

PUBLIC HEARING – 2017 Tentative Budget

December 6, 2016 4:30 p.m.

Vice Chairman Kinwoski called the meeting to order and welcomed the Supervisors and guests in attendance.

The Clerk read the official notice of public hearing.

The Clerk read the rules for the Public Hearing.

The Clerk reported there were no written communications or petitions received.

Mr. Kinowski asked the Clerk to call the speakers in the order they signed up.

James Pettis, Pettis Road, Gansevoort, NY – “Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am here on behalf of the Saratoga County Farm Bureau and Cooperative Extension Board of Directors. Having served a long time on the Board of Directors and as President of the Saratoga County Farm Bureau, I’d like to thank you for your past support in the programs that we’ve provided with that support. I’d like to ask for your further support so that we may continue those programs. These programs are beneficial to all residents of Saratoga County whether you are a big commercial farmer or a homeowner or just someone that has a quest to do something in their back yard. So I thank you again for your support and for your continued support. Thank you.”

Paul Laskey, Fairground Avenue, Ballston Spa, NY – “Good afternoon everyone. I am Paul Lasky. I’ve been on the Board of Directors for Cornell Cooperative Extension for 2 years. I’ve also served concurrently as a 4H Committee Member. Both Greg and Bill asked me to speak for a few minutes about the 4H training center on Middleline Road. And I am happy to do so. First understanding what Cornell Cooperative Extension is, is no easy task. After two years of being part of this organization I would best place Cornell Cooperative Extension as an entity that interprets the needs of its community. Being able to have feedback from different social economical groups located within our communities and Counties shapes the direction of the County. The training center is no exception. Almost all of you are familiar with the role the 4H Training Center has played in our community. The training center has served as hosts to events ranging from the Special Olympic Horseback Riding to state wide hunter safety courses. There is no other entity that encompasses the variety of needs in our County as well as the training center. Built in 1987 the training center is nearing its 30th anniversary. Last year we accompanied 30,000 visitors to our site. We have been tasked with the ongoing maintenance and are regularly doing more with less. As the years have gone by it’s becoming more and more difficult to overlook the need for major repairs. These are required to keep the facility safe and functional for its continued use. We have fundraising in place and are actively using volunteers to maintain the facility. We foresee these measures continuing in the future where we cannot overlook the need for help. With little or no costs, entities are able to use the facility to (*inaudible*) organizations and to develop their individuals within their groups. Here are some of the highlights: the center hosts 30,000 visitors and participants annually for educational programs that are offered through 4H and Cornell Cooperative Extension; it’s a leader for state and natural resource and wise choice for development of youth; we reach over 12,000 youth annually with

the main focus areas being on self, citizenship and healthy living. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.”

Jeff Hurt, Manchester Court, Wilton, NY – “As the County Leaders review the 2017 Tentative Budget which has a proposed property tax increase (*inaudible*) State Cap but let’s take this time to talk about a few items in the proposed budget. On page 1, the County Administrator, Spencer Hellwig, tell us for the need for increasing inmate cell space to alleviate double bunked inmates. Any sailor on a submarine will tell you it’s common for junior submariners to hot rack; which means sailors on different shifts will share the same bunk. The placement of these bunks is on torpedo racks. Even junior officers on service ships sleep 4 to a room. The inmates in the County Jail for short periods of time should not be awarded any pleasures better than our military. Spencer tells me that the State is requiring this and in the past the County had received a waiver but this year a waiver will not be given unless a plan is in place to alleviate double bunking. I suggest for County Leaders to push back at the State. You have the will of the people on your side. Make it known (*inaudible*). On page 4 we were told this tentative budget includes no new positions. We find in the County Administrator’s budget the Management Analyst position is not a new position just one that has been vacant for the previous two years after the previous Management Analyst was promoted to the newly formed Deputy Administrator position. Management Analyst position continued to be included in the following budgets for zero dollars. Along that same paradigms the County filled the over 200 positions in the 2017 budget that are currently populated with zero balance budget amounts by saying no new positions were added. Also on page 4 in the 2016 & 2017 budget we are told the management, confidential and part time employees will also receive the 2% COLA. When the budget is broken down line by line you can see the payroll has ballooned the past two years some due to adding new employees and some due to payroll increases beyond the 2%. Just to point a couple of the many examples on page 81 the Director received pay raises of 22.7% & 3.8% over the last two years, respectively. Deputy Manager on page 10 received raises of 7.9 and 3.8 percent. How do you justify this to taxpayers on fixed incomes that have received COLA’s of zero and .1% during that same period? My conversation with County Leaders I was told with the sale of Maplewood Manor in 2015 that the County was saving \$30,000 per day. If that is correct, the sale was in February 2015 that’s a steady reduction of over \$10M for that year and \$11M for 2016. On page 2 we see that we have had budget shortfalls 1.4 to 2.4 million dollars for those same years. How does that happen? I urge the County Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator to take another look at the budget to find ways for good fiscal standards to compel to stay under the Tax Cap.

