

STATE OF NEW YORK : **ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE**  
COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

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In the Matter of  
2022 BUDGET  
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PUBLIC HEARING in the above matter, conducted  
at the Onondaga County Court House Legislative  
Chambers, 401 Montgomery Street, 4th Floor,  
Syracuse, New York before JOHN F. DRURY, CSR &  
RPR, Notary Public in and for the State of New  
York, on October 21, 2021, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

**ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

DIST. NAME

1st	BRIAN F. MAY
2nd	JAMES J. ROWLEY
(3rd	TIM BURTIS, Chair Ways & Means-not present)
4th	JUDITH A. TASSONE
5th	DEBRA J. CODY, Chair, Ways & Means
6th	JULIE ABBOTT-KENAN
7th	MARY T. KUHN
8th	CHRISTOPHER J. RYAN
9th	PEGGY CHASE
10th	KEVIN A. HOLMQUIST
11th	JOHN D. McBRIDE
12th	DAVID H. KNAPP, Legislative Chairman
13th	KEN BUSH, JR.
14th	CODY M. KELLY
15th	WILLIAM T. KINNE
16th	VERNON M. WILLIAMS, JR.
17th	LINDA R. ERVIN

Clerk of Legislature: Jamie McNamara

Reported By:  
John F. Drury, CSR, RPR  
Court Reporter 471-7397

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Chair May

1  
2                   **CHAIRMAN KNAPP:** Good evening  
3 everyone. Welcome everybody to our  
4 2022, hard to believe, budget public  
5 hearing. Unfortunately the Chair of the  
6 Ways and Means Committee, Tim Burtis has  
7 something very important came up at the  
8 last second, so he will not be joining  
9 us this evening.

10                   So Brian May, who is the Vice  
11 Chairman if the Ways and Means Committee  
12 will be conducting the meeting tonight.  
13 So I will turn it over to him to take it  
14 from there. Thank you.

15                   **W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Chairman.  
16 I will now officially call the Ways and  
17 Means public hearing on the proposed  
18 2022 budget to order. For everyone in  
19 the room, I just want to point out for  
20 safety purposes, exits both to the front  
21 and rear of this building. Ask everyone,  
22 for the sake of everyone being able to  
23 hear speakers and keeping some semblance  
24 of order within the meeting, keep your  
25 cell phone silent. So everyone on the

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Chair May

board can hear you making your point within this process.

Anyone wishing to speak at this meeting should sign in at the front door. If you have a printed hard copy of whatever you're going to say during this public hearing we'd appreciate it if you would leave that with the Clerk of the Legislature, that would go on record.

Before we open the comment period maybe just a little overview of the 2022 budget process. And before we do that I would like to thank all of the Legislators and certainly the staff of the Legislature, department heads across county government, finance, the administration, for all the effort that went into getting us here tonight, to have the public discussion about what's before us.

The budget that was presented to us was ambitious. Certainly one of the words used to describe it was

Chair May

transformational in some of what was being proposed, is being proposed.

This Legislature did the best they could within the very limited amount of time it had to vet all of these items and discuss very thoroughly all of these items.

Just my opinion at this point, two I think very significant and important things were accomplished once the County Executive transferred the budget to the Legislature, and the Ways and Means Committee returned a report to the General Legislature last Friday. Those two things were very simply, lowering the local cost of government, specifically the tax levy. It was for many of us the top priority with this budget.

Additionally, and I'm suspecting it's very relevant to many of the people in this room, it became very clear to move the process that there is just too much to learn, discuss, understand, and

1 Chair May

2 work our way through with the proposed  
3 capital project that seems to us within  
4 the budget.

5 So the second thing that we did with  
6 this budget was remove the decision  
7 associated with the large capital  
8 projects proposed within this budget out  
9 of the budget process.

10 That being said the major capital  
11 projects that are before us are going to  
12 continue beginning next month through  
13 our normal legislative process within  
14 our Program Committee. We felt it was  
15 necessary to do this to enable us to do  
16 the diligence that we are obliged to do  
17 on behalf of the public that we serve.

18 We also think that more time is a  
19 good thing for the public to want to  
20 gain a better understanding of these  
21 projects and the economic impact they  
22 profess.

23 So with that, that's my brief  
24 overview of the budget. I think the  
25 results that we're looking at today is

V a d a l a

really good, not only for taxpayers but for employees and the overall operations of county government.

And with that I will declare the comment period to have begun. And I will take speakers in order that they signed in. I'm going to name the person who is up, and who is on deck, because it's a long walk from back there, okay. Our first speaker is Mr. Dan Vadala from CSEA and Jana Rogers is on deck. And please, the limitation on public comment is three minutes for this meeting. I thank you.

**DAN VADALA:** Thank you, good evening. My name is Dan Vadala, I'm a local president for CSEA Local 834, which represents the employees of Onondaga County.

First I want to thank all of your intention, all of you for your intention to the recent proposal surrounding the investment of taxpayer dollars for the multimillion dollar project. Your

V a d a l a

intention to take the time to review these proposals is greatly appreciated.

I want to take this opportunity to respond to the County Executive's comments surrounding the investment in the county workforce and our members. There seems to be this race to the bottom in county government to get the most out of its workforce with the smallest amount of investment. I understand efficiencies and I understand protecting the taxpayer. I myself am a taxpayer, my members are taxpayers. I'll wager that my members understand better than anyone, the relationship between taxes and county services.

But this County is being run like a for profit corporation. The current mindset doesn't account for the human cost of providing essential services. Some commissioners will come before you and tell you everything is fine and they can do more with less, but the reality continues to be much different. We have



V a d a l a

department heads who are afraid to ask for more support, because of this pressure to continue to get the job done with fewer resources.

These issues exist across all county departments, but I will use the Department of Children and Family Services as an example for all of you. It is one of the most essential services this county provides, looking out for the welfare of our most vulnerable populations. The job must get done no matter what. This is what our members understand. Because of the way this county chooses to staff the department, our members find themselves working during the lunches or after work to tackle their cases. But when our members ask to be compensated for such work they are denied. When our members bring up the issue to county management they are ignored. When they work approved overtime, they are not paid. And now what? The Federal Department of

V a d a l a

Labor is investigating our county, and will find violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

That's just all so unnecessary. The county knew these issues were occurring and understood the solutions. Staffing is the solution, both in the short and the long term. Why is this so hard?

I could go department by department with you and tell you how many positions the commissioners want, compared to what ends up in the Executive budget proposal, but I do believe that to be your responsibility. Unfortunately, it seems you will never know unless there is actual accountability in this process.

In the end I could stomach the argument about efficiency if this county took a good faith look into the actual needs of all county departments. Because a good faith analysis would show you time and again that the real fat this county carries in positions exist

Rogers

solely in the MC category, something my members call the friends and family workforce. I do not mean to paint MC with a broad brush here, but I hope you know what I'm getting at. I can at least guarantee you there aren't any no show jobs within the CSEA bargaining unit.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Jana Rogers and Richard Almeida on deck. Could the person on deck please come up while the person is speaking. Thank you so much.

**JANA ROGERS:** Hi everyone, my name is Jana Rodgers, I am currently running for County Legislature, District 5. I will be speaking about the sports complex, because it is near and dear to my heart. It is going right in my back yard where I live, on Donlin Drive. And a lot of my neighbors are quite upset about this sports complex.

