



Tioga County Worksession Minutes **May 21, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**

Legislators Present:

Legislator Aronstam
Legislator Brown
Legislator Bunce
Legislator Cantella
Chair/Legislator Monell
Legislator Rose
Legislator Standinger – *arrived at 10:28 a.m.*

Legislators Absent:

Legislator Ciotoli
Legislator Flesher

Guests:

Matt Freeze, Reporter, Morning Times - *departed at 10:32 a.m.*
Sarah DeFrank – Food Bank of the Southern Tier - *departed at 10:24 a.m.*

Staff present:

Cathy Haskell, Legislative Clerk
Breige Graven, Deputy Legislative Clerk – *departed at 10:32 a.m.*
Linda Parke, Personnel Officer - *departed at 10:32 a.m.*
Gary Howard, Tioga County Sherriif

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Monell opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with a Food Bank of the Southern Tier Presentation from Director of Advocacy and Education, Sarah DeFrank.

Food Bank of the Southern Tier Presentation: Ms. DeFrank reported on the impact of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier (FBST) on Tioga County, including a breakdown of how the \$100,000 of Emergency Funding granted in 2025 through Resolution No. 398-25 was utilized. Ms. DeFrank thanked the legislators for this funding given to Tioga County through FBST Agencies due to the local effects of the 2025 federal government shutdown resulting in a direct impact to SNAP disbursements. Ms. DeFrank also provided a Median Income report from the NYS Comptroller's Office detailing the ways inflation is affecting New York State households.

Ms. DeFrank provided a handout detailing Tioga County 2025 by the numbers, such as the statistic that 6,100 people are food insecure, including 1 in 8 individuals and 1 in 6 children. Along with this, it was reported that there are 34 partners and programs in Tioga County,

including 3 School Food Centers and 93 Distributors with Mobile Food Pantries. It was reported that 120,000 requests for food came from these, with 41,000 of them being for children. 1.4 million meals totaling 1.8 million pounds of food were distributed throughout Tioga County in 2025, with 320,000 pounds of this being fresh produce.

Ms. DeFrank further reported on the statistics of food insecure individuals and their participation in Tioga County programs since 2019, sharing there has been a 3% increase in food requests since 2025. She broke down this information, gathering intel from three main categories of Tioga County agencies; Pantries, Mobile Food Pantries and Community Meal Sites. Ms. DeFrank attributes this increase in program utilization to a spike in unhoused individuals or those with limited mobility or access to kitchen space.

Legislator Cantella inquired as to what defines an individual as food insecure, to which Ms. DeFrank explained it is a person who is unsure of when their next meal will come, or where it will come from, over a prolonged period. Legislator Bunce inquired as to whether there is an application process to determine these criteria. Ms. DeFrank explained there is not, as individuals self-report when requesting food service.

Ms. DeFrank reported that in Tioga County, FBST has 9 Food Pantries, 2 Meal Sites, 3 Mobile Food Pantries, 4 Senior Mobile Food Pantries, 3 School Food Centers, 2 Kid's Farmers Markets, 19 Backpack Programs and 12 retail partners. She further elaborated on the retail partners, stating how FBST has made it one of their primary initiatives to increase their food rescue from different grocery stores and other entities. Ms. DeFrank further reported that through these agency and program partnerships, they are estimating a \$2.3 million impact for 2026.

Ms. DeFrank reported on the actual products being purchased for the County, explaining how the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federally funded program through the USDA that provides staples such as rice, beans, meats and produce. She further reported that TEFAP has decreased since 2019, mainly due to administrative choices and issues with the trucking lines transporting the products. Ms. DeFrank explained that due to expensive freight costs and some agencies' rural locations throughout Tioga County, deliveries are being cancelled. To remedy this, Ms. DeFrank reported that FBST has started finding food at a very low cost and passing it on to pantry partners in their service area as best they can, with a large portion of these products coming from donated goods.

