was to separate them out into separate projects for better accounting and better accountability to the legislation.

Legislator Joseph Maloney provides an example of a closed bridge impacting a local winery, highlighting the importance of specific and accountable bridge repair projects.

Legislator Joseph Maloney expresses appreciation for flexibility in prioritizing bridge projects.

Legislator Ronk emphasizes the importance of prioritizing bridge repairs and emergency responses in light of recent storms.

Legislator Joseph Maloney requests plan for bridges from Department of Public Works, citing lack of information.

Sheriff Figueroa, Legislator Hansut, & Legislative Chair Bartels

- **Proposed CIP Amendment No. 6: Addition of Video Surveillance Project** – Quoting was requested by County Executive Office for upgrade to all Camera Systems. This amendment adds the Capital Project for the acquisition of new security cameras to County Buildings in 2024.

Legislative Chair Bartels felt there was a little confusion with this proposal, her understanding from the executive's office is that the proposal for security cameras across county buildings is contained in buildings and grounds and doesn't see it in the capital plan.

Legislative Chair Bartels emphasized the need for expediency in implementing the security camera system, suggesting it could be done within a year.

Legislator Hansut agrees with Legislative Chair Bartels, whether its buildings or grounds, the Sheriff's Dept as our lead security might baa good place for it to be. Legislator Hansut also stated that it shouldn't be spread out too many years out.

Sheriff Figueroa stated that this request has been going on for about 3 years and it was going back and forth on who's budget it should go on which has been the issue, does it go on the Sheriff's budget, buildings and grounds or County Executive's budget. He met up with the Comptroller who requested an assessment on the cameras throughout not just this building but the entire county, so that is why it was put in the Sheriff's budget and he also agrees that this should be moved on now rather than later.

Discussion ensued.

Sheriff Figueroa, Legislator Hansut

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 14: Addition of Avert Detective** – This Amendment fullfills the Sheriff's request for a Detective position to work in the Avert program. This includes benefits and uniform allowance.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 15: Urgent Vehicle Funding** – Vehicles were originally requested in the Capital program but were removed from the CE proposed CIP since vehicles to be purchased are used and cannot be bonded. Amendment seeks to include these vehicles in the operating as was intended when removed from the CIP.

District Attorney Clegg & Legislator Hansut

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 16: DA Investigator Upgrade** – To reclassify the Part Time Non-Benefited Position to a Full-Time Benefited Position, as requested by Resolution No. 50 of 2023, and to reduce the recommended salary for position 11651208 to be consistent with other departmental raises recommended.

Legislator Hansut explained that this position is for a DEA investigator, specifically an accident reconstruction criminal investigator. The main responsibility is coordinating the Ulster County Crash Reconstruction Team. She also stated that one reason for the establishment of such a team was to assist local law enforcement with documenting crash and crime scenes to expedite analysis pursuant to discovery laws.

Legislator Hansut The Ulster County Crash Reconstruction Team Coordinator has over 20 trainings and courses specific to their position and has built a county-wide, multi-agency team from the ground up.

Budget Director Juras explained that the county has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in this program, including a special machine that can detail accident and crime scene reconstruction, and in very much detail and the coordinator is a real asset for the community and county.

The sheriff's office has requested additional funding for the Oracle/Avert program, which provides training and resources for law enforcement agencies to combat crime and improve public safety.

Legislators Greene, Stewart

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 17: Climate Smart Schools Funding** – To establish the Climate Smart Schools Program which shall work in collaboration with a partner organization. The Partner Organization will be charged with dedicating one or more staff, including a Program Coordinator, to assist schools and school districts in Ulster County to adopt and implement Climate Solutions per the Budget Amendment Backup provided.

Legislator Greene was speaking on behalf of Climate Smart School Program for Ulster County. She shared that her experience when she was working for the UCRRA, when no one was recycling and recycling became mandatory, part of that job was to implement waste reduction and recycling in the schools and was met with resistance.