And I do understand that it was taken out of the budget for the time being. But I also understand some of

R o g e r s

the materials that were published that it plans to be opened in the spring. And so that is a very quick timeline. And I want to make sure that our voices are heard.

So I have several neighbors here with me tonight, I thank them for coming. And there is also a petition that has gone around and copies were made and distributed, of so far 273 people have signed that petition, and more are signing every day.

So the issue surrounding this that needs to be addressed are the fact that no study has been released. I don't know if studies have been done and not released regarding traffic, parking, environmental impact, lighting, sound impacts, as well as drainage. And drainage is a significant issue for our neighborhood. We have, I already have a creek running behind our neighborhood, and we have quite a bit of flooding in our basements. And taking down the

R o g e r s

existing wildlife that is there and replacing it with Astroturf that does not collect water, water a needs to be drained away from Astroturf, will definitely impact our drainage.

And so to have this all of a sudden published in the paper without having any impact or any notification of us in our neighborhood was very upsetting. And so our neighborhood today is very concerned about this.

In addition to that there is a large concern from the greater community about the appropriateness of expecting Covid relief monies, ARPA monies on a sports complex, you know, and not making sure that it's going to our social services, like the gentleman before me mentioned. Making sure that those bills are paid and making sure that we have enough staffing to run those type of programs. And making sure that our students and children have the mental health and social services they need to

Rogers

adequately recover from Covid and the pandemic that is still raging right now.

Our students and families are struggling to be back in school and in work and have work to go to, and have daycare to get them able to go to work. So until we are able to fully fund those programs, you know, I seriously question the validity of spending \$25 million on a sports complex. That's all I have to say.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Jana. Richard Almeida. I just want to take a moment to just sort of reinforce what I said a minute ago. And that is that you know, by doing what the Legislature did within the budget, it allows us the opportunity to address all of the things you just heard, which are obviously serious concerns from the standpoint of residents who could potentially be affected by this.

That being said, I want to make it clear, that the Legislature is not

Rogers

voting on the 26th, number one.

Number two, you know, our conversation moving through this process this evening, we've got quite a bit of speakers ahead of us. Like to try to be as germane to the budget as we possibly can when we're addressing the issues, and bringing up new issues pertaining to the same issues when we do that as well. Thank you. Richard?

**RICHARD ALMEIDA:** My name is Richard Almeida. Members of the Legislative Committee, other community friends and fellow softball players. I want to show my thoughts today about the County Executive proposal for a soccer/lacrosse complex. As a business owner and as a worker of a local company, one of the things I like to do is bottom line up front. Bottom line up front for me here is not vehemently opposing putting a soccer/lacrosse complex in Central New York, what I'm opposed to is the location of it.

Rogers

And I'll dig deeper into it. I speak today for myself, my daughters, thousands of softball players not only in Central New York but players that come in from different areas. It came as a shock to me to see the location of this new complex. It's a softball landmark for me positioned strategically in Central New York. In the central part of the northeast, draws a lot of teams in different locations, different places that come in and play. The amount of revenue we bring in is very large.

As I said, I'm opposed to the location. This is our home, the pride of our softball community. And we compete from April to November every year. And without it we will be homeless.

Now we bring many tournaments to the location. The County Executive vowed to replace these fields with higher quality fields, but the timing won't work for us. And we'll be without a complex for



Rogers

many years.

So we are softball players and we don't need luxury. Our games are not about aesthetics. It's about the love of the game and the competition of the game. We're not sandlot. People think of softball as sandlot, we're not. We're recreational but we play with passion. We need quality safe fields where we can compete and draw tournament competition from other states and Canada. So I think destroying these fields is a travesty.

So I propose a much better option. The option I propose is this. The plans to replace 62 acre Hopkins Road parks with a soccer/lacrosse field. And they want to move us over to the town of Dewitt, where a 70 acre plot of land is identified. But please listen to me. I think this is backwards.

We should preserve the softball field and make them better and move the soccer/lacrosse to the Dwight location

Rogers

at Carrier Park. Think about this, we would destroy one and build two. Why would we destroy one and build two? The amount of dollars we would spend doing that. I think it's totally wrong. The location of Carrier Park with the soccer/lacrosse complex would be ideal if you think about it. Right off the Thruway, there is plenty of hotels and restaurants in that particular area. Route 81 is four miles down the Road. You would have easy access for the 500,000 people that are coming in.

If you divide 500,000 by 35 weeks, because you live in Central New York, you would see about 15,000 people per weekend coming in. Very large amount of folks be coming to Hopkins. Plus the 70 acres versus the 62 allows parking, for the maximum amount of people going to be there.

So I just feel it makes a lot more sense, and like I say I'm not opposed to the soccer/lacrosse field. I'm not for

Dawes

it, but I'm not opposed to it either. What I am opposed to is the location that we put it at. And why would we destroy one and build two, and save a ton and money and just build one. That's all I have to say.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Richard. Our next speaker is Malcolm Dawes. While Malcolm is coming up, Carrie Large is on deck. And I would like to mention just for the record that we do have one written comment that has been submitted for the record, as well. Thank you.

**MALCOLM DAWES:** Thanks very much. Thank you everyone who's here today. Thank you for your concern for Onondaga County. I want to - just my name is Malcolm Dawes the third. I've lived in Onondaga County for 40 years. And my comments are based on a little summary.

We have never been closer to fulfilling the dream of a clean Onondaga Lake and Inland Harbor than right now. Some of you may remember 25 years ago

D a w e s

there was signs around salmon, 2000.  
Well that came and went. But right now  
the lake is cleaner than ever.

For 23 years I worked at the  
Syracuse Rescue Mission. The last 15  
years I was an employment developer and  
vocational specialist and helping people  
to get jobs. It was at that time that I  
realized that the destination of choice  
or a leisure destination, the County  
Executive has called it, of an aquarium  
would be one of the most mazing economic  
engines probably to ever happen in this  
town and in this county.

Maybe, now I don't know, but a  
rising tide lifts all ships in an  
economy. And I believe that an  
aquarium, and I know Congel has proposed  
such a thing, but for some reason it  
didn't happen. And that was probably  
the one thing that, if it had happened  
would have truly charged the area with  
economic development. So I believe that  
it is an economic engine and it will

D a w e s

transform the county and the city.

And I also am looking forward to the positive environmental and research impact that such an aquarium could have. Because wherever this aquarium is, there is all kinds of research that goes on. And things like salmon, red salmon coming back, probably a great thing to work on. So my hope is that the aquarium will happen and won't be breaking the promises, because it's a hundred years of promises broken about Onondaga Lake and what we're going to do with it. So I'm really looking forward to the best thing ever with this aquarium. Thanks very much.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Malcolm. Carrie Large, and Lou Valerino is on deck. Sorry Carrie, trying to remind you of time, I really don't want to have to interrupt you.

**CARRIE LARGE:** Five minutes? Just joking. Good evening. My name is Carrie Large. I have the honor of being

Large

the executive for the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. I just want to say, like have you ever paused for a moment and truly watched your children or your kids enjoy the zoo? I have the luxury of doing that often. I have a four year old daughter and six year old son. And to see them experience, see the world through the eyes of kids is tremendous. They used to scream at me. They don't anymore. Now that they have an education they understand what we do. Now they understand how pretty species can make the world.

