



News from Livingston County, NY

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Livingston County Releases 2020 Tentative Budget

Geneseo, NY, November 5, 2019 — On October 31, 2019, Livingston County Administrator Ian Coyle unveiled the tentative budget for Fiscal Year 2020. A public budget hearing has been scheduled for November 20, 2019 as part of the regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting.

According to Coyle, the 2020 budget goals have been met in their entirety. The goals, developed by the Livingston County Board of Supervisors and Administration, are to: (i) align the budget with the County's Strategic Plan, (ii) present a practical, responsible budget that delivers core County services in a cost-effective manner, (iii) comply with the tax cap, (iv) use conservative estimates, (v) fund the five-year Capital Improvement Plan as well as priority projects and programs, and (iv) maintain services and programs.

"The County is in good financial shape, and this financial plan builds on the operational, programmatic, and budgetary successes experienced over the past year," stated David LeFeber, Chairman of the Livingston County Board of Supervisors. "The tentative budget is structurally sound, balanced, and conservative in its estimates and forecasts."

Coyle recommends a balanced budget of over \$169 million that includes a tax rate of \$7.95 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This represents an increase of 1.5% or 12 cents per \$1,000 of value.

As in previous years, sales tax - budgeted at \$32 million for 2020 - will continue to be the largest source of non-property tax revenue for the County. Potential impacts on the county sales tax revenue include two new impacts: (i) the expanded collection of sales tax on internet purchases, and (ii) the withholding of a portion of county sales tax to pay Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) to towns and villages, which has traditionally been paid for by the State. Other sources of revenue beyond sales tax include Federal and State aid as well as additional interest earnings. While the Governor recently signed into law a bill allowing the County to

impose an increased mortgage recording tax rate, those revenues are not yet codified by Board action locally and, thus, were excluded from the tentative budget.

Capital improvements such as building renovations, software and hardware upgrades, emergency communications and interoperability upgrades, and adaptive reuse of existing space represent some large expense areas in the budget. Recent capital projects approved by the Board of Supervisors include the expansion of the Emergency Operations Center, the replacement of the Courthouse roof, improvements to Al Lorenz Park, work at the District Attorney's Office, and a reconfigured Government Center front entrance. Other growing budget expense areas are public safety - including marine, jail, and road patrol - and health and human services in areas such as the Department of Social Services, Emergency Medical Services, and Mental Health.

State mandates for Medicaid, State pensions, community colleges, probation, pre-kindergarten special education, and a multitude of social services programs continue to represent the largest single expense to the County. One area of concern for 2020 is State mandated criminal justice and bail reform and its spending impacts on the District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office and potentially Probation. Because there is no new State aid accompanying these mandates, local taxpayers will be directly impacted.

Coyle said, "We were hit hard again by the State government with the fiscal impacts of criminal justice 'reform' and the absurdity and poor public policy of State aid to towns and villages now coming from the County budget versus the State budget - where it belongs. This is yet another example of Albany shifting State expenses to county governments."

Despite new pressures and challenges, fiscal and economic indicators - such as the unemployment rate and consumer confidence index - indicate that the County is in solid financial shape. Livingston County continues to be recognized for its leadership and pioneering innovation in local government and financial management:

- The County maintains a low fiscal stress score - measured by the State Comptroller's Office - which places it in the top tier of all counties in the State.
- It was recently presented with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its Fiscal Year 2019 budget.
- Standard and Poor's (S&P), one of the nation's leading credit agencies for public bonds, recently re-affirmed the County's AA bond rating by stating, "The county has maintained a long history of strong budgetary performance, very strong budgetary performance, very strong budgetary flexibility, and very strong liquidity through its strong management with good policies and practices."
- The County was honored as the only county finalist in the National Civic League's 2019 All-America City/County competition.

The 2020 tentative budget can be found [here](#) in its entirety. For more information on the budget, please contact the Livingston County Administrator's office at 585-243-7040.