Ms. DeFrank went on to share the positive impact the Emergency Funding has had on their Community Meal Sites, specifically the C.C. Tioga Community Kitchen and the Allied Christians of Tioga (ACT). Legislator Cantella mentioned he volunteers with the ACT, sharing that they will serve up to 100 meals at a time.

Ms. DeFrank reported on State Funding programs and grants such as Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish New York. She further reported how Nourish New York requires that food banks keep purchases within New York, helping to encourage agencies to buy from small and medium sized farms in areas such as Tioga County. Ms. DeFrank presented a breakdown of how the several allocations that fall under HPNAP and Nourish New York, as well as a few other programs, utilize the State Funding. She further explained how the Backpack Programs, Kid's Farmers Markets and the School Food Centers operate. She offered to give the Legislators a tour of any of the three School Food

Centers in Tioga County at any time located in the Spencer-Van Etten School, Waverly Central School, and West Learning Center in Apalachin

Ms. DeFrank then reported on the recent changes in the SNAP program, and the impact this is having on the community. Ms. DeFrank shared how FBST has programs in place to help struggling individuals reach their work requirements in order to keep their SNAP benefits through volunteer work. Legislator Rose inquired as to how individuals caring for a disabled adult meet and report on the requirements to obtain the benefits. Ms. DeFrank explained that she always has these individuals reach out to their DSS caseworker for assistance.

Ms. DeFrank reported on the budget cuts being made to programs such as universal meal plans for children, specifically Healthy Meals for All New York Kids, and the impact this can have on Tioga County. She further explained how funding and grants, such as the one for \$100,000 received in late 2025, help alleviate the impacts these cuts have on the community. Legislator Rose inquired as to how long the Emergency Funding was able to assist, to which Ms. DeFrank responded that it lasted into late Q1 or early Q2. There were no further questions or comments from the Legislators.

Consolidated County Office Building Committee Proposal: Legislative Chair Monell opened discussion regarding the proposed structure for the Consolidated County Office Building Committee. Chair Monell emphasized that the handout given to the Legislators outlining the structure is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion only, with no decisions finalized at this time. Discussion focused on the membership of the proposed Executive Committee along with the Sub-Committees for Design & Construction and Regulatory & Financial Oversight.

Legislator Cantella inquired as to whether Commissioner of Public Works, Gary Hammond, should be on the Executive Committee, to which Chair Monell ensured that Mr. Hammond is proposed to be on the Design & Construction Sub-Committee.

Legislator Rose inquired as to how public outreach and transparency would work into the structure of the meetings and decisions coming from the committees. She raised the point that as the Legislature, they have a responsibility to maintain open communication with the voters. Chair Monell agreed that this is of the utmost importance, and reassured it is built into the plan. Legislative Clerk Haskell commented that as the Public Information Officer, County Administrator Bailey will be responsible for communicating anything the Legislators want to relay to the public. Legislator Bunce added that all Legislative Worksessions, along with the minutes for each meeting, are always open to the public.

Chair Monell requested that the Legislators review the proposal in further detail prior to the next Worksession, where additional discussion and potential revisions will take place. Legislative Clerk Haskell reported that upon approval of the Committee structure by the Legislators, Chair Monell could potentially appoint the committees at the Regular Meeting on July 14, 2026.

Approval of Worksession Minutes: On motion of Legislator Aronstam, seconded by Legislator Brown, the May 7, 2026 minutes were unanimously approved.

Action Items: Currently, there are no action items.

Other: None

Executive Session: Legislators Aronstam, Brown, Bunce, Cantella, Monell, Rose, and Standinger were in attendance along with Legislative Clerk Haskell and Sheriff Howard. Motion by Legislator Bunce, seconded by Legislator Aronstam, to move into Executive Session to discuss employment matter of a particular individual at 10:32 a.m. Motion carried.

Motion by Legislator Brown, seconded by Legislator Bunce to adjourn Executive Session at 10:50 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Next Worksession scheduled for Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Breige Graven

Deputy Legislative Clerk