But it is all because of the experiences at the zoo. When we travel we often go to aquariums. The Friend of the Zoo values education helping youth become conservation minded and truly just caring human beings.

We've seen youth go through our educational programs and move on to college or finding a passion for that year. From researcher, best zoo keepers

Large

and also public speakers.

Zoos and aquariums help youth connect with the world and themselves. Here's a couple of quotes from parents that have their kids involved with our ZooGuide program.

"He has learned the importance of being on a team and how each individual can contribute. He also has been very responsible and independent about his schedule and transportation. Thank you for such a positive experience." That's one mom.

"Domni has improved his oral presentation. Domni has become more career focused and research oriented." A mother Doreen, from Corcoran.

We as the Friends of the Zoo are in absolute support of the aquarium. It's going to enhance our community, but most importantly it's going to enhance the use of our community. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you. Lou Valerino is up. And forgive me, Noha

Valerino

Abou-Madi is on deck.

**LOU VALERINO:** Morning everybody.  
Evening, whatever time it is. Just want  
to say I'd like to see the greater good  
in Syracuse done well. I also have to  
say, that movies, baseball is economy.  
And Hopkins Road is our Field of Dreams.  
I run the senior league over at Hopkins.  
Quite honestly, if you want to see a  
passion, come out there this coming  
weekend, playing in the fall, 45 degree  
whether.

And I've been playing out there for  
40 years and to wake up one morning and  
all of a sudden you see a proposal  
that's out there. I was in shock.  
Really it's just like, I was appalled.  
So of course I'm not for the Hopkins  
Road project. I agree with Rich, it  
should go out to Carrier. I'd like  
other things but it's the right thing to  
do. But it's just to kick us out of our  
house that we've been there for 40 years  
plus. We have youth baseball there,



Valerino

we've got softball there, girls  
softball. I mean it's constantly  
everything going on. Why stop something  
that works? Just help us a out a little  
and make us feel better, and we'll be  
good.

You know, and one person came out,  
Mary Ann, thank you. She did come out  
and saw us play. But more were invited  
but. As I state, Field of Dreams is  
Hopkins Road and we play there Monday  
the 15th. And the leagues we play, we  
have a 65 and over league, 55 and over  
league, then there's youth baseball.  
I'm just saying, people need an out.

And the other thing about Hopkins,  
it's one place where everyone plays.  
And people gather around, we talk, we  
get to know each other. If we get  
kicked out of there we've got to go in  
another home, a different direction, like  
move out of town again. It's not good.

So keep it where it is. Go ahead  
and build it in Carrier, I agree with

Abou-Madi

Rich. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Lou.  
Noha Abou-Madi. And Daniel Meates is on  
deck.

**NOHA ABOU-MADI:** Mr. Chairman,  
distinguished members in attendance,  
thank you for listening. My name is  
Noah Abou-Madi, I'm a veterinarian,  
specialize in zoological medicine. I've  
been a veterinarian for 37 years, and  
for 30 years I've been working in  
conservation and zoological medicine.  
It is a privilege to be working in such  
a position.

I've been at the Zoo since 1997  
working for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.  
I've seen young professionals, as well.  
As a veterinarian we have worked under  
the Light House umbrella, before the  
name was invented. We protect the  
public from diseases, protect animals  
from diseases. It's important to  
continue this concept of health  
everywhere.

Abou-Madi

You take your couple of cups of water and we assume that the water is healthy to drink and safe to drink. Many of us do not know how we get to this point. But there is a line that comes with it. So having an aquarium here in Syracuse would be an incredible opportunity to gather people, experts from all different walks of life to help prosper, the training that we have, offer the training we have to engage them. To help with the discovery of new things, to prevent diseases. And to really work with people, helping people even outside the state.

What happens behind the scene in a zoo or aquarium could go to waste. It's so much fun and things that come together. And having the aquarium here in Syracuse would be an incredible opportunity. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Noah. Daniel Meates is up and Christine Herb is next.

Meates

1  
2                   **DANIEL MEATES:** Hi, my name is  
3 Daniel Meates, I'm the general curator  
4 of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. I'm in  
5 charge of all the animals at the zoo  
6 there.

7                   I come to speak to you today  
8 regarding the aquarium. I come with  
9 first hand experience, I've worked in  
10 aquariums all over the world, including  
11 Texas, and here in the United States.  
12 It's very near and dear to me, an  
13 aquarium coming to the Syracuse area.

14                  My part of this is to explain the  
15 science that Dr. Abou-Madi just touched  
16 on, behind the scenes. It's a large  
17 topic to cover in such a short period of  
18 time. But a lot of people believe that  
19 aquariums are where you just go and  
20 visit and see fish in tanks and things.  
21 It's much bigger fixture than that, it's  
22 on a global scale.

23                  An accredited institution here in  
24 Syracuse would bring in field research.  
25 And from all over the country this would

## Meates

be on oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, the plant population, the life population, and these streams would be studied by us. The control of the population, looking into pollution, looking into the ways we can clean waterways up.

We move into areas, such as rehabilitation, and recently we were responsible for the rehabilitation of over a hundred odd cold shock sea turtles. Those are the things we actually do at the aquarium.

We're also responsible for species survival of plants. Those are breed and leaf program for wildlife, whether it be native or from other countries. What an aquarium would bring to Syracuse is a level of science and economy on a global scale, crediting information, share their information on a global scale.

We travel all over the world sharing information with each other, educating different communities. Educating

Meates

different systems on different levels. So from junior school all the way to University. Currently here in the Syracuse Zoo we work with ESF, SUNY Oswego, we work with Syracuse University, the Cornell University and University of Vermont. This would be 10 times larger, again, if we were involved in an aquarium here.

And to touch on just slightly you can imagine what it would bring to the economy. Working at an aquarium in Texas it expanded every single year since it opened in 1969. And we were responsible for numerous field researches and numerous testing of different environments. As the aquarium grows, you can imagine the economy and the hospitality industry around the aquarium grows also with it. It brings a lot to the community. I appreciate it. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Daniel. Christine Herb is up. And Ellenrose

Herb

Galgano is on deck.

**CHRISTINE HERB:** Hello. My name is Christine Herb, and I am a resident of Manlius, New York. I'm a Nurse Practitioner, recently retired from Syracuse VA Medical Center. I am here on behalf of myself to describe my concerns about the budget proposal.

I'm very concerned about the lack of transparency, about the behind the scenes dealing that goes on, and we are the last to know what is going on. And so it's a done deal, there is no time to make any protests about it.

The aquarium apparently has been taken off or the sports center has been taken off, as I understand it. But you weren't entirely clear. And yet it's probably going to be pushed forward. It seems as though you didn't want to hear anything more about it, since it was taken off. But we will continue.

I think that the money that our county has been given in the Covid

Herb

American Rescue Plan needs to be used to address deficits in services that were cut from our county budget. Services that helped the people that live here, who pay these taxes. And we need increased rapid Covid testing sites. We need more addressing of effective ways of dealing with this pandemic. We need affordable housing in our community. We need to be training community workforce vacancies.

We have a deficit of nurses in our facilities. We have a deficit of teachers who will be going and are going out because of Covid. And so who is left to teach the children?

We have a shortage of bus drivers, do we not? Both in the city bussing services and in the school bussing services. We have a deficit of affordable daycare, so that people can return to work.

