



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **December 21, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Awards Contracts to Upgrade and Operate Recycling and Solid Waste Center

The Legislature approved a new public-private partnership to upgrade the Tompkins Recycling and Solid Waste Center, ushering in improvements that will make recycling easier and divert more materials from the county's waste stream. The Legislature, by unanimous vote, awarded FCR, LLC, based in Charlotte, NC, contracts governing a nearly \$2.5 million upgrade to the Center and to operate the Center over the next decade. FCR, LLC operates more than 24 recycling facilities in the United States.

The ten-year agreement with FCR, which begins February 16, 2011 (with an option to cancel after five years), will expand services and activities at the Center—including substantial improvements to the facility, conversion to single stream recycling, and processing of additional recyclable materials on site. These improvements will divert more materials from the county's waste stream, toward meeting the goal to increase the diversion rate from the current 60% to 75% by 2015. The County anticipates a grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to cover 50% of the facility construction cost. Construction will be completed by the end of October.

Single stream recycling will take effect as of March 7, meaning that all recyclables collected will go into one bin, then will be transferred to FCR's Ontario County facility for processing and recovery. The materials processing changes and Drop-Off Center improvements will take effect after construction is completed.

FCR president Sean Duffy said his firm is excited about the opportunity to work in partnership with the County and to continue to build beneficial long term sustainable relationships. County Solid Waste Manager Barbara Eckstrom said she is happy that the County has found a like-minded partner in FCR and characterized the partnership as a "very wise decision." Legislators praised Eckstrom for her leadership throughout the process, saying that the process should be a model for any major project the County undertakes.

Contact: Barbara Eckstrom, Manager, Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division, 607-273-6632; Sean Duffy, President, FCR, LLC., 704-697-2011; Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453.

County to Purchase Ithaca Building to House Aging Office

Tompkins County will purchase the building that most recently housed the Carpet Bazaar, located at 214-216 West State Street (Martin Luther King, Jr. Street) in Ithaca to house the County Office for the Aging (COFA). The County has for years searched for facilities to which to relocate COFA, to comply with the State's mandate for COFA to vacate its space on the ground floor of the County Courthouse. The New York State Court Facilities Act mandates counties provide adequate space to the State court system, and for several years, the State has advised the County that the courts, at a minimum, need the space in the courthouse now occupied by COFA.

The Legislature approved the sale by a vote of 11-3, with Legislators Carol Chock, Frank Proto, and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no.

The County will pay \$600,000 (present value) for the building in a structured sale that will provide payments of \$52,000 per year for 15 years. The sale is contingent upon the building having a clean bill of environmental health. After looking at a number of potential alternatives over several years, County Administrator Joe Mareane told legislators this space appears well suited for COFA. Mareane noted that the property has the advantages of being located close to the County's Human Services Building in a downtown location that is easily accessible to the Office's clients. Saying that there is some urgency to act with responsible speed to meet this immediate facilities need, Mareane advised that closing is expected before March 1, 2011. Praising the Court system's patience, Legislature Chair Martha Robertson said that finding new space for COFA has been discussed since she joined the Legislature nearly nine years ago.

Legislator Chock said she reluctantly voted no, that while she sees the need for new COFA space, she expressed concern that the action could interfere with City efforts to develop the West State Street corridor. Legislator Proto said he commends staff efforts in locating alternate space, but thinks the cost is too high. A companion resolution, which determined that the acquisition will not carry a negative environmental impact, was also approved by a vote of 11-3, Legislators Chock, Proto, and Kiefer dissenting—Kiefer saying that her no vote stemmed from not being able to review the actual environmental assessment form.

The County will next develop a plan to renovate the building and seek legislative approval for funds to support the renovation. COFA is expected to occupy the building before the end of 2011.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, Chair of the Capital Plan Review Committee, 274-5434 or 272-0584; James Dennis, Chair, Budget and Capital Committee, 387-4058.

Legislature Approves Funding for Long-Term Center of Government Study

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, appropriated \$50,000 in contingent funding to support an expert study to examine the County's long-term space needs, to provide more information on the Center of Government concept. The analysis will explore whether a business case would exist to pursue a Center of Government facility that could house a number of County legislative and administrative operations, a concept first identified as part of the County's Space Use Master Plan five years ago and more recently reviewed by the Legislature's Capital Plan Review Committee.

The expert analysis will compare the current configuration and projected costs of occupancy of County operations housed in County-owned and leased facilities to the estimated cost of housing all or some of those operations in a new Center of Government facility, and will recommend the most cost-effective way to accommodate the County's long-term space needs. The County's Facilities Division has developed a draft scope of work to guide the analysis.

The County's 20-year capital program currently projects the Center of Government project would not begin until 2016. County Administrator Joe Mareane repeatedly has cautioned that a clear business case for cost savings and efficiencies must be made for a Center of Government project to be seriously considered.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, Chair of the Capital Plan Review Committee, 274-5434 or 272-0584.

Legislature Bans Gas Drilling on County-Owned Land

The Legislature, by a vote of 14-1 (Legislator Frank Proto voted no) approved a resolution that prohibits leasing of County-owned land for natural gas drilling through hydro-fracturing. The measure was first presented to the Legislature two months ago, then withdrawn to revise its wording. The resolution cites the potential impact that hydro-fracking could have on the environment—including factors such as air and water quality, greenhouse gas emissions, county forest lands and their species—as well as impacts such drilling would have on county infrastructure. The measure states that "Tompkins County will not lease any county-owned lands, including but not limited to County forest lands, for high-volume, slick-water hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas."

As he has in the past, Legislator Proto maintained that, while he in no way supports such leasing of County lands, that taking such a symbolic gesture is not needed and that drafting of the measure has needlessly consumed weeks of time on the part of legislators and staff.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453; Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203; Legislator Frank Proto, 277-4875.

Legislature Supports Participation in “ITNEverywhere” Mobility Management Project

The Legislature, by unanimous vote authorized the County to join with a consortium of other local agencies to work with ITNAmerica, of Portland, ME, to adapt a business plan for local volunteer transportation services, which would integrate transportation alternative in Tompkins County. The action allocates \$25,000 from Federal Transit Administration Job Access and Reverse Commute mobility management project funds to match grant funding from a private foundation. Community partners involved in a local steering committee which have been investigating the initiative include the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council, County Office for the Aging and Department of Social Services, Finger Lakes Independence Center, Ithaca Carshare, the local Cooperative Extension, GADABOUT Transportation Services, and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT).

Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875; Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203

Twelve “GIACtivists” Honored as Distinguished Youth

The Legislature recognized a dozen young people who represented the Greater Ithaca Activities Center and the Ithaca community at the United States Social Forum in Detroit, MI in June, focused on grassroots social movements and civic engagement. Honored were Dana Malcolm, Shiane Milton, Reggie Feaster, G-Quan Booker, Harmony Graves, Dacia McBean, Kelsey McBean, Eisah Nunn, Giovanni Griffin, Keisha McBean, Ashanee Brooks, and Danica Webbe, who identified themselves as “GIACtivists” at the forum. The nomination form from GIAC Director Marcia Forte and three other staff, praised the youth for sharing their experiences at the forum. “We are proud of the diligence, intgerest, and active participation these young people exhibited as they planned for the trip and participated in the USSF,” the letter states. “They represented our community admirably. They give us hope for the future of our community, the U.S., and the world.” 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

- Appropriated from the contingent fund more than \$25,000 to cover expenses of this year’s primary elections, funds not budgeted as part of the 2010 budget.
- Approved a number of standard year-end resolutions, including implementation of departmental fees, memberships, and position changes as part of the 2011 County budget.

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