Molly Alger, Middle Grove, NY – “Hi everyone. My name is Molly Alger and I’ve been asked to speak on behalf of 4H and Cornell Cooperative Extension on my experiences and what 4H means to me. So, what is \$H? That’s a question I often get asked and to me it’s different then for a lot of other people. But that’s what makes 4H so great. This year was the last year as a 4H member and after 8 years of being an active member in Saratoga County. I joined 4H at the age of 10 not knowing exactly what it was just knowing it was activity with neat programs. I started with my main interest at the time which was art and I started with a few items at the Saratoga County Fair. That very first year, I had an item selected to go to the NYS Fair which I couldn’t believe. After that I made it a goal to have an item go to the NYS Fair the next year. For every I’ve been in 4H, I’ve had at least one item and sometimes several items go to the NYS Fair and compete at that level. I could go into depth into all the aspects about 4H and all it’s done for me but just to give you a short list of what it offers: I have, through the Saratoga County rabbit programs won the Grand Champion Rabbit Showmanship awards for multiple years. I have also tied for first at the State rabbit showmanship decathlon. And I now successfully raise an

endangered species of rabbit for meat purposes. I have also achieved my hunting certification and am a certified junior archery instructor in the 4H shooting sports program which I believe is an area in which Saratoga County definitely shines. And also I have thru the Fairs have my little art hobby that I started with, been recognized and featured in Saratoga County Arts Center in downtown Saratoga, and my most favorite program, public presentations I have not only competed at local, regional and state levels but I have also placed fourth at the national conference. This is just an example of what 4H can do for me and anyone else. I know run my own business as an essential oil educator and health advocate and am already in the top 2% in my company. So that is just an example of the things 4H has taught me and I really think all those life skills thought to me such as public speaking, managing people, relationships and managing money have been cultivated through 4H. So when it comes down to what 4H really is I'd just like to say that it's opportunity that is hard to find elsewhere."

Ben Potiker, Ponderosa Dr., Clifton Park, NY – "In the budget, Spencer Hellwig states that the county appropriation for economic development for next year is set at \$1.2M which includes \$405,000 in appropriations for tourism, marketing which covers a variety of promotional activities that are managed under contracts with the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce and the Southern Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. We can see this listed in the budget as I Love NY contracts, account 7111 for \$375,000 and other professional services account 8190 for \$30,000. The other \$775,000 for account 9000 is listed as unallocated amount. I'm not entirely sure what that represents. I'll have to assume this is the money set aside for Saratoga Prosperity Partnership. This is an organizational that was created by the Saratoga County Supervisors after the County severed its ties with the Saratoga Economic Development Corp at the end of 2013. And according to an article written in the Albany Business Review dated 5/19/2015 it states that the County parted ways with the SEDC after the private non-profit refused to let County Supervisors appoint someone to its Board. One of my questions is, are we seeing a return on our money with this private-public partnership. That seems like an awful lot of money. And it appears there are several of supervisors and former supervisors that sit on this Board. I understand that this is why they wanted this organization so they could have some representation on it. But I also find it unlikely that these supervisors will vote to remove the funding of this government entity that they sit on. Has this organization provided this Board of Supervisors with reports on their successes or to the public so that we can see that our money is being spent properly. We still have two well established organizations in Saratoga County bringing businesses to the County. We've got the Chamber of Commerce and the still functioning SEDC. Both of these organizations rely heavily on private funding through their members' business dues. So why do we need a heavily funded government organization to do the same. I look at Albany and see this taxpayer boondoggle called Start Up NY. I just want to make sure we aren't setting up something here in Saratoga County that's going to be the same. I also want to make mention on page 15 there is a large increase the County Administrator's contingency budget item. In \$547,000 in 2015, \$622,000 in 2016 and now it's budgeted for \$1.25M in 2017. Plugging this data into an excel and performing a regression we can project it to be \$2.4M in 2018. If we stay on this same course for this contingency budget from 13% in 2016 and 101% in 2017 based on the 2016 level there will be (he trailed off because he was over the time limit)"

