

ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE
Special Joint Meeting of the Ways & Means Committee and
The Legislative Programs, Education & Community Services Committee

DATE & TIME : Wednesday, June 11, 2014 – 6:45pm
LOCATION : VAN 203A, Vanderlyn Hall, Ulster County Community College, Stone Ridge, NY
RECORDER : Janet Salanitri, Administrative Assistant, SUNY Ulster County Community College

FOR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMS, EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES:

CHAIRMAN : David B. Donaldson, Present

LEGISLATORS

PRESENT : Dep. Chair Mary Wawro, Leg. Craig Lopez, Leg. Lynn Archer, Leg. Donald Gregorius
Leg. Chairman John R. Parete, ex officio member of the committee.

ABSENT : None

QUORUM : Yes

FOR WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE:

CHAIRMAN : Richard A. Gerentine, Present

LEGISLATORS

PRESENT : Dep. Chair Tracey A. Bartels, Legs. Thomas (TJ) Briggs, Leg. Mary Beth Maio, Leg.
James F. Maloney, Leg. Hector Rodriquez, Leg. Jeanette Provenzano; Leg. Carl
Belfiglio; Leg. Chairman John R. Parete, ex officio member of the committee.

ABSENT : None

QUORUM : Yes

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Manna Jo Greene, Legislator; Erica Guerin, Minority Counsel; Victoria A. Fabella, Clerk of the Legislature; Cappy Weiner, Esq. Counsel; Ken Crannell, Deputy Ulster County Executive; Don Quesnell, Legislature Clerk Finance; and Theresa Brundage, Assistant to Leg. Lopez; Roland Bloom, Assistant County Attorney; and Beatrice Havranek, Esq., County Attorney.

A quorum for both committees being present, and following a public hearing, Chairman Gerentine, on behalf of both committees, called this joint meeting to order at 6:47p.m. and presented the following proposed resolution:

RESOLUTION #200 – for the June 17, 2014 session: To approve the Ulster County Community College budget for the year 2014-2014 calling for a county contribution of \$6,280,863.00.

A motion to approve said resolution as presented on behalf of both committees was made by Leg. Rodriguez. There was no second and the motion was withdrawn. The resolution was tabled pending the following motion.

MOTION #1 – TO AMEND RESOLUTION #200:

Motion by : Legislative Programs Chair David Donaldson

Seconded by : Leg. Bartels

Discussion :

Legislative Programs Chair Donaldson moved to increase the contribution of the county by the sum of \$241,538, which is the amount needed to offset the college's proposed tuition increase. He said the county has not increased its contribution in six years and we need to go on record that we support education in this county. He said the county could not continue to turn around and say the state is not living up to their part of the bargain if Ulster County does not live does not live up to its share.

Leg. Bartles said she has friends who have attended SUNY Ulster and are now employed in and live in the county primarily due to their education from Ulster, and she believes the college to be an economic driver. She said she is worried about the economy and feels we have to take this step to show the state where we stand.

Leg. Provenzano said some of her children went to SUNY Ulster and she doesn't think \$50 per semester is a big increase. She said she has never heard this Legislature publicly criticize the state for its lack of support for the community college. She also said the debt service the county is responsible for increased more than 13% on top of the \$6.25 million. Also, there are other things going on around the county. Leg. Provenzano said we have a backdoor mandate that if the county doesn't keep to its 2% property tax cap the property owners will not get their rebate checks. She also wanted to know what are we willing to cut in order to come up with the funding for any increase.

Leg. Maio said she is not against education and believes in the Community College but this is about dollars and cents. She said our budget is completed and wants to know where we are going to find the funds to support this increase.

Deputy County Executive Ken Cranell said he himself had just gotten a copy of the budget today and he thinks he could find the \$250,000 within the college's budget to keep tuition flat. He also believes Leg. Provenzano's remarks are correct; also, Safety Net will come due January 1st. He said the county budget is getting tighter with Safety Net and all of the state and federal mandates getting worse.

Leg. Belfiglio said President Katt mentioned that the nursing program costs do not meet expenses. He thinks most of the nursing students will most likely make a large salary within the first ten years. He knows the per credit cost for nursing classes is the same as for other classes and maybe it should be larger. He said it's the student's choice to take that class and if that course is going to make them more money maybe they should pay a higher rate. He also said \$50 per semester doesn't seem like a lot considering the cost of education at private schools. The tuition increase also seems in line with other schools, except Dutchess.

Leg. Rodriguez said everyone would like to vote for this amendment but in the overall position of the county relative to the sales tax, the real property cap and other, the difference in percentages between the state and the county shouldn't be the big motivator but we do need the state to step up.

Legislature Chairman Parete said he believed tuition at the community college had gone up about 26% in the last six years and asked what percentage the county pays now. Chair Donaldson said he believes it to be about 28%. Chairman Parete said he believes this is an economic development issue. The Community College is the gateway to the middle class and the middle class is not doing well. He would vote to support the amendment.

