



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 16, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Supports Revised AES Cayuga Payment in Lieu of Taxes Agreement

The Legislature, in an advisory action, supported a revised Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement between the AES Cayuga power generating facility and the County Industrial Development Agency (IDA). The vote was 14-1 after a half-hour of discussion, with Legislator Carol Chock voting no. The recommended revised agreement, put forth by utility and IDA negotiating teams, would decrease the facility's value from the current \$160 million for 2009 to \$100 million in 2013, instead of increasing the value from \$160 million to \$255 million in 2013, as set down in the agreement finalized a year ago. The renegotiation is considered in light of economic and market factors that have caused a rapid decline in the plant's financial condition, creating an extraordinary situation, as defined in the agreement. The agreement governs a system of valuation and tax for the facility, and is not a tax abatement.

Several legislators expressed the view that, while the situation is difficult, the approach is appropriate considering the complex issue of power plant valuation and the alternatives which would likely include litigation. Lansing Legislator Pat Pryor, who sponsored a recent public forum on the issue, characterized the decrease in valuation as "painful" and not something that Lansing taxpayers will be able to handle easily, but added, "It is very clear to me...that to do anything else other than to support this resolution would not be in support of taxpayers of Tompkins County." Without the valuation schedule contained in the revised PILOT, she noted plant would be assessed at a lower value, producing less tax revenue than would be coming in under the revised agreement. Interim Assessment Director Jay Franklin has advised that if the IDA fails to approve a revised agreement, he must as of March 1 justify an appropriate value to the state and will be forced to assess the property at its current market value.

While she credited the efforts and good faith shown by the negotiating team, Legislator Chock said she is not comfortable with committing to a four-year valuation schedule, adding that the parties need "to do not just due diligence but extra diligence for the revenue that will be lost." Chair Robertson noted that the revised agreement would not commit the parties to a firm four-year schedule, since the agreement will be revisited later this year to review validity of the \$100 million figure. Legislator Peter Stein expressed concern that the valuation formula should be studied further going forward.

After taking public comment at a hearing earlier today, the IDA is scheduled to vote on the revised agreement February 24.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature and Chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, 274-5434 or 272-0584; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 607-274-5551; Legislator Patricia Pryor, 319-0507; Legislator Carol Chock, 273-9007.

Legislature Endorses Route 96 Corridor Management Study

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, accepted and endorsed the Route 96 Corridor Management Study, which evaluates how development along the corridor from the Village of Trumansburg to the City of Ithaca would affect corridor traffic. The study, undertaken through a partnership involving the County, City of Ithaca, the Towns of Ithaca and Ulysses, and the Ithaca-Tompkins Transportation Council, concludes that a nodal

development pattern, consistent with principles of the County's Comprehensive Plan, would be expected to reduce traffic, enhance traffic management, and preserve quality of life within that area. The measure formally supports continuation of cooperative planning efforts among the parties that conducted the study. It was stressed that the study is a document to provide planning guidance and that municipalities remain responsible for overseeing municipal land use. The other partner municipalities have all taken actions expressing some level of support for the study.

Contact: Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203

Public Hearing Scheduled on Hanshaw Road Reconstruction

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, scheduled a public hearing next month related to the project reconstructing Hanshaw Road in the Towns of Ithaca and Dryden and Village of Cayuga Heights. The hearing will be held Tuesday, March 16, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chamber of the County Courthouse, 320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca. The hearing, to be held under provisions of the Eminent Domain Procedure Law, will inform the public and review public use to be served by the reconstruction project, including impact on the environment and residents. Negotiations for approximately 57 permanent and 64 temporary easements for the project have not yet been completed, and the hearing will be held in case any land might need to be acquired via eminent domain procedures as a last resort.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453.

Chelsea Weidman February's Distinguished Youth

Chelsea Weidman, of Lansing, has been honored as the Tompkins County Distinguished Youth for February, especially for her ongoing support of the Lansing Food Pantry. Food pantry executive director William Gottschalk-Fielding and director Nancy Myers say that Chelsea for three years in a row has held a charity birthday party to benefit the pantry, donating more than \$500 each year, as well as hundreds of food items. Chelsea, they say, is a regular volunteer at the food pantry, serving many area families. Before moving to Lansing, Chelsea held similar birthday parties at her former home in New Jersey, which raised thousands of dollars and items to benefit other children. Chelsea's other service activities include mentoring fifth graders on bullying and service on Lansing's Student Council Organization and her church's youth group, as well as being very involved in music, theater and dance, while maintaining a better than 95 average in advanced courses. The nomination letter states: "Chelsea is a well-rounded person who sets the bar high for herself, in many ways, and has continually met those high expectations in her achievements both in school and in life. She is a pleasure to be with and truly exemplifies a Distinguished Youth." 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 business, the Legislature

- Heard a report from the County Youth Services Department sharing results of the first countywide community youth survey as part of the 2008 New York State Youth Development Survey.
- Observed a moment of silence to honor former County legislator Florence Starr, who passed away recently. Starr represented the Towns of Caroline and Danby from 1982-1984 on the Board of Representatives, and was the first woman to serve in a county legislative leadership position and the Board's second Vice Chair.

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