Rob Arrigo, Preserve Way, Saratoga Springs, NY – "Good evening everyone. I am going to keep this to the budget as much as I can. The cap and the budget are intertwined. My name is Rob Arrigo I'm the founder of Upstate Victory Fund. Update Victory Fund has been leading the fight to keep the Saratoga Board of Supervisors from passing this cap busting budget. As it currently stands Upstate Victory Fund has collected more than 700 signed petitions from county residents opposing this proposed budget and the violation of the tax cap. If the Board passes this

budget they will be doubling the amount of taxation allowed under the cap. Let me repeat that they will be doubling the amount of taxation allowed under the cap. So let's put some facts on the table. The levy is, the tax levy is, the property taxes are increasing 67 to 71 million or 5%. The true tax cap when you account for all the exclusions is \$2M or 2% not the .68% quoted in newspaper story after newspaper story. But I guess one of the bigger issues people are having with this budget is that there seems to be a lack of transparency around here. What I mean by that is that the County has put out statements that are generally misleading pointing to the tax rate increase and suggesting that because the tax rate increase is under 2% they are somehow staying within the spirit of the law. We all know the law has nothing to do with the tax rate. The law has everything to do with the tax levy and the levy is increasing by 5% more than the general 2% allowed under the cap. When we look at this budget what my organization is asking is for supervisors to find a way to cut $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% out of this carved budget or roughly 1 to 2 million dollars. I honestly think you guys can do that. Here's how we suggest you get there. Number one cap pay raises for elected officials and management level personnel to 2% unless they are otherwise mandated by the State. Two, cut the County Administrator's contingency budget to the 2016 levels and three, look at the indigent defense bill that was passed by the legislature last year. That is one of the largest mandates on County's. I believe it's sitting on the Governor's desk; it may still need to be sent there but that would save the County roughly \$700,000. I think when you look at all those items you get to about \$1.2M in saving. That gets us pretty close to where we need to be under the cap. In addition, from a transparency standpoint (Time was up).

Gayle King, Merchant Road, Gansevoort, NY – “Hi. I'm Gayle King and I'm the Director of the Saratoga County Historical Society which is located here in Ballston Spa. We have several speakers tonight but I wanted to talk to you about one aspect of our building and that is Brookside Museum which is how most people know us. Before the County even existed as an entity there was a structure on that site. It has sat for more than 2 centuries and has served residents as a hotel, a school, a sanitarium, a private resident and apartments. It is listed on the national register for historic places. In our basement, if you look up, there are bark covered logs used from the original pre-1792 log cabin. Wide planks still exist from the original structure. Arabic and Roman numerals are seen on each beam indicating how each piece came together. The rear 1800 addition is an extremely early example this construction. The front door and side lights are the same ones that James Fennimore Cooper and Washington Irving passed through. The building has stood in silence witness to 225 years of Saratoga County history. The County has put time, talent and funds insuring that this County landmark can achieve as service residence. I respectfully request the Board of Supervisors grant our request for funds to paint the building and repair the exterior wood structure and continue the work preserving the building, preserving history serving all the residents of Saratoga County.”

Donna Dardaris – Middle Street, Ballston Spa, NY – “Thank for allowing us to speak tonight. My name is Donna Dardaris and I am a resident of the Village of Ballston Spa and I'm here to speak in support of Saratoga County Historical Society's request for capital funding to do painting and exterior wood repair on our building Brookside. I am not a lifelong resident of Saratoga County as many of you may be but I have lived here 30 years and I am involved in several organizational in Saratoga County including being both a member, a donor and a volunteer and a volunteer to the Saratoga County Historical Society. I give a lot of time and effort to Brookside. Saratoga County is so rich in history and Brookside is a part of that history and preserving that building for future generations I think is so important. I'm getting emotional about it and I apologize for that. Brookside houses the historical society and all of our artifacts and archives and every Town in the county benefits from that museum. I personally was involved when the Town of Galway came to get artifacts from the museum. The Town of

Ballston when they celebrated their anniversary a few years ago. I can't remember if it was their 200th or their 225th, we took things to them to use for their celebration. I would just ask the Board of Supervisors to grant our request to insure that Brookside will be here for not only our children and our grandchildren but our great grandchildren. Thank you very much."