Legislator Eric Stewart outlines plan for Climate Smart Schools program in Ulster County. Legislator Stewart explained that the way they view the Climate Smart Schools Program is very much like the climate smart communities' program and the climate and housing smart program in the climate smart communities, the different municipalities take steps and they are awarded points on the actions that they take, this then enables them to apply for grants down the road.

Minority Leader Ronk expressed concern about investing a significant portion of county funds in school districts, already paying for unpaid property taxes and having their own taxing authority.

Legislator Nolan suggested coordinating and packaging school efforts on climate smart and housing smart, modeled after state-level programs, and working with the youth board for additional funding and staffing.

Legislator Eric Stewart suggests a coordinator role to help teachers and students access available funding for climate change programs.

Discussion ensued.

Legislator Greene

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 7: Addition of Reuse Innovation Center Project** – This Amendment adds the Reuse Innovation Center to the Capital Improvement Program. The County has budgeted and contracted for the Reuse Innovation Center Feasibility Study and it is foreseeable that the Reuse Innovation Center Project will be undergone, therefore, it should be part of the County's 5 year plan.

Legislator Greene stated that they have paid and received a very comprehensive feasibility study for a Reuse Innovation Center to maximize waste diversion and need to be housed somewhere. It will include some capital expenses, some operating expenses. It is designed according to the feasibility study, to be as close to self-sustaining as possible but there will be some start-up costs and it's not included in the RRA budget.

Legislator Maloney is open to starting small and cheap with a reuse center, but others disagree, citing significant costs associated with the project.

Legislator Maloney suggest that starting slow in a rental space and building up is not a viable option, and a real plan and budget must be attached to any capital investment.

Legislative Chair Bartels suggests starting with a cheap, generic facility to determine needs and work with private sector, rather than investing in a capital project.

Legislator Joseph Maloney disagrees, citing the firm's recommendation to start with a cheap, flexible facility to better understand the needs of the facility and the private sector.

Legislator Joseph Maloney suggests renting a cheap warehouse to start the energy and environment firm, as it's the responsible way to do it.

Legislator Greene stated that there is a meeting taking this afternoon to discuss the recommendation, which is a final draft and that all it is and some will be commenting and then it will go to the committee. Legislator Greene purpose was to alert the Legislature and the Executive Branch that this will need funding and that funding may come from the RRA budget.

Legislators Maloney, Erner

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 18: Adjustment to DPW salary schedule** – This amendment applies the \$5.70 increase for DPW employees to the employees listed above who were not included with the initial increase.

Legislator Maloney seeks pay increase for Public Works workers, including those at the law enforcement center.

Legislator Erner stated the Public Works building grounds of law enforcement center workers, evidently had communicated through the union that they would all like an hourly increase.

Legislator Bartels expressed concern that changes to union contracts are being made outside of negotiations, which could lead to legal issues.

A discussion ensued.

Legislative Hewitt

- **Proposed Budget CIP Amendment No. 19: Addition of Director of Parks** – The Ulster County parks, public spaces, and Recreation Department (PPSRD) will work with Towns, Villages, the City of Kingston, and County residents to develop cohesive parks plan that highlights the diverse flora and fauna of Ulster County and provide safe, enjoyable opportunities to experience the outdoors. The PPSRD will foster collaborations with local municipalities and organizations to create more access to nature and build greater community resilience through stronger relationships with our natural surroundings. The position is budgeted for July 1-December 31.

Legislator Hewitt explained this is a parks plan to create edible spaced throughout Ulster County.

Incorporating useful trees in landscape planning helps with food resilience, as seen in the Watershed Nature Trail in Rochester.

Legislator Hewitt also outlined plans to improve parks, create a county park and build local fire departments in Ulster County.

Legislator Hewitt spoke to the Director of Parks and Recreation in Dutchess County, and she expressed that she loved being a part of DPW. She also proposed creating a new department, department of Parks and Public Spaces and Recreation, to streamline operations and increase efficiency.

The proposed department would be led by a director at a salary of \$86,000 starting July 1, with additional professional services budgeted for studies and feasibility assessments.

County officials express concerns about adding headcount for parks department due to budget constraints and existing efforts to survey open space.

