



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
April 5, 2011
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **April 5, 2011** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Creates Independent Redistricting Commission

The Legislature set the stage for the process of reapportioning the County's legislative districts as a result of the 2010 Census. The Legislature, by a vote of 14-1 (Legislator Carol Chock voted no), approved creation of a nine-member Independent Redistricting Commission, charged with preparing a reapportionment plan to present to the Legislature for approval. The plan will include recommendations regarding the number and geographical boundaries of districts from which members of the Legislature are elected. Commission members and its chair will be appointed by the Legislature. Members must be county residents and registered voters, and no current elected municipal officials, or officers of any political party or committee will be appointed to the Commission.

This is the first time the County has employed an Independent Redistricting Commission as part of the reapportionment process, an approach recommended by the Legislature's Government Operations Committee. Committee Chair Mike Lane said all Commission meetings will be open, and there will be a lot of them by the time the Commission reports back to the Legislature next March. He called the independent commission "a great leap forward for good government." While thanking the committee for its work, Legislator Chock said she has reservations about the Commission's having no political representation, saying her study of the redistricting issue shows some potential pitfalls in a total lack of political representation. She said she would prefer that a few commission members represent political parties, bringing a level of understanding from people directly responsible to the voters. Legislator Nathan Shinagawa stressed the importance of education of Commission members as part of the process, and Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera said it is in the public's best interest that the independent commission be open and transparent, including providing clear and ample public notice for all of its meetings.

The Legislature may offer amendments, once presented a plan by the Commission, and it will ultimately be up to the Legislature to pass a local law adopting a redistricting plan, once the Commission completes its work.
Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440.

Jay Franklin Confirmed as Assessment Director

County Administrator Joe Mareane has appointed Jay Franklin, who has served as Interim Director of Assessment for more than a year, to a permanent appointment as Director of Assessment, an appointment confirmed by the Legislature by unanimous vote.

In offering his appointment, Administrator Mareane had high praise for Franklin, calling him "an exceptional candidate" who possesses a combination of strong technical, organizational, and "customer service" skills—someone able to effectively communicate the complex business of property valuation to a variety of audiences, and is comfortable doing so. For many years, Mareane said, Franklin has contributed to the quality of an assessment department known to be the best in New York State and has shown a capacity for well-considered innovation aimed at preserving assessment quality even during times of fiscal stress.

Many legislators joined in praising Franklin—his professionalism, skill, caring, and service. Legislator Pam Mackesey called him “a remarkable person” and said, “we are fortunate to have him” Franklin’s father, Don Franklin, was a past Tompkins County Director of Assessment.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

County Moves Ahead in Eying Community Justice Space Options

The Legislature, by a vote of 13-2 (Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voted no), directed staff to proceed with investigation of the possibility of relocating the Day Reporting and Family Treatment Court programs, currently located in the Community Justice Center at the Old County Library, to the Human Services Building. The Legislature allocated \$8,000 in contingency funding to support the space analysis, expected to be completed within 60 days. The County Facilities Division, working with an independent architect, has told the Capital Program Review Committee that remodeling may enable those two programs to be relocated to the ground floor of that building, by utilizing space currently occupied by a credit union and the Beverly Livesay Conference Room. The Legislature last year directed staff to investigate alternate locations for programs housed at the Old Library.

Legislator Luz Herrera said her “no” vote reflects ongoing concern about the loss of public meeting space, should the Livesay Conference Room no longer be available; however, she said she is encouraged by language of the resolution that indicates that the study will explore potential opportunities for limited use of Livesay Conference Room at times when the room would not be used by Day Reporting. Legislator Will Burbank said he shares concern about the meeting space issue and cautioned that, while voting in favor of the study, he remains uncertain regarding whether the program relocations are advised.

Contact: Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, Chair of the Capital Program Review Committee, 274-5434 or 272-0584.

New Office for Aging Building Named

Tompkins County’s newest government building, which will house the County Office for the Aging, will be known as the Human Services Annex. The Legislature, by a vote of 13-1, approved the name designation for the building located in the 200 block of W. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street/W. State Street, which formerly housed the Carpet Bazaar store. 1 (Legislator Frank Proto voted no; Legislator Jim Dennis was temporarily out of the room and excused for the vote.) The building is located close to the Tompkins County Human Services Building and, it was noted, County policy calls for County building names to reflect as much as possible building functions and services provided there.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Authorized an agreement with the firm of Barton & Loguidice, PC, of Syracuse, to provide construction support and inspection services for county bridge painting, for a cost not to exceed \$100,000. Through a prior agreement with the State of New York, federal funds will support 80% of the project cost, with local cost not to exceed \$10,000.
- Approved a construction funding agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation for reconstruction of the Newfield Depot Road Bridge over Cayuga Inlet, which makes available \$976,000 in up-front total funding cost, with 80% reimbursement expected through federal sources.
- Awarded We Care Transportation, LLC a three-year contract to provide hauling and disposal services for the Solid Waste Management Division, at a base cost of \$44.66 per ton.
- Awarded AllPro Parking, LLC, of Buffalo, a three-year contract for airport parking, with the option to renew annually for another two years; and renewed for another five years the contract with Barbara Sweeney/The Second Landing to operate the terminal café and gift shop at the airport .

- END -