



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **October 19, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Opposes Natural Gas Drilling on State Forest Lands

The Legislature voiced official opposition to gas drilling on State forest lands, but delayed action on a similar measure that would prohibit any County-owned land from being leased for natural gas drilling using hydraulic fracturing. Commenting on the State Department of Environmental Conservation draft Strategic Plan for State Forest Management, the Legislature urged the agency to modify the plan to prohibit drilling altogether on the State's 780,000 acres of forest land. The resolution predicts hydraulic-fracturing would fragment forest lands, be incompatible with purposes and values for such land, damage roads and other infrastructure, and threaten water resources and habitat.

Although the vote was unanimous (with Legislators Nathan Shinagawa and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne excused), it followed close to an hour of debate focused on wording related to whether science shows that greenhouse gas emissions from natural gas extracted using hydraulic fracturing is equal to or greater than that from coal. Legislator Peter Stein said that, although he opposes such drilling, he could not support the resolution with that wording included, and a number of procedural moves followed that ended up eliminating that language from the resolution, as well as language that referred to the plan's claim that emissions from natural gas are lower than from other fossil fuels.

The emissions issue was also involved in the decision to delay consideration of measure pledging that Tompkins County would not lease any county-owned lands for gas drilling using hydraulic fracturing. Legislators, by an 8-4 vote, decided to send the proposal back to committee for further review.

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

Public Hearing on 2011 Budget Rescheduled to November 8

The Legislature has adjusted the schedule for deliberations toward a 2011 Tompkins County budget, delaying the Public Hearing on the budget, which had been scheduled for November 3, until Monday, November 8. The hearing will be held on November 8, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Legislature Chambers in the County Courthouse, 320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca.

The revised schedule also changes the date of the final Expanded Budget Committee review from October 28 to Monday, November 1, beginning at 5:30 p.m. A vote on the amended tentative budget is now scheduled for the Legislature's November 3 meeting, with final budget adoption still scheduled for November 16.

Also related to the 2011 budget, the Legislature tonight heard from 18 people who urged restoration of funding eliminated from the budget—Social Services preventive services delivered by Catholic Charities and the DSS Family Resolutions project; the Health Department home health care and early intervention programs; and County matching funds to support municipal youth development. Among those addressing the Legislature were eight young people from the Towns of Ulysses and Newfield who talked of the personal and community benefits the youth programs have produced.

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

Legislature Extends Temporary Amendment to Fiscal Policy on Rollover

The Legislature, on the recommendation of the Expanded Budget Committee, extended until the end of 2010 last year's temporary suspension of the County's rollover policy on personnel-related savings. The action, approved by a 12-1 vote (with Legislator David McKenna voting no, and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Kathy Luz Herrera excused) temporarily continues the practice of excluding department personnel-related savings from the rollover calculation and redirects those savings to the general fund. The provision sunsets at the end of the 2010 fiscal year. Legislator McKenna expressed reservations about taking the action without prior consultation with departments.

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

Legislature Authorizes Tax-Exempt Bonds for Ithaca College Project

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized the Tompkins County Development Corporation to issue up to \$30 million in tax-exempt revenue bonds to support refinancing, improvements, and construction of additional college housing at 1031 Danby Road, the College Circle student apartment complex. The action excludes the interest payable as gross income under the Federal internal revenue code and does not involve any financial obligation on behalf of the County. Legislators including Kathy Luz Herrera asked whether the local development corporation had raised the issue of whether local trades people would be employed to construct the project. Chair Martha Robertson, who also serves on the LDC, said the matter would be raised when the development corporation considers issuance of the bonds at its next meeting.

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

Natalie Kirkwyland Recognized as Distinguished Youth

The Legislature recognized Natalie Kirkwyland, of Dryden, as the latest recipient of the Tompkins County Distinguished Youth Award. Nominated by Debbie Fisher, treasurer for the Dryden Community Center Café, Natalie is recognized by her work in organizing the Café, in serving on its board and finance committee, including writing the business plan for Café operations. She is also praised for her many other activities on behalf of her church and community—including planting and helping maintain plantings around the village as a member of the Dryden beautification Brigade core team; serving at Dryden's Southworth Library, and participating in last summer's Rotary youth leadership conference. The Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by A&B Awards and Engraving, Bangs Ambulance, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Authorized application for Federal Transit Administration funds to support \$12.3 million in transit projects for Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) and Tompkins County.
- Accepted a \$750,000 State Office of Housing and Community Renewal Community Development Block Grant of federal housing funds to continue support of the County's first-time homebuyer program.
- Awarded Tourism Capital Grants, funded through Room Occupancy Tax funds, to the Kitchen Theatre and Hangar Theatre (\$25,000 each) to support capital improvements for each facility.

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