Discussion ensued.

Legislators Hewitt, Roberts

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 20: CARES III Funding** – To provide the Department of Economic Development with funding to conduct a CARES III Program

Legislator Erner

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 21: Boards and Commissions Stipends** – Establish a \$25 per meeting stipend for boards & commissions to equal the value which some, such as Soil & Water, already provide; and to make it easier for working people to afford to volunteer. This amendment acknowledges the financial hardship that a commitment to these boards & commissions would represent for a sizable proportion of the County’s low-income, low-wealth population.

Legislator Erner suggests a targeted approach to providing stipends, such as income verification, to ensure the money goes to those who need it most.

Legislator Erner expressed concern about requiring income verification for board members, citing privacy and legal concerns.

Legislator Nolan suggests offering a stipend to board members who face financial constraints, such as childcare or transportation costs, to increase diversity and inclusivity. Legislator Nolan also acknowledges the idea but notes the administrative burden of implementing such a program would be significant.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 22: Addition of Bus Aide Positions** - To establish two (2) new positions entitled "Bus Aide". These individuals will be responsible for riding on the busiest public transit routes in order to provide valuable information to all riders. Since UCAT’s introduction of no-cost-to-rider fares concurrent in Oct. 2022 with the sudden alteration of routes leading to riders alternating between gratitude and outrage, the Legislature has heard from bus drivers about passenger decorum. Believing that such problems generally have socioeconomic roots, I introduce two (2) new positions entitled Bus Aide. Dubbed “ayudantes” (“helpers”) in Central America and “voceros” (“announcers”) in Oaxaca, México, these County human-services workers would ride (at first the busiest) public transit routes, supplying valuable information about County services to passengers, inquiring as to ridership experience, and facilitating safe, distraction-free driving by helping to keep the peace.

Legislator Erner proposes hiring "bus aides" to provide information, facilitate safe distraction, and connect passengers with social services on busy bus routes.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 23: Fund Office of Housing Counsel** - To increase contractual expenses for professional services - legal, eviction services to include services such as providing residents with the information, resources, services, advice, and representation they need to exercise their housing rights. Issues might include potential eviction proceedings, habitability claims for repairs, claims under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act, and discrimination proceedings. If we obtain numerical data demonstrating the present inadequacy of such services, then we shall have budgeted for a justifiable expansion.

Council member proposes new Office of Housing Council, potentially addressing administration's objections to previous legislation.

Legislator Nolan had some concerns about the assumption that services will go down and that funds will be available from the services going down.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 24: Increase Contractual Eviction Services** - To increase contractual expenses for professional services - legal, eviction services to include services such as providing residents with the information, resources, services, advice, and representation they need to exercise their housing rights. Issues might include potential eviction proceedings, habitability claims for repairs, claims under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act, and discrimination proceedings.

Legislator Erner references studies showing the need for legal services to keep people from losing their homes. He also highlights the ongoing nature of the issue, with 70 cases still outstanding despite efforts to address it.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 25: Addition of Part-Time Enforcement Officer** - To add a part-time, benefited enforcement officer to the Department of Environment for the purpose of enforcement of County environmental laws including Proposed Local Law No. 12 of 2022 - A Local Law Providing For The Protection And Restoration Of The Hudson River, Formerly Known As Mahicannituck, And For The Rights Of The Residents Of Ulster County And The River To Clean Water And A Healthy And Productive Ecosystem. Annual salary of \$36.00 an hour, 35 hours per week, beginning July 1st. This addresses an administration concern about their staffing capacity and other resources needed to enforce Proposed Local Law #12 of 2022.

Legislator Erner expresses frustration with Department of Environment's lack of advocacy for people's environmental concerns.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 26: Dispatcher Raises** - To head off the borderline crisis of short staffing in this office, I propose to reclassify Emergency Dispatchers to increase positions by 1 grade. E911 dispatchers 1 & 2 are significantly underpaid in comparison to their counterparts in many other regional counties. Even those counties struggle to hire & retain employees in those titles.

