

FINANCE & RULES COMMITTEE
September 17, 2024

Present: Tom Osborne, Chair; Jeff Nellenback, Vice-Chair; Herb Frost; Vincent Nortz; and Barry Lyndaker.

Legislator Osborne called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Legislator Osborne moved to approve the August 20, 2024 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

Broome County Purchasing Alliance update – Suzie Philips, GKG Representative

Susie Phillips introduced herself and stated that the objectives of today's presentation were to go over the history of Lewis County's participation in the Broome County Purchasing Alliance (BCPA), results of the BCPA request for proposals and decisions required, 2025 rate information and its impact on retirees, and what the next steps are. Lewis County made the decision to join the Broome County Purchasing Alliance in the summer/fall of 2023 with an effective date of January 1st, 2024. The estimated savings resulting from moving the Medicare-eligible retirees from the self-insured health plan to the fully insured BCPA Medicare Advantage Plan with United Healthcare is over \$2.3 million. Additionally, the County will be receiving a New York State Shared Services Initiative Match of approximately \$2.2 million in the spring of 2025. However, since joining in 2024 the State has removed any future New York State Shared Services Initiative Matches.

Upon entering the BCPA, Lewis County was clear that the three-year deal the Alliance and United Healthcare had negotiated would expire at the end of 2024. Therefore, the BCPA would be conducting a request for proposals in the summer of 2024, which could result in a change of carrier. This possibility was communicated to the retirees during the implementation. This initiative not only benefited the County financially, but retirees paying 25% of the cost of their retiree health coverage realized a significant savings per month of roughly \$244.95. Overall, the change was well received by the Lewis County retirees and the transition went smoothly which was considered a big win.

Excellus BC/BS won the BCPA request for proposal and was awarded the book of business for a three-year term. The increase for plan 1 that is offered to Lewis County retirees is 85%. Excellus has granted a rate cap of 7.5% for years two and three. The United Healthcare increase is 96%. With Excellus, groups can offer more than one plan to retirees. A decision is required by October 1st, 2024, in writing from the county. No board resolution is required. The current Alliance members have the following choices: remain with the Alliance and transfer membership to Excellus BC/BS; keep the Medicare Advantage membership with United Healthcare but leave the Alliance; or exit the BCPA altogether and transfer the Medicare eligible retirees back to the self-insured health plan.

The current United Healthcare monthly premium for Plan 1 is \$275. As a reference point, the single monthly premium equivalent for the self-insured PPO plan is \$1,254.81. The Excellus BC/BS monthly rate for 2025 Plan 1 is \$508. Retirees either pay nothing or 25% of this cost for retiree coverage. Plan 2 is \$413 per month; Plan 3 is \$423 per month; and Plan 4 is \$543 per month. The monthly increase for retirees paying 25% is \$58.25, or \$699 annually. Even after this increase, the savings per month for those paying 25% is roughly \$186.70.

The next steps for the County will be to decide what their intent is by October 1st, 2024. Once the decision is finalized, the County will send out a written communication to all enrolled retirees that announces the change. United Healthcare will provide an enrollment file to Excellus, and Excellus will verify enrollment in Medicare Parts A & B with CMS. Excellus will begin sending materials to plan participants. Informational meetings will be scheduled with Excellus present for retirees to attend and ask questions. The new coverage becomes effective January 1st, 2025.

There was continued discussion on the choices available. Susie explained that due to legislation on pharmacy benefits and out of pocket maximums being decreased Medicare rates have gone through the roof. Legislator Kalamas verified that the increase to retirees who pay 25%, is only \$58.25 per month, however the County increase is the other 75% of the premium increase. Legislator Osborne stated that even with the increase it is still cheaper by \$186.70 per month over what they were paying on the self-insured plan. Legislator Nortz verified that there is no significant dental or vision coverage in Plan 1.

Legislator Dolhof voiced his opinion that the most effective and least increase is to remain with the Alliance and switch to Excellus BC/BS. Legislator Moser agreed and confirmed that Excellus BC/BS is capping the increase in years two and three of the agreement. Legislator Osborne agreed stating that it is a difficult decision but it is the best option. Others in the committee all agreed to go with Excellus BC/BS. County Attorney Joan McNichol will work with Eric Virkler and Caitlin Smith to create a letter by October 1st to send to Broome County Purchasing Alliance of our intention.

A Small Business Association U.S. Government Representative came forward to state that they were working in Town at the Outdoor Services Building until September 27th to assist those with flood damage. If anyone needs assistance for damages, they are offering low-interest rate loans and professionals on site to help deal with documentation. Anyone can show up Monday through Friday, homeowners or renters, and will receive assistance to apply online and to discuss documentation.

2025 Capital Budget Requests – Brian Hanno, Director of Purchasing

Brian Hanno began his presentation with a disclaimer saying that the 2025 Budget is a work in progress with the tentative budget being due in November so this

presentation is for discussion and input only. This is Lewis County's 6th annual 5-year capital plan. The goals of capital planning are to invest approximately 3% of annual operations into the capital budget, planning is better than not planning, puts our investments in context, ensures important investments aren't forgotten, alleviates emergency expenditures by establishing a replacement schedule, allows for consistent annual capital budget spending stabilizes the county budget, and allows better tracking of expenditures.