I support the development of manufacturing that will make products



Herb

our country has a current shortage of.  
We a need to build in America. Why  
isn't our county developing manufacturing?  
We used to have Chrysler and G.E. and  
Allied Chemical, and they're all gone.  
And what is taking its place?

We have a beautiful opportunity to  
create manufacturing, to provide things  
that our country is in dire need of  
right now today. And we are missing  
that opportunity.

And developing an aquarium? Who is  
going to afford the ticket for the  
aquarium? I have property in Carmel,  
California. I have been to the Monterey  
aquarium, I'm a member, have been a  
member of the Monterey aquarium that is  
world class. And that does not operate  
on ticket sales alone. They require  
philanthropic money. This community  
does not have that kind of money to  
support or the volunteer network to  
provide for that.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** You're running short

Galgano

on your time, you're over actually.

CHRISTINE HERB: Thank you very much.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you so much.

Ellenrose Galgano is up. And Casey  
Cleary is on deck.

**ELLENROSE GALGANO:** Thank you. I'm  
Ellenrose Galgano, a retired educator.  
And my passion has always been  
connecting children and the natural  
world. And I think this is more  
important now than ever. I mean what we  
see that our youth are facing, the  
anxiety, the mental health issues, the  
violence.

People connected with nature, kids,  
adults, connected with nature just make  
calmer people. To this end of  
connecting children and nature, I've  
been a county school teacher for over 30  
years, and I've been a new volunteer for  
over 30 years. So I've had first hand  
experience seeing children interact with  
animals and mammals. Not watching TV  
shows, not screen time, not YouTube, but

Galgano

being there with the animals, close enough to care.

And of all our exhibits at the Zoo, some of our most popular are aquatic exhibits. The penguins, the octopus. I see infants interested in following the fish with their eyes. Then as they get older they're following the penguins, following the movements. Children are fascinated with aquatic life. And there are not a lot of opportunities for that here in Central New York.

We want to bring children close enough to really care. We want to save the things we care about. You care about animals, you care about their homes. If you care about aquatic animals you want to care about water. What better place to put an aquarium than on the cleaned up Onondaga Lake. What an opportunity for conservation, education, for history, talking about the lake in terms of the Onondaga people.

Galgano

This is just such an opportunity that our county can't pass up. One of my greatest joys as an educator is when I see my students grow up as adults. I saw them as six year olds, I brought them to the zoo. I'll see them come to the zoo with their children, and they'll say Ms. Galgano, remember when we saw the elephant Siri, and remember when we saw a baby sloth being born. Not only do they remember the animal experience, they remember the conservation messages.

Ms. Galgano, whenever I have a six pack plastic, I always cut it up, so a birds neck won't get caught in the plastic. We never litter, we don't want litter to wind up in the ocean. We always save our cans. Remember when we used to save cans to adopt animals at the zoo?

So I know the early messages that we give children really stay with them. So I just ask you to please consider the impact that the aquarium will have on

Cleary

our children. This generation needs to save our planet and we need to conserve our water, our most valuable resource. So please consider the aquarium. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Ellenrose. Casey Cleary is up and Linda Malik is on deck.

**CASEY CLEARY:** I have to say I really wish I wasn't following that wonderful presentation, because I want to talk about needs, not wants. Who wouldn't want an aquarium if we had extra money for an aquarium? But we have a community that has dire needs that are not being addressed.

My name is Casey Clearly, I've been a resident of Onondaga County for 38 years, and I have never felt compelled to speak at a meeting of the county before. I'm here because we are in a state of emergency. Maybe not the people in this room, but the children and families who can't make it to these

Cleary

kind of places.

The majority of the Legislators here, you seem detached from that pain and that need. Your actions seem to look downright cray cray, as kids say today.

Do you have data about how many people are still in this crisis? Who are still stuck in the destruction it has caused? It's not people in this room.

Are you simply going to make marching orders from a County Executive or are you going to stay up late at night, studying how communities across our country are divided in strategies to uplift their small businesses and their people?

U.S. Treasury Guidelines using ARPA funds, rebuilding and reopening advise you to consider three factors:

Covid 19 related harm. The economic harm resulting from this pandemic.

And that you consider proportional

Cleary

assistance. Assess where the most damage has been caused most, and spend proportionately on the damage.

Use flexible criteria based on local conditions and local data.

There is no evidence presented to us, in fact there is very little information of any kind presented to us to see that you've done this analysis.

And in the absence of that analysis what I see is that you've dusted off pet projects for the few at the expense of the many.

In preparation for my very few three minutes I read many guidance documents with excellent ideas on how best to invest ARPA funds in areas critical to our economic competitiveness. Serious ideas. Guess what is not on any of those lists I looked at? An aquarium or turf field.

Consider the strong recommendation from the Brookings Institute for spending ARPA funds strategically.

Cleary

There are cities and counties all across this nation that are developing regional recovery coordinating councils to plan and make strategic investments, and then monitor their impact. These councils are public/private partnerships, including all of the usual officials, but also many small businesses and unions.

First they are aggregating their recovery plans, then they're setting goals, then they're making investments and planning to track those results. These regional recovery coordinating councils will also be prepared for any future funds for infrastructure and innovation that could be force multipliers.

Those councils are charged with ensuring that investment decisions calculate issues stemming from systemic racism and poverty. Do you know why? Because lessons learned from the CARES ACT prove that IF funds are moved



Malik

quickly through existing systems they exacerbate patterns of institutional racism and perpetuate economic inequality.

The approach you are taking and the County Executive is taking has been shown to exacerbate racial and economic inequality.

An aquarium? Really. Turf field? Really.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Casey, out of time. Thank you so much for your time. Linda Malik is up Nick Lore is on deck.

**LINDA MALIK:** Hello, I'm Linda Malik, and I live on the north side of Syracuse. And I'm also a board member of Inclusive Economy. It's a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission of supporting socio-economic prosperity and creating sustainable wealth in underserved communities across Central New York. It was formerly the Westcott CDC, where we were able to successfully revitalize that small area of the city.

Malik

So when I heard about the sports complex I was concerned. And I talked to people. I talked to former planners and I talked to current planners. I just wanted to get an understanding how do these things happen? And shortly thereafter I read about an aquarium.

And I'm thinking, \$110 million? Now I live on the north side. I live less than two miles from where this aquarium will be built. But to get there I have to travel Butternut Street. So I'm wondering will any of the benefits come to Butternut Street? Highly unlikely. Or even North Salina Street? So there are existing communities that really could use this economic benefit.

So instead of creating something new while we continue to circumvent the communities that have not gotten the attention, not gotten the support, is a travesty.

Now I'm here, there is too many great points that I'm not going to

Malik

continue to say, but I will say that it should not have even come. I heard about due diligence, and I thank you for that. But the fact that it was even thought to come before, to be voted on, when there has not been any community input of any, it's totally irresponsible.

Just last month I-81 community, some concerned citizen said, why are you making a traffic circle near Dr. King elementary school? This could hurt our children. So imagine, imagine if there wasn't community input. Imagine even one child being hurt or killed because of that oversight. Imagine the successive lawsuits that come from that. Imagine the tens of millions of dollars to have to redo a project in order to ensure the safety.

This is what community input is. It helps you think of things that should have been thought of by the experts, the DOT. How long have they been looking at this? This is an oversight? This is

Malik

the best part of looking at this and doing the due diligence is getting the expertise of the people who know the area the best. The citizens, the residents, we know our areas, we know what's important. We must be included in this.