Legislator Erner expresses concerns about low pay in Emergency Management Department, requests higher increase for workers because low pay is going to cause workers to leave.

Legislator Ronk agrees with Legislator Erner, stating that there is a shortage of dispatchers and questioning the hiring process, but he doesn't think that a budget amendment is the proper way to do this. He went on to say, there are civil service positions that need to be negotiated.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 27: Adjustment to Elected Official Salaries** - The Legislature's adoption of the recommendations of the Periodic Compensation Review Board on these matters and the rejection of mine notwithstanding, this amendment takes a step toward equity in pay for the entire county by re-appropriating the salaries of county-wide elected officers to make them equal to the Area Median Income. Elected officers hold tremendous power & responsibility, much of which a salary cannot reflect, measure or compensate; unlike other government jobs, holding elective office makes one accountable directly to the people. This amendment also supports a goal of moving all County salaries toward a median pay rate, at which we acknowledge the necessity of each worker for their work, energy & time, not their title or role; and given that in determining salaries, we cannot consider most individuals' personal circumstances, such as dependents or socioeconomic disadvantages.

Legislator Erner proposes increasing legislator salaries to match area median income to make the job more accessible to working people.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 28: Increase Contractual - Contingency for Required Minimum Wage of \$30.00/Hour** - To increase the Contingent Account to accommodate the increased cost of Professional Services with a mandated \$30-an-hour minimum wage for all employees working on County contracts. This appropriation acknowledges that the County's Living Wage for contract workers - - originally set in 2021 at \$15 an hour when New York State minimum wage equaled \$13.20 an hour for Ulster County - will equal the state's minimum wage as of Jan. 1, and has seen no increase for over two years. This amendment meaningfully addresses the contract workforce's rapidly increasing costs of living from housing to food to fuel to transportation, making life more affordable for our lowest paid contract workers. Remarkably, this increase of \$3.243 M represents only about three-quarters of one percent of the total budget; and even more astonishing, it costs under 50 percent more than doing a bare-minimum alternative for \$2.323 M. To me this is but little to ask in order to significantly improve the affordability of life for our contract workers in Ulster County. An accompanying Resolution to increase the Living Wage is forthcoming. (Note, this would apply only to new contracts, or amendments thereof.)
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 29: Increase Contractual – Contingency for Required Minimum Wage COLA increase** - To increase the Contingent Account to accommodate the increased cost of Professional Services with a mandated minimum wage increase for 2023 COLA adjustments + 2024 COLA adjustments for all employees working on County contracts. This appropriation acknowledges that the County's Living Wage for contract workers - - originally set in 2021 at \$15 an hour when New York State minimum wage equaled \$13.20 an hour for Ulster County - - will equal the state's minimum wage as of Jan. 1, and has seen no increase for over two years. This bare-minimum increase only begins to correct the law's omission of COLA adjustments and will do little to make life more affordable for Ulster County's lowest paid contract workers. This increase of \$2.323 M represents only about one-half of one-percent of the total budget; it is very little to ask but unfortunately also gives workers

very little. An accompanying Resolution to apply these adjustments to the Living Wage law is forthcoming. (Note, this would apply only to new contracts, or amendments thereof.)

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 30: Wage Adjustment for \$30/Hour Minimum Wage (only those below \$30)** - This Amendment increases the hourly rate of pay for all employees making below \$30.00/hour to make \$30.00/hour.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 31- Wage Adjustment for \$30/Hour Minimum Wage (county-wide standardized increase)** - This Amendment increases all County Employees by a standard rate in order to increase the lowest paid employee(s) to a minimum of \$30.00/hour.

Legislator Erner argues that increasing the minimum wage is a moral issue as it affects one's material reality and raises questions about fairness and affordability.

The Ulster County Workforce may struggle to afford living in the county due to lagging pay compared to neighboring counties, despite enjoying benefits with an excellent reputation.

Elected officials in Ulster County, NY discuss wage gaps and affordable housing.

Legislator Erner discusses living wage law, sharing data on wages for employees of contractors and subcontractors, and seeking an increase to \$30 an hour for all workers employed directly or by contract with the county.

