



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **March 2, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Strongly Opposes Retroactive State Tax on IDAs

The Legislature, by unanimous vote after little discussion, went on record strongly against a retroactive “cost recovery” tax imposed on Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) across New York State. The State Department of Taxation and Finance has billed every IDA in the state seeking a tax corresponding to 4.7% of the gross revenue received by the IDA in the 2008 calendar year, payable by March 1. For the Tompkins County IDA, that payment would be nearly \$36,000. The tax, contained in this year’s state budget, is said to reimburse the State for a share of the cost of providing services to IDAs. The Legislature’s resolution calls the tax “redundant and punitive,” noting that it includes payments-in-lieu-of taxes collected for local governments and school districts, state and federal grants, and local taxpayer-funded appropriations and that the tax was imposed long after IDAs prepared their budgets. It predicts the tax on revenues that include tax generated resources from the state and federal government will lead to these resources and funds appropriated by counties to job creation will instead be used to help bail out the state during its time of financial crisis.” The Legislature calls upon the Governor and State Legislature to “repeal this onerous tax on the primary economic development organizations of New York’s counties and other local government, a tax that will take local resources that could better be used to create jobs in our communities in this time of economic crisis.” Legislator Nathan Shinagawa remarked he was “in awe” of the state’s justification for payment for the support supposedly received.

Contact: Legislator Dooley Kiefer, 257-7453; Legislature Chair Martha Roberton, Chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, 274-5434 or 272-0584.

TC3 President Delivers Annual “State of the College” Message

In his annual “State of the College” message, Tompkins Cortland Community College president Dr. Carl Haynes told the Legislature the College is strong and has accomplished much in the past year. But while enrollment is growing (up by more than 14% as of the fall) and will continue to grow, he cautioned that the College will face the ongoing challenge of supporting more people with fewer resources. With the Governor’s executive budget for the next fiscal year proposing a more than 15% cut in support, President Haynes predicted the proposed \$1.6 million reduction “will be much more than local taxpayers and students will be able to offset.” With uncertainty about the pace of the economic recovery, the College, he said, will need to respond to short-term challenges, while also focusing on the long term.

Among recent achievements: the Middle States Commission recognized TC3’s institutional assessment program as one of the best in New York State; the “CollegeNow” concurrent enrollment program for high school students earned accreditation (one of only 44 colleges nationwide); the College advanced to the design stage for a new Cortland County extension Center, opened a new, centralized learning and technology center, expanded its cross-disciplinary “learning community” courses, and completed two small capital projects to add classrooms and renovate its cafeteria, both at or under budget. While student retention has increased, so has the demand for financial aid. The College, Haynes said, continues to work hard to gain insight on how to meet its challenges by data-driven decision making—learning from data and developing strategies from it. He reminded Legislators that a recent socio-economic modeling study showed that TC3 contributes \$155 million per year to the region’s economy, supporting economic vitality and improving the area’s quality of life.

Contact: TC3 president Dr. Carl Haynes, 844-8211.

2010 Budget Adjustment Approved

The Legislature, without dissent, approved a 2010 budget adjustment to decrease the funding received by programs and agencies under the County's municipal sales tax agreement with the City of Ithaca, decreasing funding allocated under the agreement by more than \$46,000 because of 2009 sales tax collections within the City that were nearly 5% below the revenue budgeted.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget and Capital Committee, 387-4058

Among other actions,

- Legislators observed a moment of silence in honor of former long-time Mental Health Director Anthony (Bart) DeLuca, who died Sunday. Mr. DeLuca served as Mental Health Director for 27 years, ending in 2004. Legislature Chair Robertson said the County, in part owes its Mental Health Building and long-sought single-room occupancy residence on Third Street to Mr. DeLuca's initiative and foresight. Legislator Frank Proto called Mr. DeLuca's death a "sad loss" of a fine gentleman who was very innovative. Many of our programs we have today, Proto said, are the result of what he started.
- Again and again, County employees were praised for all they did to help the County cope, respond, and recover from last week's snowstorm.
- Chair Martha Robertson proclaimed March 27, 2010, the hour of 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. as Earth Hour in Tompkins County, urging everyone to turn off the lights for one hour as part of a global event symbolizing a call to support action on climate change, described as "the gravest threat our planet has faced." This is the third year that Tompkins County has actively participated in this worldwide event.

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