Now, when I heard about this I did my own thoughts. Like what are the initial sustaining costs what are the safety issues? Massive amounts of water, engineering for exhibits.

With the PILOT tax break from OCIDA how long will we get? What's the return on investment? How long will it take to get those benefits?

Will there be a community benefits agreement? If we're putting that kind of money into it we need to make sure it's stays in the county. And when you're not sure about a new project you need expert help, and then monies goes away.

It's an amplifier effect if you keep

Malik

the money here. What is the training that needs to happen? Who's is the local expertise that should be working on it.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Linda.

**LINDA MALIK:** That can't be three minutes.

W&M CHAIR MAY: You can have a second to wind it down.

**LINDA MALIK:** I would say there are many dire needs that are here. And I agree with Casey who just spoke before me. We need to use this money for the suffering that is happening now. And only amplified through Covid.

Now, believe it or not, I'm not pro or against the aquarium but I am pro-transparency. I am pro-democracy. The democratic process allows every person to come ask the questions and learn about these. Without that happening we can never have successful projects in this area.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Linda.

L o r e

**LINDA MALIK:** So we must do that.  
And I just want to say I'd love to  
partner with you County Legislators on  
future projects, and I hope you will  
honor us with that. And let's make a  
more fair inclusive place to live, work,  
play, shop and visit.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Linda.  
Nick Lore is up. And Jerry Keohane is  
on deck.

**NICK LORE:** Here it comes again.  
This sports complex was proposed without  
any community notification or input and  
without conducting an environmental and  
traffic study. In fact, our council for  
our district where the project is  
proposed found out about it on TV.

The 25 million dollars are from  
Covid American Rescue Funds, which  
provided for our county with the  
intention of benefitting the entire  
community, not just the subset of.  
These funds could be better spent to aid  
the poor and ill members of our

L o r e

community, improve infrastructure and roads, help small businesses and non-profit organizations, which would benefit all of us living in Onondaga County.

The construction of the complex on this site is extremely detrimental to the environment. Numerous acres of trees and dense woods will be cleared. And our only wildlife will be displaced.

The traffic on Hopkins Road and surrounding streets, including Buckley, Electronics and neighborhood avenues will become increasingly -- I'm sorry -- exceedingly congested. The increased traffic will also make transported children to two elementary schools within one and-a-half miles of the proposed complex site more difficult.

Noise and light pollution from bright lights used in the night games will be a major issue, and could potentially decrease the value of nearby properties.

Lore

This complex could hurt small businesses in the area, especially the local indoor sports complex that already operates less than a half a mile from the proposed complex site.

It deprives our county of the much needed funds that could be spent much better in the community, protected woods that local residents have enjoyed for decades. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Nick. Mr. Fortier is up. Tom Fortier. I don't see him. Okay, Rita Stanley. I can't read the handwriting. Jerry Keohane.

**RITA STANLEY:** I just want to say that I shouldn't have filled out a card.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** That's okay. Thank you, Rita. Jerry Keohane. With Kyle Hares on deck.

**JERRY KEOHANE:** Thank you, very much, appreciate your time tonight. I have been in the hospitality business for well over 30 years. I started at the



Keohane

Ramada Inn on Buckley Road, which is now gone. It's hard to believe back then when I was 20 some years old, I didn't realize that hospitality was an industry. And it is an industry, it's a big industry and it brings a tremendous amount of new money into our community. Brings a tremendous amount of money just in the people and staff that work here.

Being involved with conventions, that's pretty much what I've done my whole career, with the Conventions Visitors Bureau, the OnCenter complex. Over the years we had so many unbelievably huge successes as a result of that. And that's all money into our community.

And what we always had to do, we are speaking in front of people in regards to presentations and pitches, we needed something in our bag. We needed a bag of tricks. The aquarium is that bag of tricks. We've been selling the same thing for too many years. It is time to

H a r e s

swing it over the park and get something huge. This is truly beneficial. I appreciate your time tonight, thank you.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Jerry.

Kyle Hares, with Danielle Neuser on deck.

**KYLE HARES:** Good evening. My name is Kyle Hares, I'm the general Manager of the Crown Plaza Hotel in District 9.

The Crown Plaza holds 277 guest rooms, which is the second largest hotel in the city, with 13,000 square feet of banquet space and two food outlets and bars. Owned and operated by a small business out of Florida. Our entity contributes approximately \$1.2 million to the county directly, through real estate and property, room occupancy tax as wells as the sales tax.

In addition to my role as GM, I have the pleasure of being the vice-president of the Greater Syracuse Hospitality Association. I'm also a board member with Visit Syracuse Executive Board, and a resident of this

H a r e s

county for over 10 years. Not only do I live the reality of tourism, hotel demand, hotel struggles, etc., but I also hear the other hotel concerns, as well as the push and needs for Visit Syracuse. I've worked in Orlando, one of the top tourism destinations of the US but I love Syracuse. My passion for hotels and tourism, and improving our market is what drives me to stay in my role and be here tonight to share my opinion.

It is critical that the County Legislature take faith in the concept of an \$85 million dollars aquarium and the \$25 million sports complex along with other pro-tourism investments. Spending the stimulus funds provided on a tourism attraction, such as the aquarium will ensure we invest in jobs, tourist attractions. An area of the city that has been stalled in development, and provide approximately 20,000 room nights into the market.

## H a r e s

Combined with the sports complex, we are talking about a potential of 50,000, room nights added to the hotels, which is desperate for growth and revival post Covid.

An item to note is as an industry we supported the room occupancy tax increase from 5 percent to 7 percent. This is 40 percent increase in collections that the county will receive from tourists directly. The additional 40 percent increase in ROT will be about \$1.42 million in additional funds based on 2018 collections. We will get back there by 2023.

Investing in tourism that drives hotel room night demand is one investment that the county knows not only will contribute to sales tax collection but also the 7 percent. Not many items have a return on investment on the form of money. As an industry we support the increase, because we are optimistic that this investment will

H a r e s

attract tourism and room nights to the market.

In closing, let's not sit back and wait. Covid has created an environment that is unpredictable. I think as a county it is time to make bold moves that have a calculated positive impact to the future of this county and its residents. An aquarium would be one of the few year round items that myself and all the hotels could use to sell more city wide conventions.

As hotels, we need compression, we need room night revenue. And as the county you need funds from sales tax and ROT. The pandemic, I-81 community grid diverting traffic around the city, labor shortfalls, all these hardships we've faced, but this is something positive to look to in the future. As a business we need positive, we need growth so owners such as mine will continue to invest in this market. Thank you.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Kyle.

Neuser

Danielle Neuser. With Justin Chapman on deck.

**DANIELLE NEUSER:** Hi, my name is Danielle Neuser. I'm a Camillus resident. I am a sales leader for Embassy Suites Destiny USA. And I am the president of the Greater Syracuse Hospitality and Tourism Association. I represent 50 hotels that unanimously support the aquarium project.

I'm also the Board Chair for the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, which represents the 14 counties in the Finger Lakes. We collectively market our destination and we are currently working on having the Finger Lakes be designated as a 14 county national heritage area. We have an industry that generates sales tax and we collect room occupancy tax.

I support this project because I am part of the local industry that employs upwards of 3,000 people when we are fully staffed. I have spent my adult life selling our county as a

Neuser

destination to leisure and corporate travelers.