Legislator Erner provides background on the living wage, including calculations for various household sizes and compositions, and notes that wage rates have changed slightly over the past nearly 10 months.

Legislator Erner proposes increasing the minimum salary for in-house workers to \$30 an hour to address wage stagnation and inequality.

The updated cost of the increase is now \$37 million, up from \$31 million due to growth or inadequate addressing of stagnating wages.

Administration resisted increasing union titles' pay without unilateral authority, instead using calculated rate of increase for contract workforce.

Minority Leader Ronk

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 32: Comptroller Office Standard Work Week** - To restore standard work weeks to the 2023 adopted hours. The Deputy Comptroller position will maintain standard hours at 75 hours. The Director of Internal Audit Control will maintain standard hours at 75 hours. (Recommended Budget is 70 hours for DEP COMPT and 80 hours for DIAC).
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 33: Budget Department Standard Work Week** – To restore standard work weeks to the 2023 adopted hours.

Minority Leader Ronk discussed both Amendment No. 32 and 33 together. He expresses concern about reducing hours without changing pay, citing potential for future controllers to manipulate hours to increase salaries.

Minority Leader Ronk suggests keeping hours at 75, while other committee member proposes standardizing hours across departments to address compression issues.

Legislator Maloney expresses frustration with unequal treatment of deputies across different county offices, suggesting they should be more similarly compensated. He also explains how the creation of additional deputy county executive positions was influenced by lobbying from the county executive elected at the time, rather than the county comptroller elected.

Minority Leader Ronk advocates for standardizing salaries for deputy positions in the county government, citing inconsistent increases and lack of transparency in decision-making. He also expresses difficulty in recruiting for tier 6 positions due to benefits and healthcare concerns, and hopes for pension reform.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 34: Legal Secretary Raise** – To increase regular pay for the Legal Secretary in the County Attorney Office to equal the regular pay of the Confidential Secretary (\$36.00/Hour).

Minority Leader Ronk this was brought to him that with this amendment amongst all the elected officials, that confidential secretaries and department heads that confidential secretaries would be standardized. There is legal secretary who does legal secretary work in the County Attorney's office that would have then been making less than the confidential secretary. So he has put in this amendment to increase it by \$3,594 to bring it up to what the agreement was for confidential secretaries which is \$66,024.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 35: Standardize Confidential Secretary Salaries** - To change two (2) confidential secretaries to be equal to the other 9 confidential secretaries within the County at a rate of \$36.00 / hour.
- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 36: Standardize Attorney Raises** - To keep all Attorney Increases to 7.5%.

County executives and departments with attorneys agreed on a standardized 7.5% raise for attorneys, except for two positions with higher increases.

County attorney and public defender offices request flat \$10,000 increase for all attorneys, citing unequal workloads and overtime.

Minority Leader Ronk feels that County Attorney's office and Public Defender's Office they are the most overlooked for increases.

Legislator Nolan does not in favor of this amendment. She doesn't have the full grasp of all the differences between these different areas but from her perspective, there are substantial differences in what the workload of the DA's office has been. So she would not be in support of this amendment unless there is information that shows that workloads and overtime and workload is comparable.

Discussion ensued.

Legislators Hansut, Sperry

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 37: Reassign Better Future Initiative** - This amendment will move the Brighter Futures Initiative (BFI) Program and associated staff from the Youth Department into the Office of Employment and Training (OET) in the General Fund in order to integrate the program into the Workforce Innovation Initiative and new workforce development programmatic opportunities in OET.

Legislator Hansut discuss the benefits of moving teen mentorship and job training programs under one umbrella. Services include alternative educational programs, tutoring, mentoring, various counseling, internship stipends and recreation subsidies.

Legislator Sperry has been serving on the Youth Bureau this past year. So she has gotten to understand a little more of what the Youth Bureau does and what the Youth Board does and the different programs. This creates a very symbiotic relationship between teen mentorship and job training and allows the county to stay involved with the youth through high school and getting them placed in jobs.

