



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 21, 2011** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Moves to Divest of Home Health Agency

Culminating months of discussion and in-depth review, the Legislature has reached the difficult decision of deciding the future of the Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA), operated by the Health Department. The Legislature, by a vote of 9-6, following nearly two hours of thoughtful discussion, authorized the County to move to divest of the agency, seeking another qualified provider to purchase the Agency license. (Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Dave McKenna, Kathy Luz Herrera, Dooley Kiefer, Pam Mackesey, and Health and Human Services Committee Chair Frank Proto voted no.)

Legislator after legislator commented on the extreme difficulty of the decision—since they value the employees, their dedication, and the excellent care the program provides. But in light of the extreme fiscal constraints the County faces for the year ahead, the majority concluded the County cannot reasonably keep the public service, which currently requires an annual taxpayer subsidy of \$400,000, when study over the past few months has shown another agency can provide quality care, without the County paying for it. Legislator Nathan Shinagawa said that, with another provider preserving the service, he believes the decision actually produces less harm than many other very difficult decisions that will be necessary in the coming budget season. Reminding his colleagues that more than \$3 million in reductions will be needed to meet the Legislature's tax levy goal, Legislator Brian Robison said that the decision must be made "with our heads, rather than our hearts."

Before the final vote, both Legislator Dooley Kiefer and Health and Human Services Chair Frank Proto, advanced substitute proposals that would have retained the CHHA and invested in financial and efficiency improvements advanced by the Health Department to reduce the deficit. Both proposals failed by votes of 6-9. Proto was one who urged that the Legislature consider the value of the license and to give more time to turn things around. Proto, Kiefer, and several others said the decision should be delayed until the budget process, when it could be reviewed with other programs. Both Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Kathy Luz Herrera said they're troubled by divestiture, since services like this are something the County should do.

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson said the matter amounts to "a structural issue we have been handed by the State" through its cut in support. She thanked all who have been involved in a transparent review process over many months which enabled an informed decision, and promised that involvement will continue to ensure that community values are reflected as the process moves forward.

Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875; Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 272-0584; Frank Kruppa, Tompkins County Public Health Director, 274-6674.

Legislature Adopts 2011-2011 TC3 Budget

Following a public hearing, the Legislature, by unanimous vote, adopted the 2011-2012 operating budget for Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). The \$35.9 million budget holds the sponsoring community contribution from Tompkins and Cortland Counties steady at a little over \$4.2 million. Tompkins' share of the sponsor contribution is \$2.6 million (63%), based on a funding formula related to the proportion of students enrolled from each county. Several legislators expressed their thanks to the College for holding the line on the sponsor contribution in a very difficult year. College president Dr. Carl Haynes noted that, while the budget has

increased by 1.5%, due to mandated expenses (such as fringe benefits) over which the College has no control. The College operating budget, he said, has declined by 2.5%. The Cortland County Legislature is scheduled to act on a similar budget resolution June 23.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.

Legislature Urges Governor to Rescind Secure Communities Agreement

The Legislature, by a vote of 13-2, urged Governor Cuomo to rescind the Memorandum of Agreement signed last year with the federal Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency implementing the Secure Communities program in New York, and to not commit the State to any future involvement without further investigation, review, and public debate. (Legislators Brian Robison and Frank Proto voted no.) The Secure Communities program agreement requires New York State and any participating local law enforcement agencies to fingerprint arrestees and immediately share the data with the federal agencies, which, the resolution states, will damage community trust in policing, increase the potential for racial profiling, and "funnel thousands of New Yorkers into immigration detention and deportation without the exercise of due rights." In its action, the Legislature applauds the Governor's suspension of State participation in the program on June 1, as "a move in the right direction," but maintains that firm, permanent action is needed. Legislator Robison, whose background is in law enforcement, said that while he understands the concern, the issue isn't a local issue or objection with our State representatives, but what federal officials do with the information.

Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 266-7579.

Funding Approved to Counter Cut in State Support for Preventive Services Programs

The Legislature, without dissent, allocated nearly \$215,000 from the Contingent Fund to support preventive programs for children and families, making up a more than 70% cut in budgeted State revenue to support Community Option Preventive Services Contracts, programs operated by the Department of Social Services through several human services agencies and which support some staff positions in the County Probation Department. The funding will permit the programs to operate through the end of this year. Questioned about what could happen after year's end, County Administrator Joe Mareane said it would be extremely difficult to sustain the programs without State support.

Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875.

Nina Lindberg Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Lansing High School Senior Class President Nina Lindberg was honored as the latest Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. Nominated for the award by Principal Eric Hartz and senior class advisor Cathy Moseley, Nina is described as "a very accomplished young woman who has demonstrated leadership and commitment to her community throughout her high school career. Nina was recognized for her many academic, co-curricular, and community service accomplishments—in music, art, history, sports, newspaper, and student government. She also entered and won a statewide YouTube competition by creating a video urging Governor Cuomo to stop cuts to local school budgets—all these achievements while maintaining an academic record on the high honor roll. During spring of her junior year, Nina went on a mission trip to help individuals living in poorer conditions in the U.S, and last summer organized and directed a local fundraiser to support Camp Good Days, a camp near Rochester that supports children with cancer and their families—an event that produced a more than \$2,250 donation from the senior class.

In his nomination letter, Hartz states, "Nina is an amazing young person. Her vision for organizing and orchestrating successful events to benefit others and her leadership role in and around the Lansing High School community make her, we feel, very well qualified to be a recipient of the County's Distinguished Youth Award." 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

- Acted again endorsing 20-year retirement benefits for an investigator position in the District Attorney's Office. The vote was 10-5, with Legislators Brian Robison, Mike Lane, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne,

Kathy Luz Herrera, and Frank Proto voting no. The Legislature already asked for the home rule authority under law to extend such benefits under law. Tonight's action endorses the specific bills before the State Legislature.

- By a vote of 12-1 (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera dissenting) authorized the use of up to \$20,000 in contingency funds to support work of the Independent Redistricting Commission as it prepares a recommended reapportionment plan for County legislative districts. The funding is set aside to support staff overtime costs, and purchase of equipment and supplies, if needed.
- Awarded Economy Paving Company of Cortland the construction contract to replace the Newfield Depot Road Bridge (Town of Newfield), for its bid in the amount of \$916,402.70, pending approval and confirmation of funding by the New York State Department of Transportation.
- Adopted an exclusion screening policy, as part of the County Compliance Program. The policy relates to screening to minimize risk of hiring individuals or contracting with business entities that have been involved in adverse governmental actions related to fraud and abuse.

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