



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Youth Services Funding, Environmental Protection Focus of Annual Community Budget Forum**

The Legislature tonight held its annual Community Budget Forum, inviting residents to learn about and comment on the County's recommended 2016 budget currently under review by the Legislature.

About a dozen people attended, and nine of them spoke, with comments about equally split between support for youth services funding and environmental issues.

Ithaca Youth Bureau Director Liz Vance was one of several who asked for support of over-target funding for a 3% cost of living adjustment for agency partners that work with youth, a request of just over \$11,000 not included in the Administrator's budget, saying it will force program reductions for hers and other agencies, and also urged support for a 3.3% funding increase for the intermunicipal Recreation Partnership. She said a new \$30,000 allocation for City waterfront parks represents a new beginning to a cost-sharing solution that will keep Stewart and Cass Parks viable, and urged its support by the Legislature. Lorraine Moran, a member of the joint youth commission asked for support for \$75,000 for the Municipal Youth Services System, to restore some resources after reductions in 2007. Since then, she said, there's been a dismantling of the system in some sense, and expressed hope for the funding to prevent potential decay.

Both Roger Hopkins, of Lansing, and Betsy Darlington, of the City of Ithaca, spoke in support of ongoing funding for the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection, \$50,000 requested as part of the Planning Department budget and recommended as one-time. They maintained that our trails and recreational resources are important factors in the area's quality of life. Three present and past members of the Environmental Management Council, including Chair Steve Nicholson urged approval of \$4,650 in one-time funding to continue the update of the County's Unique Natural Areas Inventory, not recommended as part of the budget. Mr. Nicholson said the inventory is an extremely useful tool in planning for conservation of these important areas.

The 2016 Recommended Budget supports total expenditures of \$171 million, with local dollar spending of \$85 million (an increase of 1.9%). The recommended 1.3% tax levy increase is below the projected 1.8% State-imposed property tax cap. Under the budget, the tax rate would decrease—from \$6.86 to \$6.74 per thousand—and the tax bill for the owner of a median-value \$170,000 county home would rise by \$15.36. The annual County Solid Waste Fee would increase by \$4.00, returning to its 2014 level of \$56 per household.

Legislators meeting as an Expanded Budget Committee will next meet Tuesday, October 13, for the first of as many as three voting meetings to recommend modifications to the administrator's budget.

The 2016 Recommended Budget and other budget information are posted at the budget page of the County web site at [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/2016budget](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/2016budget).

There are ongoing opportunities to comment on the budget. Residents may submit budget comments online at the County web site budget page, and may also visit the County's Facebook page on the budget. Written comments can be mailed to the Legislature Office at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

People may address legislators on the budget at the beginning of any County Legislature meeting and at the Legislature's formal budget hearing November 10. All budget meetings, including the hearing, take place at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (Second Floor).

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 592-3206.*

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