Legislator Stewart

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 38: Historical Societies Funding** - To add a contractual funding for the Department of Economic Development to pursue a program for aid to historical societies and museums.

Legislator Stewart is requesting \$100,000 for Ulster County historical societies, citing lack of county support.

Organizations operating on shoestring budgets may benefit from grants to catalog and document their collections, and some may contract with counties for genealogical research.

Discussion ensued.

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 39: Additional Funding for Warming Centers** - To add a contractual funding for the Department of Social Services to pursue a program for aid to local municipal warming centers to encourage geographically diverse warming centers.

Legislator Stewart asks for additional funding for warming centers.

There are main warming centers in Ulster County: Yglesias Mission Church, Rosendale community center, and East Kingston Fire Department.

Churches seek county assistance for warming centers, but county has not provided direct support.

Committee members discuss challenges in establishing warming centers in southern Ulster County, including unequal distribution of resources and lack of communication between districts.

Legislative Chair Bartels expresses uncertainty about the need for a warming center in their community, citing a lack of information on municipal efforts and resources.

Director Erichsen discusses the challenges of opening warming shelters during power outages, highlighting the need for evaluation and preparation to ensure safety and compliance with state regulations.

Director Erichsen emphasizes the importance of local agencies working together to provide transportation and support to those in need during emergencies, citing examples from past events.

Legislator Maloney suggests going through ARPA because they may be some money left over that could be used for these warming centers and also suggested funding a warming center in Kingston, NY, and expanding its hours and temperature range to accommodate more people.

Committee discusses potential collaboration with church on warming center project.

Discussion ensued.

Legislators Stewart & Erner

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 40: Feasibility Study for Composting /Eco-Toilets** - To provide the Department of Environment with additional contractual resources for the completion of a feasibility study on the implementation of composting and/or eco-toilets.

Committee seeks funding for composting toilet study along NW Rail Trail.

Legislators Stewart, Heppner

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 41: Additional Funding for Short-Term Rental Software**- 16 Ulster County municipalities have adopted short-term rental regulations, but face implementation and enforcement challenges due to the rental market's complexity and staff limitations. Granicus offers modules to aid local monitoring and enforcement, customizable to each municipality's needs. This amendment seeks to provide base-level Granicus accounts to 11 municipalities in the County's Housing Smart Communities Initiative, with funding for five additional municipalities if they join.

Legislators stated that Controller Gallagher made a report to the legislature saying that there were 600 units of short term rentals that were not in compliance, meaning that they have not registered with the county. They are also assuming that there is still many hundreds of units that are not registered and have not signed up with the county and have to pay the tax.

Majority Leader Heppner explained that the proposed agreement with Airbnb would provide 51,000 additional funding for municipalities to regulate short-term rentals. He also explained that The company provides a range of services, including rental activity monitoring, compliance monitoring, and consulting services, to help local governments enforce short-term rental regulations.

Discussion ensued.

Legislator Gavaris

- **Proposed Budget Amendment No. 42: Addition to Information Services Personnel** - To create and fund a new position entitled Radio Repair Technician within the Department of Information Services. This individual will be responsible for the installation, maintenance, and repair of all County radio telephone communications systems.

Discussion to create a new position within the county government to address radio repair needs, potentially as a substitute for the Konkal contract.

Director Erichsen supports disposition of radio system, seeing it as a position within the Department of Emergency Services. He also suggested using two radios instead of one to save money, with one on standby for maintenance and emergencies.

Legislative Chair Bartels suggests phasing out contracts for radios that aren't emergency service radios and starting to work towards self-reliance in financial accountability.

Legislative Chair Bartels supports the idea of evaluating and potentially privatizing contracts to save money, while also acknowledging the importance of having someone on board to utilize the new system effectively.

Legislator Maloney suggests moving the IT position within the Sheriff's Department to better facilitate collaboration and streamline processes.

Discussion ensued.

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislative Chair Bartels

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Roberts

No. of Votes in Favor: 4

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 5:35 PM

Respectfully submitted: Natalie Kelder

Minutes Prepared by: Lizvett Bost

Minutes Approved: November 20, 2023