



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 1, 2011** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Listens to Comments, Delays Action on Proposed Road Preservation Law

The Legislature took public comment on a proposed new local law that would amend the County Code to regulate certain heavy commercial or industrial uses of County roads with the potential to cause road damage. The proposed law is intended to protect roads from the effects temporary heavy use, such as would occur from activities such as natural gas drilling, but to not affect operations of local businesses. But many who spoke at the hearing expressed serious concern—as was voiced at an informal information session the night before—that the law would have unintended consequences that would hurt local commercial operations. Action on the measure had been included on the Legislature’s agenda, but was withdrawn to permit further work on the proposal by the Legislature’s Government Operations and Facilities and Infrastructure Committees.

The amendment, as currently drafted, would regulate temporary commercial or industrial activity generating “high frequency, high impact truck traffic”—traffic to or from a single project site generating more than ten truck trips per day for more than three days in a week, involving trucks with a gross weight that exceeds 20 tons. But several businesspeople who testified at the half-hour-long hearing told the Legislature the currently proposed thresholds could be tripped by routine local projects and must be increased to achieve their desired effect, that enforcement is a question, and should be reworked to minimize the undesired effect on local businesses. Other residents, some acknowledging the user concerns, voiced strong support of a local road ordinance to protect local roads from the strain of future hydrofracking activity without overburdening taxpayers, while a representative of Chesapeake Energy suggested the law should include provisions for road use maintenance agreements, as he said is being used successfully related to drilling in northeast Pennsylvania.

Several legislators remarked that the information session held the night before the hearing to explain the proposal and gain informal input was productive and helpful, and thanked those who initiated the meeting, as well as those who attended for their observations and suggestions. Legislator Pam Mackesey said, “I have no doubt we will come up with a better law” based on those comments. Chair Martha Robertson said she hopes the committees can report back with a revised proposal within the next couple of months. Another hearing will be held should major changes be proposed.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440; Carol Chock, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 273-9007.

Legislature Appropriates Funding to Support County Corporate Compliance Plan

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused) approved the funding needed to develop and implement a formal Tompkins County corporate compliance program. Corporate compliance programs are intended to implement a coordinated system of internal controls to ensure compliance with applicable federal regulations and guard against any potential waste, fraud, and abuse of government funds. \$35,456 was appropriated from the Contingent Fund to support professional services and staff costs associated with establishing the program. Federal agencies responsible for the enforcement of Medicare and Medicaid laws and regulations have encouraged development of formal Corporate Compliance programs, with the State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General issuing rules and regulations to ensure that claims submitted to the State are true and accurate and adhere to a compliance plan.

The action, in part, directs that the County Administrator have oversight for ensuring an effective Corporate Compliance Program, and that Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger be designated Corporate Compliance Officer, to direct development and implementation of a Corporate Compliance Program for the County.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440; James Dennis, Chair, Budget and Capital Committee, 387-4058; Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger, 274-5551.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Heard from County Administrator Joe Mareane who said his office will be compiling information regarding how departments could be affected by the Governor's budget, presented today. The administrator has already heard from departments regarding potential aid losses for Assessment, Probation and Aging, and he told legislators the Governor's budget also identifies Certified Home Health Agencies and community colleges for significant aid reductions.
- Appropriated \$25,000 from the Contingent Fund to support negotiator fees for upcoming contract negotiations for the Sheriff's Department road patrol. The County has reached agreement with the firm of Roemer, Wallens, Gold & Mineaux to provide negotiating services toward a contract which would cover a period beginning as of March 1, 2008.
- Appropriated \$5,500 from the Contingent Fund to support the latest element of the County's "smart work" training program, focused on business practices and efficiencies related to the sewage systems permitting and inspection program of the Health Department's Environmental Health Division.
- Accepted the 2011 annual Criminal Justice/Alternatives to Incarceration Consolidated Service Plan, to be filed with the New York State Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives.

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