



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **May 18, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Urges State Hydrofracking Ban

The Legislature is calling upon New York State to ban all hydraulic fracturing operations to extract natural gas from shale until independent scientific assessments are completed to determine the risk of hydraulic fracturing, the greenhouse gas emissions it would produce, and its economic and social costs. The action supports legislation proposed in the State Senate and Assembly. After listening to more than an hour of impassioned public comment from more than 20 residents who urged support of the ban and another half-hour of discussion, mostly focused on wording changes, the measure was approved by a 13-1 vote, with Legislator Peter Stein voting no. (Legislator Carol Chock was excused.)

Citing the many concerns that have been expressed about the potential dangers of the gas drilling technique, the local infrastructure damage it could produce, and the Legislature's three prior resolutions of concern about gas drilling, the action supports proposed state legislation that would place a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing until 120 days after the federal Environmental Protection Agency issues findings from a two-year study of potential adverse effects of hydraulic fracturing on water quality and public health. The measure also calls upon the state Department of Environmental Conservation to extend statewide the same standards the agency plans to apply to the New York City and Syracuse watersheds, requiring individual permits for each individual well.

Legislator Stein said he was "sadly opposed"—while he supports the concept of the ban and saying in plain, simple language that drilling by the hydraulic fracturing technique should be delayed until water quality and safety impacts can be evaluated, he felt "extremely uncomfortable in making highly technical statements" through the detailed resolution that he did not completely understand and could not verify.

Copies of the resolution will be sent to Governor Paterson, the county's congressional, Assembly, and Senate delegations, Assembly and Senate leadership, State Health Commissioner Richard Daines, Environmental Conservation Commissioner Peter Grannis, Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Patrick Hooker, Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, a number of members of State Senate and Assembly, and the New York State Association of Counties.

Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee chair Pam Mackesey thanked Legislature Chair Martha Robertson for her work in drafting the resolution and for her leadership on the gas drilling issue.

Contact: Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203; Legislator Peter Stein, 266-7579.

Legislature Authorizes Biggs Building Sale

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Carol Chock was excused), authorized the County Administrator to sell the Biggs Building, currently occupied by the Health Department, to Cayuga Medical Center. The sale includes the Biggs Building and nine acres surrounding it. The medical center will pay the County \$1,059,000 and will take ownership of the building August 1. The Biggs Building sale is part of the plan to relocate the Health Department to a more efficient facility on Brown Road in Lansing, with sale proceeds used to support part of the renovation cost. The sale will not affect a 26-acre wooded parcel or a small residential-type structure adjacent to the Biggs Building, which remain owned by the County. Before the final approval vote, Legislators

also formally declared the Biggs Building surplus and determined that the action would have no negative environmental impact.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453.

Initial Expenditures Approved for Housing Fund

The Legislature, by unanimous vote of those present (Legislator Carol Chock was excused), authorized the County to disburse the County's share of funding related to the first recipients under the Community Housing Affordability Program and the Community Housing Trust Fund (jointly known as the Housing Fund). The Legislature also authorized the County to serve as the Housing Fund fiscal agent, accepting funds from the City of Ithaca and Cornell University and disbursing them to the first two recipients. The Housing Fund supports and encourages affordable housing initiatives which benefit low- and moderate-income households.

The Housing Fund Program Oversight Committee has recommended a \$75,000 loan for the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services/PathStone project to construct apartments on the current site of the Women's Community Building and a \$70,000 loan for Tompkins Community Action's Magnolia House project in the City of Ithaca. Environmental review must be completed for the third project recommended, the INHS Holly Creek Townhomes in the Town of Ithaca (\$200,000 grant), before funding for that project can be allocated. The County's contribution to the Housing Fund comes from federal Housing and Urban Development program income funds.

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

Groton Class Officers Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Eight Groton High School students, class officers of the 9th and 10th grade classes, are the Tompkins County Distinguished Youth for May. Principal Barbara Case nominated Class of 2013 officers Joel Twitchell, president; Christopher Hinman, vice president; Donald Evener, treasurer; and Samantha Rose, secretary; and Class of 2012 officers Jenna Shufelt, president; Allen Quints, vice president; Nicholas Slocum, treasurer; and Jordan Twitchell, secretary—all recognized for their efforts to raise student awareness regarding breast cancer. Incorporating the charity cause into their semi-formal dance social event, they raised more than \$760.00 for breast cancer research and cures donated to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. "These officers educated the student body by sharing statistics, talked about the seriousness of this public health issue, and took action to make a difference," the principal's nomination letter states. "These officers, by serving as role models for all students within the Groton Central School District, exemplified student leaders with compassion and generosity, both characteristics of 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 actions, the Legislature

- Observed a moment of silence in memory of long-time legislator Phil Shurtleff, who passed away last week after a long illness. Mr. Shurtleff served on the County Board of Representatives from 1981 to 1993, some of those years as Vice Chair. Mr. Shurtleff was also the father of County Director of Emergency Response Lee Shurtleff. Groton Legislator Brian Robison praised Phil Shurtleff as "very, very involved in the community for a long, long time"—also serving as a trustee, a mayor, a justice, a council person, one of the original members of the Industrial Development Agency, and an early liaison to Tompkins Cortland Community College.
- Scheduled a public hearing for its next meeting on June 2, 2010, regarding a proposed addition to Agricultural District No. 2 (West Side of Cayuga Lake)
- Authorized design and right-of-way approval for reconstruction of the Forest Home Drive bridge over Fall Creek in the Town of Ithaca, also finding that action carries no adverse environmental impact.

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