Our industry, hotels and restaurants alike, was decimated during Covid. So this would be Covid money for us. What I would say about Covid relief for our industry, as Kyle said, there is a return on your investment. We would take the funds being spent on this aquarium and we would fill our hotels and we would collect sales tax and collect room occupancy tax and give it back to the county, where they can then decide what will be spent on social services.

We want all of those things to happen, but we have to be able to do both. I agree that we have to pay for the shortfalls we have right now. But to be successful we also have to think about the future and how can we continue to make money. How can we continue to make money to fund these programs? You can't be shortsighted and say, we have a

Neuser

1  
2 quick solution, we'll put the money over  
3 there for now so we can take care of  
4 that problem. We want to be able to do  
5 things, but we need to be able to spend  
6 money to make money. And our lives and  
7 our industry is proven. I promise you.

8 We also, and Jerry said, we have to  
9 go against other cities we are trying to  
10 get business. As I sat here tonight I  
11 kind of thought I feel like we might be  
12 kind of the sales team for the county,  
13 right? We know that we can be  
14 successful and make money. We might be  
15 those people out with boots on the  
16 ground selling our city to bring more  
17 money in. I'm not sure that there is  
18 other industries that I could compare  
19 that to.

20 We have to compete against other  
21 cities with larger pieces of business  
22 are coming to possibly be here. But  
23 they're also in Buffalo, going to be in  
24 Albany, they're looking at cities that  
25 have invested in their downtown area.



Neuser

They're looking at cities with waterfront and new OnCenters, like our OnCenter, they have new convention centers. They's investing in their area to bring more people in because they know that's the long game, the long game is to be able to make money, not this year, next year but for years to come.

We need to keep investing in our destination. I know that when I was working out in the Carrier Circle area, the people at Bristol, they were trying to get people to come in and interview for positions at Bristol Myers. They kept saying, people don't want to come interview here, there is not a lot to do here, and the traffic circle. Syracuse doesn't have much, okay. We need to change that perception of our destination.

We need to bring people here, not only for jobs but when they come, businesses can follow. I will highly suggest that this investment be really

Chapman

looked at from a return on investment angle because I think that's really what we need to do here.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Danielle.

**DANIELLE NEUSER:** We need to keep investing in the destination, aquarium and sports complex should be the beginning of a multi-plan for the destination. Help us compete with the other bigger cities. We need to work together to create our own demand and create a long term plan for funding into our county. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Danielle. Justin Chapman, with Joe Bennett on deck.

**JUSTIN CHAPMAN:** I'll keep mine short to make up for some of her overage. So I just wanted to say that Syracuse itself is considered a depreciating market when it comes to hotels. What that means is that our occupancy actually gets lower each year instead of increasing.

What the city desperately needs is

Bennett

demand generators. Things that bring people to the market. One of the clarifying things I would like to say, one of my colleagues from the hospitality industry, is the one thing about ROT tax is that it comes from outside of our community. So that is tax dollars that is not coming from people here. That makes a big difference. That being said, I'm much in favor of the aquarium. Thank you.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Justin. Joe Bennett is up, and Tony Campitello is on deck.

**JOE BENNETT:** Hi everybody, I'm Joe Bennett. I'm physics teacher in the Syracuse City School District. I'm here to speak against the aquarium and against the stadium.

This is typical top down investment. We have to expect it will trickle down eventually. The sales tax will trickle down. This is a story told over and over again. It's old, I don't want to

Bennett

hear it anymore.

I'm upset with the lack of transparency which has already been said, so I won't go into that. The lack of empathy from these people here who don't care about the people. We're just supposed to wait for the sales tax to trickle down. We have homes falling apart. I live in the Valley. We have homes falling apart in the Valley. We've got lead paint in homes, poisoning hundreds of kids every year. Every year hundreds of kids get poisoned in our city and in our county.

We have a climate emergency. We have flooding, all these issues, we have bussing being cut that's been said already. Lack of internet access, I do appreciate that the Internet is being addressed somewhat in this bill in this package.

We see too that the county is being investigated. Treating workers terribly. They're understaffed. So I'm supposed

Bennett

to wait for a sales tax for you to cut the Health Department again? It's kind of ridiculous.

The Covid rate is remaining high. I notice a lot of you aren't wearing a mask right now. Forget about the rules there. So these issues are not being addressed. Why aren't you addressing these issues? Let's laugh about Covid and people dying. Okay.

I think the mayoral debate with Janet Burman, whatever her name is, I think she gave it away. She said that this Salina stadium was a gift to Salina and that the Destiny -- pardon me, the aquariums is a gift to Destiny, because they're mad about 81. I think she gave it away. We all heard that.

We have the highest rate of concentrated poverty and segregation and it's gotten worse with the pandemic. But let's build an aquarium and stadium.

I mean I'm up here, this is ridiculous, I shouldn't even be up here

Campitello

saying this. So what about constituents? What about workers? What about the working class people? Let's care about them. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Tony Campitello is up, and Liam O'Connor is on deck.

**TONY CAMPITELLO:** Good evening. My name is Tony Campitello. Most of my comments have already been covered, due to the Hopkins Road complex.

I've been playing there since 1968. Most of you probably weren't even thought about in 1968. So it's the only place that we have in the area that can accommodate large tournaments. I don't have any comments to say about the soccer complex. I would love to have one, but don't put it at Hopkins Road. Keep the park the way it is. We have safe, established, within for the next two or three years possibly up to five years of people, big tournaments coming into town and bringing in money for the county.

O'Connor

And my last comment, please keep Hopkins Road, build the soccer complex, if the money is available, at another site, at another location. You don't have to cut down trees and everything it's already there. Thank you very much.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you. Liam O'Connor is up, and Elaine Denton is on deck.

**LIAM O'CONNOR:** Thank you. My name is Liam O'Connor, I'm a senior at West Genesee High School, and I'm the founder and co-chair of the Wildcats Committee for Political Awareness.

I come before you to speak as a rare young voice in our local government on behalf of my group of optimist, engaged young citizens. Our group is made up of several civic minded students who gather to discuss relevant issues in government that affect us at all levels, with a particular emphasis on building our understanding of issues at the local level, which have a profound, yet often

O'Connor

overlooked impact on our lives.

Our group pushed out a survey to the West Genesee Class of 2022 last week on several of the ARPA projects and key budget items, bringing in feedback from several students from across the political spectrum. We chose the senior class because we are the ones who have the highest interest in what is going on in our local government to make this region a place that us and our peers will choose to continue to call home as we make big decisions about our futures. Not to mention how those of us who are 18 this year will choose to cast our first votes in the upcoming local election.

From our survey, the results yielded a resounding support of nearly all of our members and all of the senior class on the proposed aquarium, sports complex, increased investments in childcare, and investments in school mental health resources. Nearly 90 percent of



O'Connor

approval on each individual item amongst hundreds of young county residents.

These are the projects we feel will make the biggest difference in the long term project in our region.

It is refreshing to have leadership that reflects just how critical mental health assistance is in schools, and it is particularly exciting to see expansions in childcare to fight the barriers that leave several parents unable to achieve their full potential, both at home in and in the workforce.

As for the sports complex project, each of us here have friends or siblings, or even ourselves, in my organization and people my age, that every weekend during sports seasons are making inconvenient long drives down to sports complexes well out of state where we are giving hotels, restaurants and retail stores outside of the county our money. And larger boosts to their sales tax revenue.