Sam McKenzie, Hearthstone Drive, Gansevoort, NY – "Good evening. For the past 18 months I've had the privilege of being a volunteer working with the Saratoga County Historical Society and it is on their behalf I speak tonight. I've been a volunteer for 18 months and I average about 40 hours a month working for this exceptional organization. I have watched literally hundreds of young children come through that building that inspired many of them by the heritage that exists in this wonderful place and this terrific village that this structure sits in. And by the way it's the oldest structure if not in the County certainly in the Village of Ballston Spa that is surviving. It is important that this work goes on. Children from all over the County have this experience. It's a wonderful one even at my age, 75, I feel inspired every time I go through that ballroom and think of the folks back in 1792 dancing in there and the famous people who have stayed there. So I would hope that the request by the Society specifically for the upkeep of that building would meet with favorable consideration from you folks and I thank you very much."

Anne Clothier, Arnold Road, Malta, NY – "Hello. I am Anne Clothier and I am the Director of Education at Saratoga County Historical Society at Brookside Museum. I am also a resident of the Town of Malta. I am here this evening to voice support for the support of the structure at the Historical Society. And I wanted to mention briefly about the educational programs that we do. The structure its self being built in 1792 that it's something of many of the students that visit our historic site mention and ask about. And it ignites curiosity. And as an educator igniting curiosity that's such a huge goal. And the kids have so many questions about how it was used, who stayed there, how many people could stay there at one time when it was a hotel all of these different things. We do a variety of different programs there. We do a program there called Native New York which talks about Saratoga County's very earliest residents and that one is very popular. I have here a note from a student, a fourth grader saying 'overall it was probably the best field trip ever so thank you'. Another one 'I learned a lot and I can't wait to learn more'. So these are students who have discovered something; discovered something about their County history, their personal history something that is relevant to them. And we love to see that happen. And so as a face and literally a façade, the building, that's what the children see when they come to visit us. It is a welcoming presence in the County. We have students visit from Galway, Moreau, Charlton and Ballston, Corinth, and Waterford all over the County has come and visited our museum. And we want them to have a very positive memory and we also want them to have a positive memory of the view of that building. People also come to us for our Sheep to Shawl Program. And if you ask around in your community, there is a good chance that if someone see a sheep be sheared at some point they were a kid in elementary school it happened at Brookside Museum because we are also keeping local Saratoga County Agricultural History alive through our Sheep to Shawl Program. So thank you very much for your time and thank you for being here this evening."

Cherie Gray, 5th Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY – "Hi. I'm Cherie Gray and I live in Saratoga Springs. I'm a board member of the Saratoga County Historical Society. And most of you don't know that building was abandoned in 1968. This is a very large building that was all of a sudden left to whatever was going to happen to it snow, rain, ice and everything else that we get in Upstate New York. However in 1971 a group called the Society purchased this building for \$13,500. Unfortunately what they didn't do was set up an endowment. An endowment would have been nice and certainly would have been nice today in 2016. But it means that the Board is

entrusted with not only with staffing, running education and other programs you just heard about but also with the important part of maintaining and keeping this building going. Obviously painting the building is only one thing we need to do. Just recently, this past summer, upgraded a very important electrical connection. We have many other projects that we need to do. Anybody that knows old buildings knows these projects are constantly ongoing and we really hope you can support us with keeping this building going with his small portion of your budget. Thank you very much.”