Leg. Gregorius said he would like to support the amendment; however, he quoted from a NYSAC report that said SUNY Ulster is third in the state in the percentage of county contributions. He also said he doesn't think a \$50 price increase per semester is out of line in today's economy; also, he doesn't know what the county budget is going to be and whether or not this proposed increase will mean three jobs will be lost to other people in the county. He would also like to see a more detailed examination of the budget. He knows, he said, if you increase the budget one year you have to stay at that figure and cannot go back.

Legislative Programs Chairman Donaldson said we sold Golden Hill for \$11.5 million, we privatized Mental Health and insurance, we laid off 500 employees and have taken several other cost saving measures. But, he said, each year when this comes up, we never have the money to increase the county's contribution to the college. He said if you don't want to give it, fine, but don't say we shouldn't give it because the state doesn't give it. The question now is when do we increase it. This college puts people into the middle class and is an economic development driver. He said if this amendment does not pass here in committee he will make it on the floor of the Legislature.

Leg. Maloney said he believes everyone should have access but we need some time to digest this properly and also that the process should change.

Ways & Means Chairman Gerentine asked Chair Donaldson to request the college to provide copies of the budget to the committee members earlier in the future. He also said he would like to give more money to the college – everyone would, but we have to be careful of the state and of our taxpayers. He also said we have to be aware of what's coming on, and he also does not know what is happening with the county budget. He said the college is a good institution and a good economic driver and everything everyone has said is correct. As far as the tuition increase, he does not think it will prevent anyone from attending as most students are eligible for TAP assistance and other grant funding. Chair Gerentine said we do our share for the community college in many ways, but we have to look at all of Ulster County and we don't have the extra money now.

Discussion being concluded the joint committee proceeded with the vote on the motion on the floor to amend the college's budget.

Voice Vote : Yes
In Favor : Legislative Programs Chair Donaldson, Leg. Wawro, Leg. Bartels, Leg. Chair Parete.
Opposed : Ways & Means Chair Gerentine, Leg. Briggs, Leg. Rodriguez, Leg. Belfiglio, Leg. Maio, Leg. Provenzano, Leg. Maloney, Leg. Gregorius, Leg. Lopez, Leg. Archer
No. in Favor : 4
No. Opposed : 10
Disposition : The motion to amend Resolution #200 to increase the budget of Ulster County Community College for the year 2014-2015 was defeated.

RESOLUTION #200 FOR THE JUNE 17TH SESSION: This Resolution having been tabled was put back on the floor and presented by Chair Gerentine to the joint committee.

MOTION #2:

Text of Motion : To approve the Ulster County Community College Budget for the year 2014-2015 with a county contribution of \$6,280,863.

Motion Made : Leg. Bartels

Seconded : Leg. Briggs

Discussion : Leg. Bartels and several others asked if the vote could wait until they got answers from the college to several of their questions. Leg. Archer said she had asked for a copy of the budget a week ago but never got one. Chair Donaldson said they usually give us the budget a week before. Leg. Provenzano said she had served on the Education Committee for many years and the college came to the committee and any questions you had you could ask, but nothing would change. She said in all the years she has been a Legislator, the college has never given the Legislature any input into their budget. Cappy Weiner, the Legislature Attorney, said he believes it is in the law, and has been affirmed on appeal, that the Legislature cannot line item the college's budget. It is different with the county budget. Leg. Gregorius said if the Legislature votes against the budget the Maintenance of Effort clause comes into effect which would be disastrous to the college involving putting money in escrow, loss of programs, and other things. Leg. Archer said she was most concerned because she hasn't seen anything and hadn't gotten any information. Leg. Maloney said the budget was approved by their Board on May 14th. Chair Donaldson said maybe we should tell them to have the budget presentation earlier, but this is the way it has always been done. Attorney Cappy Weiner said you either approve it the way it is or you don't. There being no further discussion the matter proceeded to a vote.

Voice Vote : Yes

In Favor : Legislative Programs Chairman Donaldson, Deputy Chair Wawro; Ways & Means Chairman Gerentine; Deputy Chair Bartels; Leg. Archer; Leg. Lopez; Leg. Gregorius; Leg. Belfiglio; Leg. Maio; Leg. Provenzano; Leg. Briggs; Leg. Maloney; Leg. Rodriguez; Leg. Chair John Parete.

Opposed : None

No. in favor : 14

No. Opposed : 0

Disposition : Motion passed – Resolution #200 approving the budget of Ulster County Community College for the years 2014-2015 with a county contribution of \$6,280,863 was unanimously approved by the Legislative Programs, Education & Community Services Committee and the Ways & Means Committee.

There being no further business before this joint committee meeting, Chairman Gerentine, on behalf of both committees, asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION #3: A motion to adjourn was made by Leg. Provenzano and seconded by Leg. Maio and Chairman Gerentine declared this joint meeting duly adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Dated: June 17, 2014

Janet Salanitri, Recorder

Minutes approved on: July 2, 2014 (Legislative Programs, Education, and Community Services) and July 9, 2014 (Ways & Means Committee)