O'Connor

The same for the aquarium project. This opportunity is absolutely huge for Central New York, as seen from the revitalization and subsequent prosperity in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a similar sized city, who took the bold optimistic leap of investing in an aquarium of this scale. Not only this, but this investment will spur several others in the Inner Harbor, and complement several other big Onondaga Lake projects.

Investments in local sales tax revenues, that also happen to give our residents the ability to spend their time and their money here, while also drawing hundreds of thousands of individuals from outside the county each year to engage in our local economy and fuel our county's budget is exactly how we will build our region's success.

As for concerns from those interested in making sweeping increases in county services --

W&M CHAIR MAY: You're running over.

Denton

Close to winding up?

**LIAM O'CONNOR:** The economic output of these projects will generate the very long term sales tax revenue that will allow our county to make further and more sweeping investments in our people in the future.

So I leave you with this. Don't discount our future. Thank you.

**W&M CHAIR MAY:** Thank you, Liam. Elaine Denton is up and Peter McCarthy is on deck.

**ELAINE DENTON:** I live in the Town of Manlius. In March of 2020 we had one case of COVID and we went on lockdown to protect our community. We were not able to gather.

We are not at the end of this pandemic, but you would not know it looking at this proposed budget, where the County Executive is pushing for 25 million of pandemic recovery funds for a sports complex and using our excess of 60 million for an \$85 million aquarium.

Denton

The \$50 million Amphitheater wasn't able to put on shows in 2020. And we still have an excess in revenue. At least the Amphitheater followed a process. There was a facility environmental review, public meetings, public comment period. How can the County Executive ask for funding of these projects without an environmental review being done. If the environmental review was done, where are they? Why are they not on the county website? When are the public meetings and comment period? How can the County Legislature consider funding these projects when these important tasks haven't even started. Will they even happen?

Just for an example I looked up the jobs at the Amphitheater currently, what they're hiring. They pay a private company to run. Currently they are hiring four full time jobs and 12 part time jobs. The shows may bring in people to our community, but how does

Denton

our community live on part time? But these kind of projects do what they always promise to do. Where is the truth? We have given the Pyramid Company millions in tax breaks. Have they attracted more development to Inner Harbor? No.

The recent sports complex, the same thing. Sports complexes are a poor investment. For an aquarium, the maintenance costs alone I assume would be high. And who will pay for the building and maintenance? The taxpayers.

All in the name of tourism, which if you look at our sales tax figures, the hotel room sales tax only accounts for one percent of the sales tax we generate. One percent. We are doing an awful lot to increase a hotel sales tax when in reality we could grow our economy by investing in workers, education, health care, childcare, transportation and job creation.

When our residents have access to

Denton

jobs that pay a liveable wage, they have more to spend, and our sales tax, which makes up almost 30 percent of the proposed revenue in the 2020 budget -- or 2022 budget, would increase.

Let's leave our revenue to fully fund our Health Department, children and family services, adult and long term care services, our education board, which has requested four additional employees, a Mental Health Department, which currently has zero employees. In 2009 it had eight.

Let's take care of people, let's provide them a service so Onondaga County can thrive. Thank you.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Elaine. Peter McCarthy is up. Next up is MacDonald Carden, with Tammy Honeywell on deck.

**MacDONALD CARDEN:** Hi, I'm Mac Carden. It's been said before but I want to reiterate, Onondaga County currently is being investigated by the

Carden

1 federal government for not paying their  
2 workers. Right. Workers, as the  
3 gentleman from CSEA said earlier,  
4 workers were put into a position when  
5 they thought they had to work overtime,  
6 that they were then not compensated for.  
7

8 And we're talking about building an  
9 \$85 million aquarium right now. Is this  
10 a joke? Like you need to pay the  
11 workers we have first, right, and not  
12 just those workers, but when you put the  
13 money to properly staff these  
14 departments, that's for the community.  
15 That builds up the base, the people that  
16 Onondaga County needs to have a good  
17 life, the safety net that they need,  
18 right.

19 I'm not here to say that we need to  
20 be austere and concerned about, you  
21 know. I want the county to have nice  
22 things like an aquarium. But if we're  
23 going to build an aquarium it needs to  
24 happen in a way that people's lives --  
25 it can't happen in a way which high

Honeywell

hotel executives and owners want, right. They can't be the people who we're building our policy around. Instead it should be, you know, it should be county owned, the employees at the county. The workers at the aquarium have to have a strong union, it needs to provide good jobs. I think everyone, especially all here in the Legislature, you need to ask yourselves, like what side are you on? Thanks.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Mac. Tammy Honeywell is up, and Chuck Sharkey is on deck.

**TAMMY HONEYWELL:** I'm going to start off by reiterating the comments of our first speaker Dan Valdala, who represents county employees of Onondaga County. And as a former county employee I can vouch that what he says is absolutely correct.

What everybody who sat in here and has proposed this budget with the aquarium and sports complex in it knows



Honeywell

what's going on. Everybody here had an opportunity to address these issues, and you all decided not to do anything about it.

We sent a letter to the County Executive back in February addressing these issues, prior to any federal government coming in to investigate anything. We sent that letter to all you here at the Legislature. We were promised meetings and were told conversations were going to take place. Yet here we are. Where is our conversation?

But at the end of the day we're not focusing on the needs of our residents. We are not focusing on our county. We are so worried about everybody else from every other county coming here. I have a question. What children in this community are really going to benefit from the aquarium? I really don't think it's the children who are living in poverty in the City of Syracuse.

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Honeywell

This is not a new story. We have been talking about it for awhile. Those children are going to get left behind, like they continue to get left behind. Because county government doesn't want to be transparent, and they want to do whatever the County Executive says.

This is not new with Ryan McMahon either, this happened with Joannie as well, and we all know it. What happened to the pie, the P in poverty in pie? Where is the poverty itself that we're supposed to be focusing on? \$750,000 last I knew, yet we're going to build an \$85 million aquarium and sports stadium.

How are you going to talk to the children at Pioneer Homes who are suffering from asthma and everything else, about the aquarium that's going to be built next to a mall that promised us the same return that we never got.

When you talk about all the positions that were lost during Covid. We are not talking about the county

Honeywell

employees that are leaving in droves because they can't stand the environment anymore. Because it's too toxic. Not one of you has spent a day, maybe with a couple exceptions, I know a couple of you have, have spent a day in ESF to see what's going on, or a day in DSS or a day in the Health Department.

We were all essential employees during the pandemic. And then the minute they didn't need us to be essential anymore we went back to being unemployed. Which is why the federal government is involved.

So while you take notes from people sitting in the back who happen to be in charge of the county who really don't know the day-to-day of the trauma that comes in and out of the Civic Center. When it comes to the community residents who are still suffering and struggling.

And by the way, a lot of the community residents who need our services work at these hotels. Because

Honeywell

they don't make a living wage. That's what created poverty. You're not going to get people to come to Onondaga County to visit and spend money and to take care of until you take care of the problems we have here. Stop lining your own pockets and take care of the problems we have here. We have landlords who need to be held accountable for the slums we have here.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Tammy, you're over.

**TAMMY HONEYWELL:** Meanwhile code is behind, and we're not partnering with the city to make sure that we're doing what the city should be doing.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Tammy. Chuck Sharkey is up. Steven Holder or Holden is on deck.

