



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **November 17, 2009** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Adopts 2010 Tompkins County Budget

Two-and-a-half months after the process began, the Tompkins County Legislature tonight adopted the County's 2010 budget and the County's capital program for the next five years. The budget, which changed only slightly from the amended tentative budget approved by legislators at the end of last month, increases the County tax levy by 3.99% and the countywide average tax rate by 1.1% to \$6.00 per thousand. Local spending in the budget has decreased by nearly a quarter of a percent.

The budget passed by a vote of 8-5, with Legislators Mike Hattery, Kathy Luz Herrera, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Mike Sigler, and Chair Mike Koplinka-Loehr voting no. (Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Tyke Randall were excused. Legislator Kiefer, who had to leave the meeting before the final budget vote, indicated that she could support the budget as amended to that point.)

Only three amendments were added to the budget before passage. \$10,600 in maintenance-of-effort target funding for Human Services Coalition agencies was once again restored to the budget through an 8-6 vote, the only change that affected the tax levy. Legislators, by a vote of 11-3, also restored an account clerk-typist position in the Health Department, at a net expense of \$32,054, funded through one-time rollover funding, and by a 9-4 vote added \$2,000 in one time funding to the County Historian's budget to support the county's Civil War Commission.

Other amendments proposed, some reconsidered from earlier recommendations, failed to win support. Legislators once again declined to make the more than \$250,000 final payment for the Mental Health Building with cash, instead of through capital debt service, and declined to support an estimated \$195,000 overrun in anticipated pension expense through one-time, instead of target funding, as had been decided earlier. Proposed amendments for target reductions of \$50,000 for deferred maintenance in the Facilities budget; \$50,000 in the Highway Division budget; \$49,000 for vehicles in the Sheriff's law enforcement budget; and \$10,000 in the County Attorney's budget were not supported. Legislators also declined to increase the sales tax revenue projection for 2010 by \$100,000. Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera, who advanced most of the proposed amendments, maintained the Legislature should respect taxpayers' needs and lower the tax levy as much as possible.

Budget committee chair Jim Dennis characterized the 2010 spending plan as "a hopeful budget," demonstrating the hope that the State, through the Governor and Legislature, does not require the County to support additional expenses in 2010. Both he and County Administrator Joe Mareane thanked department heads, legislators and staff for enabling the County to address substantial challenges in a very difficult year, through hard work and good faith exhibited throughout the process.

Comparison of 2009 and 2010 adopted Tompkins County budgets:

Local Share (spending on local programs; revenue raised from the local community, primarily through property and sales tax):

2009: \$74,099,865
2010: \$73,925,836 (Percent change: -.23)

Property Tax Levy (total amount to be collected from owners of taxable property):

2009: \$36,837,645
2010: \$38,309,070 (Percent change: +3.99)

Property Tax Rate (countywide average amount per \$1,000 of assessed property value):

2009: \$5.93
2010: \$6.00 (Percent change: +1.1)

Tax change on a \$100,000 home \$6.50

Contact: Michael Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Legislature 274-5434 or 257-2329; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Finance Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Supports “Green Fleet” Initiative

The Legislature approved a new County “Green Fleet” policy and authorized purchase of three hybrid vehicles in support of the County’s “Green Fleet” initiative. The new policy, approved by a vote of 13-1 (Legislator Mike Hattery voted no; Legislator Tyke Randall was excused), states, in part, that the County shall “procure the most cost-effective and least polluting vehicles and fuel-using equipment possible” to meet operational requirements. The policy also requires each department that uses or maintains any vehicles to submit an annual strategic greenhouse gas reduction plan for its fleet, with goals including optimizing fleet sizes, increasing average fuel economy, and increased use of alternative fuel vehicles.

Also by a vote of 13-1 (Legislator Mike Hattery voted no; Legislator Tyke Randall was excused), the Legislature authorized the County to purchase of three hybrid vehicles, at an anticipated cost of \$62,000, to form a new shared car pool for all County staff in the downtown Courthouse Complex, as well as to accept a \$6,000 U.S. Department of Energy grant to be used toward the purchase. Most of the cost will be funded through \$50,000 in contingent funding earmarked for the alternative fuel initiative in the 2009 budget; remainder of the funding will come from anticipated revenue from sale of three current County vehicles and previously approved Planning Department rollover funds.

Contact: Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203; Planning and Public Works Commissioner Ed Marx, 274-5560.

Local Development Corporation Approved

The Legislature, by a vote of 12-2, authorized formation of the Tompkins County Development Corporation, which will operate in conjunction with the County’s Industrial Development Agency (IDA). (Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera and Greg Stevenson voted no; Legislator Tyke Randall was excused.) The corporation, whose board members will be board members of the IDA, is empowered to issue bonds and other obligations on behalf of the County to promote community and economic development and the creation of jobs, filling the gap left when New York State civic facility legislation which permitted the IDA to issue such bonds, expired at the end of last year.

Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera said she could not support the resolution, since she feared formation of the development corporation could constitute “an end run around local wage stability,” such as the principle that contractors for funded projects pay a livable wage. The measure, it was noted, requires that all funding agreements will follow IDA policies related to such public interests.

Contact: Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203; Legislator Martha Robertson, Chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, 272-0584; Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera, 273-8169.

Alex Wicker Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Eighteen-year-old Alex Wicker, of Newfield, is Tompkins County's Distinguished Youth for November. Alex was recognized for the "extraordinary amount of service" he has provided over the past several years, including as a volunteer firefighter in Newfield for as much as 30 hours per week, described as "consistent, dependable and dedicated." Newfield Fire Department Chief Ben Emery notes Alex took the initiative to earn required basic training certification, which normally takes five months, in only two weeks and is currently training to become an emergency medical technician. Among his accomplishments, Alex also was selected to participate in TST-BOCES' intensive "New Visions" program to prepare for a medical career. The Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by A&B Awards and Engraving, Bangs Ambulance Service, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Accepted two grants awarded to the County's Office for the Aging to improve citizen access to long-term care services: a \$150,000 three-year federal grant under the Aging and Disability Resource Center program and a \$50,000 two-year grant awarded under the Community Living Program.
- Accepted two records management grants from the New York State Archives: a more than \$50,000 grant to support development of an electronic medical records system for the Mental Health Department and a \$42,000 grant to support back-filing and indexing of archival records into the County Clerk's Office Electronic Document Management System.
- Authorized a master mass transportation capital project supplemental agreement between the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), and Tompkins County, through which the DOT agrees to pay nearly \$840,000 to reimburse the county and TCAT for capital projects authorized by prior federal and state grants.
- Approved a number of year-end resolutions, including scheduling of the Legislature's 2010 organizational meeting on Tuesday, January 5, 2010.

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