Capital Equipment is defined as an expenditure of \$5,000 or more for either a single piece of equipment, or for a number of pieces of equipment to be used together. In 2024 the Capital Equipment cost in the budget was a total of \$1,309,550, the tentative 2025 capital equipment cost is \$1,607,280. Buildings & Grounds will be purchasing a zero-turn lawn mower for approximately \$18,000. Emergency Management will be purchasing a pickup truck for approximately \$45,000. Real property will be getting a new folding machine for approximately \$9,200. Recreation, Forestry, and Parks is looking to purchase a mini excavator with mowing head for approximately \$110,000. The Sheriff's Office is requesting four radar detectors for approximately \$10,000, a new UTV for approximately \$38,000, and jail meal carts for approximately \$8,000. Solid Waste is requesting another 100 yard trailer for approximately \$110,000 and a new excavator for approximately \$223,000. The Highway department will continue paying on several equipment loans but will also be purchasing a construction roller and construction mid mount broom.

Capital Projects are defined as an expenditure of \$10,000 or more for new and expanded physical facilities of relatively large scale and with a relatively long life expectancy; large scale rehabilitation or replacement of an existing facility, including highways; purchase of equipment for any capital improvement when first erected or acquired; the cost of engineering and architectural studies and surveys relative to the improvement; and the acquisition of land for capital improvement. In 2024 the Capital Projects cost in the budget was a total of \$1,126,290, the tentative 2025 Capital Projects cost is \$1,088,000. Building & Grounds has requested \$250,000 for the Courthouse HVAC initial stage project, \$250,000 for a PSB backup generator, and \$10,000 for the PSB front doors push button. Information Technology has requested \$150,000 for backup solutions and \$75,000 for firewall and security products. Real property has requested \$52,000, which is payment three of six, for aerial imagery and \$31,000 for ESRI small government software. Social Services has requested \$10,000 for AI powered virtual assistant program. The highway department has several bridge construction projects in the works, a culvert project, road striping program that they follow, and guardrails, paving, and design plans for several roads.

2025 Personnel Requests – Caitlyn Smith, Director of Human Resources

Caitlin Smith began over the requests and recommendations for 2025 personnel. There were 22 personnel requests made from 11 departments, fifteen of those are

recommended by the County Manager. Net headcount add is one part time employee. The recommended total estimated budget increase is \$6,794.38. Some of the new position titles are Senior DMV Examiner, Director of Administrative Services, Senior Mechanic, and Deputy County Manager. One of the things that is being looked at is office efficiency. Multiple requests surrounding part time administrative support functions within departments was brought up, so utilizing full time staff as a shared resource to assist in multiple departments has been discussed. The implementation of new software has changed employees workloads and there is ongoing discussion to determine division of resources.

An update on labor negotiations is that there are currently two contracts set to expire on December 31st, 2024. One is the Road Patrol, UPSEU which covers 28 employees and the other is the Correction and Dispatch, CSEA which covers 45 employees. Those negotiations are ongoing, and any increases will affect the 2025 budget. County Manager Tim Hunt verified that with all the recommended personnel changes, the impact is only an additional \$6,794.38.

Legislator Osborne moved that the position and title of Deputy County Manager be brought to the October Board meeting with a resolution creating the position to start immediately, seconded by Legislator Nellenback, carried with Legislator Nortz and Lyndaker opposed.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Adopting Local Law No. 4-2024 “Local Law to Authorize Overriding the Tax Levy Limit Established by General Municipal Law § 3-C (A/K/A 2% Tax Cap) for the Lewis County 2025 Budget.”
AYE 5 NAY 0
2. Authorizing a three-year agreement with Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. effective December 1, 2024, through November 30, 2027, for licensing software at a cost of \$87,900.00 (\$29,300.00 per year) to provide software for GIS Mapping services to benefit 911 purposes in Lewis County.
AYE 5 NAY 0
3. Authorizing the submission of a CDBG Vacant Property Clearance Fund application and appoints the Lewis County Director of Planning and Community Development as the Certifying Officer for all CDBG applications and awarded programs as required by the NYS Office of Community Renewal and determines that the application constitutes as Type II actions as defined under SEQRA with no significant impacts.
AYE 5 NAY 0
4. Determining the proposed abatement and emergency roof replacement tasks funded by the Restore NY Program constitutes Type II action under the SEQRA with no significant impacts.
AYE 5 NAY 0
5. Authorizing the Treasurer to close out Capital account HAI (Capital Highway Striping) and re-appropriate the remaining \$5,106.69 into the General Fund.

AYE 5 NAY 0

At 2:53 p.m. Legislator Osborne moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel and asked that Legislator Leviker be excused, seconded by Legislator Frost, and carried.

At 3:14 p.m. Legislator Frost moved to enter regular session, seconded by Legislator Nellenback, and carried.

There being no other business to come before the committee Legislator Frost moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m., seconded by Legislator Nellenback, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board