**CHUCK SHARKEY:** Thank you for my opportunity to speak. I'm the New York State Director for Senior Softball, which is the largest softball organization in the country. They come and play tournaments here at Hopkins

Sharkey

Road complex. It's the premier softball complex in the northeast. There is no other complex that attracts this kind of tournament. This past July we had 54 teams coming here, and that was without Canadian teams, because they couldn't cross the border in time.

This tournament brings an estimated \$2 to 3 million of economic impact into the area. And it's proven. Been coming here for the last 10 years. Without this facility these teams will go away. That impact will go away. As Rich and Lou and Tony mentioned, this is our Field of Dreams, so to speak. I coach here as a manager in one of the local senior leagues, and they will have no place else to go.

Now this tournament that comes here every year, they just signed a contract for three years, to come here again for three years. And they come every July. And if they find that this is not available, they'll go elsewhere. They

Sharkey

will not come back.

I've spoken to another softball organization called SPA. They recently have been sold and they are now operating out of Cleveland, Ohio. They are interested in bringing their organization and running one or two tournaments at Hopkins Road.

Not only is this tournament viable as far as an economic impact to the area, these teams come here for a stepping stone to go to a further tournament in Florida in February. That's the reason why they come in droves to come to this tournament.

Along with this tournament there is other tournaments that are run every weekend throughout the summer, with ages 10 and up. I provided the County Legislature with a list of tournaments that are proposed for next year, 2022. And there is at least 25, 30 tournaments, that's one almost every weekend.

Sharkey

Now Hopkins Road has been doing this, and I don't know if the Legislators know this, I was interviewed by Channel 3 recently, and they came up to the complex and the sports reporter didn't even know it existed there.

It's a premier complex, like I said. It attracts not only seniors but youth and also college tournaments. Where if this is gone they won't have any voice, that's all. So I just want to emphasize the fact that we should save this complex and not convert it into a lacrosse/ soccer facility. If you're going to build, they should not destroy this complex. And thank you for my time, thank you, very much.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Thank you, Chuck. Steven Holden is our last scheduled speaker. If anyone else wishes to speak you can still sign up. I'll be doing the last call for speakers in a moment. Lot of pressure Steve.

**STEVEN HOLDEN:** I'm kind of used to

Holden

1  
2 it. As I have family here in the room.  
3 All right, for those of you who know me,  
4 I don't come tonight as a Congressional  
5 candidate, I come here tonight as a  
6 husband, as a son-in-law, as a brother-  
7 in-law and a grandson-inlaw.

8 Those of you who know me, I'm one of  
9 the biggest sports fans you will ever  
10 find. My father pitched minor league  
11 for Pittsburgh Pirates. I'm a life long  
12 soccer fan.

13 There is a time and place for  
14 everything. Right now we have a raging  
15 pandemic. We have a raging pandemic  
16 that has my wife cooped up in the house  
17 for a year and-a-half. I have a  
18 father-in-law who is afraid to leave the  
19 house, same thing with my grandmother-  
20 in-law. I have a sister-in-law I have  
21 to watch out for all the time.

22 I teach finance and contract for the  
23 federal government. And I probably know  
24 better than a lot of people, where  
25 federal money is supposed to go. The



Holden

intent Congress had for this money was not to build a sports complex or an aquarium. And I have a son who has a degree in marine biology.

This money is going to help our fellow citizens. We have people out there still struggling with Covid right now. We still have people out there on the south side of the city who have lead contamination in their houses. We have Native Americans south of here who are still trying to figure out how to make things happen. Being part Native American, I completely understand that.

What I ask here for is priorities. If you're going to run a budget for a county, especially one the size of Onondaga County, who has Syracuse as an anchor city who is the 18th poorest city in the United States, take care of the least of us. Take care of my wife. Take care of my wife's grandmother. Take care of my father-in-law. Take care of my sister-in-law. Take care of

Holden

us. Because I know the way this money is supposed to be spent, and it is not on a sports complex.

I talk to members of the federal government daily, it's what I do for a living, people with HHS. And that's not what the intended purpose of this money is. Let's just use this money for its intended purpose, which is build back. There is a time to build back this economy. And by the way that was a question we should have asked 18 months ago, we could have got businesses back up and running if we would have taken the PPP money correctly.

Also look at workers, here in the county, here in the city, here across the state and here in the district. I ask that that's where the money needs to go right now. Thank you, have a good evening everybody.

W&M CHAIR MAY: Last call, anyone wishing to speak? Okay, with that I declare this public meeting or public

Carranti

hearing closed. Thank you everyone for your participation and comments, and have a good evening.

(FOLLOWING ARE TWO WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED):

**PATRICIA CARRANTI:** (7715 Farley Lane, Manlius, NY.) "I'm writing to share my views re said proposals for spending the federally allocated funds, The American Rescue Plan, to the county. Although the aquarium is an admirable way to bring people and tax dollars here, is this a nice idea but in the wrong place? Is this eco friendly? Does Onondaga County have any business showcasing marine animals in a landlocked city? Will this be an albatross on taxpayers in the future?

Have you really spent enough time and received input from multiple independent economic experts to justify this? I have serious reservations about this process. Wouldn't it be more reasonable to spend money on the city and county green spaces and creating

Irwin

more? Showcase something uniquely CNY.

The sports complex however, seems like a reasonable idea. These are huge in the south and bring in families from all over for tournament play. This could spin off and benefit multiple hospitality businesses. But I think it must include winter sports also. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts."

**DR. MARK IRWIN:** (SUNY Jefferson Community College, 1220 Coffeen St., Watertown, NY.) "I'm absolutely in support of the proposed aquarium. I'm sorry that I can't make the public hearing. Here's a statement as I would read it. Feel free to adapt it to the situation or let me know if I should make modifications. If I should send it to a different person or in a different way, let me know.

Good evening. Mark Irwin, professor of biology at SUNY Jefferson in Watertown. I would like to express my

Irwin

wholehearted support for development of a state-of-the-art modern aquarium for the Inner Harbor. The Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River are the planet's greatest freshwater ecosystem, and our proximity to them make their resource incredibly important to us in the North Country for reasons of economy, tourism and the environment. A new aquarium would be a great regional attraction for us.

Our college offers academic programming with a focus on training new animal care professionals and zookeeping. We attract students from across the country and have graduates working at San Diego Zoo, Disney's Animal Kingdom and places in between.

We've been able to make this impact because of our collaboration with Rosamond Gifford Zoo to provide applied learning experiences and cultivate young professionals. After all, you can only learn so much from a book. The proposed


1  
2           aquarium would be a tremendous  
3           opportunity to expand our educational  
4           partnerships into the field of Aquaria  
5           and it would go hand-in-hand with our  
6           current curriculum offerings while  
7           advancing the profession. Thank you,  
8           Mark Irwin."

9           (Conclusion of comments for public hearing.)

10                           \*     \*     \*     \*

11                   C E R T I F I C A T E

12           This is to certify that I am a Certified  
13           Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and  
14           for the State of New York, that I attended and  
15           reported the above entitled proceedings, that I  
16           have compared the foregoing with my original  
17           minutes taken therein and that it is a true  
18           and correct transcript thereof and all of the  
19           proceedings had therein.

20  
21                             
22                   John F. Drury, CSR

23  
24           Dated: November 1, 2021  
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