Jim Baisley, Clifton Park, NY – “Budgets are sometimes, how do I want to say, funny. Saratoga County is booming in my estimation. More and more business which makes more and more taxation for the County. You get more and more money every year. You have more expenses to a certain point. But you spend that money. For several years you use to state that the County home you had to supplement it by millions of dollars. You don’t do that anymore. You don’t do that anymore but you spend the money the following year and the year after that. You have more revenue coming in and that’s a fact. So maybe the 2% tax hike could have been 6% but you get more money in every year and you find a place to spend it. So I recommend that you look at this each year. That’s what needs to be said to the taxpayer. What’s the assessed valuation this year? How much more money are you receiving? What don’t we have to pay anymore? Now when you do your budget you won’t have to appropriate \$1M over here, ok, so now we can spend it over here. So I think this has gone on with government for a long time. So I just ask you to look again at your budget and see the revenue that has increased in this county for the last few years and maybe you should have cut taxes 1%. Each year you get more and now we only have to go up 2% but you saved \$1M here and your assessed valuation gone up, you received more money and then you spend. So that’s my only comment. Thank you.”

Christine Lytle, Lake Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY – “I wasn’t quite prepared with a speech but my name is Christine Lytle and I’m from Saratoga Springs. I’ve lived in Saratoga County for about 30 years. I’ve lived in many states prior to this and I know that we have a beautiful area and we have a lot of people that work very hard to keep your county great. I’ve managed many companies in NYS and many of them are an absolute wreck. So it’s really nice that we do have a place to call home that we can be proud of. I also managed several building housing projects in the region. And I had to do the budgeting. I had to deal with the State. I had to deal with the Federal Government on all of them and I know budgeting is a thankless job, a difficult job but it has to be done. And as you can see from the people who have spoken there are no lack of places you can spend money. But I would ask that you do go and take a look at this budget more carefully. And I appreciate this gentlemen from this victory upstate whatever. It’s crazy that the compensation is going up so high in an area where people really should be a voluntary or trying to be statesmen politicians and I think we’ve lost the whole concept of a statesmen in our country. And we just want to have politicians and we just spend spend spend. I just kinda wonder what has happened to the concept of volunteering and helping our fellow man. A lot of times I think maybe because of the fact that we are working so hard to support our families that we are just too exhausted to volunteer. But I want you to think of this budget and think of where you can cut it. I know I’ve done it. I’ve raised my rents for my low income housing projects and I’m very cognizant of the tax payer and I think there are places that you can cut. So I thank you for your time and have a good evening.

David Buchyn, Heritage Way, Wilton, NY– First of all I would like to thank Art Johnson for spending his time discussing the budget with me. Art has a great knowledge about budgeting and finance and I appreciate him leading me through the details. I also want to thank Ed Kinowski for helping me better understand the budget and the budgeting process. One thing I

will say about the cap is that it's the most complicated and not well understood. Sewer use fees, pension costs, tax base growth, payments in lieu taxes and other factors go into the calculation of the tax cap. I've seen numerous conflicting numbers and even as of today there are disputes as to what the correct number for the cap is. Misunderstandings about the term tax levy and tax rate have led to further confusion. This complexity leads to accusations by all parties that some of the numbers being discussed are wrong or misleading. This is not helpful in resolving the issue at hand. In the further it would be beneficial if the tax cap calculations and the amount of the override were put on the county website for review so that everyone is working from the same set of numbers. Secondly, there are many different opinions that I have heard over the past month of the benefits of the tax cap. In my view the tax cap focuses more attention, fosters more discussion, about increases in property taxes. A number of the people in this audience would not be here if it weren't for the publicity regarding overriding the cap. I suspect many Saratoga County residents looked at the details of the county budget for the first time this year. I know it is my first time doing so. Increased civic participation is a good thing. Thank you.

Teddi Smith, Cornelia Avenue, Charlton, NY – Hi. I'm Teddi Smith and I'm from the Town of Charlton. And actually they said a lot about what I was going to say. This tax cap is very confusing to almost everybody. Is there any way that you can explain how it's calculated now. (Mr. Kinowski responded "No, this is your period to review it and there has been misinformation passed out that we understand but not at this time".) Ok, is it possible that something can be done so that a simplified version of as to what it is and the exclusion and everything else so that we can read it. Is that something that you can put together? (Mr. Hellwig "The reality is we didn't come up with it. We are complying with the State of New York's requirements so that's documentation is readily available on the Comptroller's site. So you can access it there and review it at your leisure.") (Mr. Kinowski "Miss if we contemplated doing that right at this time it would constitute a debate and we are not here to debate it.") Ok. Well thank you very much."

Mr. Kinowski closed the public hearing closed at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Wright, Clerk