

PRESS RELEASE FROM
PRESIDING OFFICER DUWAYNE GREGORY



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Suffolk Legislature Approves \$2.9B Budget

RIVERHEAD, N.Y. – The Suffolk County Legislature on Wednesday voted 11-7 for a \$2.9-billion county budget that eliminates proposed cuts, restores services and increases sales tax revenue projections for 2016 and 2017. Legislator Al Krupski joined with Republicans in opposition to the amendments to County Executive Steve Bellone’s proposed budget.

The budget amendments will now head to County Executive Bellone’s desk for approval or veto.

Budget amendments, which were advanced by the bi-partisan Budget Working Group, restored the Public Health Nursing Bureau and the Tobacco Education and Control Program, which had been omitted from the County Executive’s proposed fiscal package.

In addition, income eligibility for day care was restored at the 2016 level of 125% for a family of four earning \$30,375 annually, rather than 100% earning \$24,300 annually – as proposed – to be more inclusive of those needing day care services.

The lawmakers reduced fees, including charges for security alarm system fees and fines, and eliminated a 1% contract agency service fee and a proposed \$25-increase in the tax map certification fee.

Included in the omnibus bill is an increase in 2016 sales tax revenue from 0.85% to 1.16%, which equates to \$4 million in 2016 and \$4 million in 2017, and an increase in police district property taxes of \$500,000, reflecting an increase of 3.986%. The bill also reduces property taxes in the Southwest Sewer District by 33%.

Legislators increased funding for overtime in the Sheriff’s department by \$2.4 million, increased revenue from the Motor Vehicle Registration Surcharge, which will generate an additional \$2 million, and increased an administrative fee on moving violations from \$30 to \$60.

They also built in anticipated savings of \$4.1 million based on a new RFP issued for the 2017 Employee Medical Health Plan.

In a separate measure, legislators – in a bi-partisan vote – rejected a plan to borrow \$26.7 million for police retirement pay. Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory argued against the bonding, which would require state approval.

“I believe there is little to be gained as it would be very unlikely that the state legislature would agree to this,” said Presiding Officer Gregory. “It makes more sense to do it in house and resolve whatever the issues are through negotiations between the County Executive and the labor unions.”

Presiding Officer Gregory said the county is prohibited from bonding for expenses that are part of the operating budget. Therefore, he included the costs for the retirement pay in a deferred salary line in the budget. Legislators Kara Hahn, Tom Cilmi, Thomas Barraga, Leslie Kennedy, Robert Trotta and Louis D’Amaro opposed the measure.

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