



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **October 18, 2011** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Approves Sale of Home Health Agency**

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-4, approved sale of the County's Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) to the firm HCR, based in Rochester, NY, directing the County to enter into a sales agreement, pending State Health Department approval, for the CHHA's Operating Certificate. (Legislators Dooley Kiefer, Pam Mackesey, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Health and Human Services Chair Frank Proto voted no.) The action resolves a more than year-long process to determine the fate of the CHHA. HCR, one of two firms to respond to the County's Request for Proposals, has offered \$850,000 to purchase the agency license. The action also authorizes the County Administrator to enter into a management contract with HCR, under which HCR will operate the CHHA on behalf of the County until the State approves the sale. Costs associated with the management agreement are expected to be more than offset by sale proceeds. The sale to HCR was recommended by the Legislature's Health and Human Services and budget committees.

Legislators Mackesey, Kiefer, and McBean-Clairborne said they do not have a problem with HCR, but voted no because they continue to believe the County should have retained the CHHA. Both McBean-Clairborne and Mackesey expressed displeasure about the effect on agency employees.

Health and Human Services Chair Frank Proto again thanked Health Department staff for their work during a difficult process, and noted that despite his opposition to divestiture, he is tremendously impressed with HCR and the County is now ready to move forward with the process and to work with HCR to see that citizens receive the type of care to which the community is accustomed.

Tompkins County made the difficult decision to divest of the CHHA in light of deep state aid cuts for operation of such agencies, forcing annual expenditure in local dollars of \$400,000 each year.

*Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

#### **Legislature Calls for Open Process for Africana Center Realignment**

By a vote of 13-2, the Legislature urged Cornell University Administrators to engage in an open, inclusive process in implementing plans to restructure the University's Africana Studies and Research Center, as they change it from the cross-disciplinary, intercollegiate unit that it has been since its founding in 1969 to an administrative unit with the College of Arts and Sciences. (Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock dissented.) Legislators in June had declined to support a different resolution concerning Africana, requesting that the restructuring be delayed. The latest resolution, approved tonight, asks that Cornell administrators consider all implications of its realignment and encourages the University to commit itself to an open process with the support of the majority of Center faculty in selecting permanent leadership, and it strongly recommends that Center faculty be included in the process of the restructure. It was noted that members and supporters of Africana have asked for the Legislature's support on this issue.

Legislator Nathan Shinagawa said this resolution, unanimous supported by the budget committee and the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee is forward-looking, and several Legislators who voted against the

prior resolution said they were prepared to support the latest action. Both Legislators Chock and Kiefer said they could not support the resolution, since they do not believe the Legislature should be weighing in on the matter. Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera called it a “historic moment,” maintaining activism always has been, and should continue to be a part of Africana, and the issue is important, not only for the community of color, but for the entire community.

*Contact: Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Tompkins County Workforce and Inclusion Committee, 277-5104.*

### **Legislature Urges State Delay on Gas Drilling Regulations**

The Legislature is calling upon New York State to withdraw new draft regulations on gas drilling through high volume slickwater hydraulic fracturing until the Environmental Impact Statement on such drilling becomes final. Legislators, by unanimous vote, with Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne excused) asked the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) or the Governor to withdraw its newly released hydrofracturing regulations until after the revised Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) is finalized. In its action, the Legislature calls it “imperative” for the revised environmental impact state to become final before regulations are drafted, since that document should affect how such regulations are written, as well as an enormous burden for small communities to review two such lengthy and complex documents at the same time.

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

### **Legislators Express Sadness and Appreciation for Mental Health Commissioner Bob De Luca**

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in honor of Mental Health Commissioner Bob De Luca, who died last weekend after battling serious health challenges for the past year. Legislature Chair Martha Robertson called Mr. De Luca “an inspiration to so many people in so many ways,” someone who led his department in ways that created a compassionate community, devoted his life to helping people in need, and who over the past year “fought on and refused to stop serving.” Health and Human Services Chair Frank Proto called Bob a very special person, an understated individual who was also a talented and passionate writer, musician, and performer, and will be greatly missed. Many legislators expressed fond and moving remembrances of Bob, and recognized him as an amazing and kind man, and who superbly managed a complex organization with grace and caring. As Legislator Nathan Shinagawa noted, “he lived a beautiful life, and he will be missed.”

*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 272-0584; Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875.*

### **Legislature Voice “Sincere Appreciation” for Past Chair Harris B. Dates**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, recognized the “extraordinary contributions” and expressed its “sincere appreciation” to long-time legislator and Chair Harris B. Dates, who died September 26. Mr. Dates, who always called himself just a “Country Boy from Lansing,” served the County for 29 years—first on the old County Board of Supervisor, then became the first Chair of the new Board of Representatives (now the County Legislature) in 1970, serving as Chair for a total of nine years, until his retirement in 1986. The resolution of appreciation, advanced by Legislator Frank Proto, the only member of the current Legislature to serve under Mr. Dates’ leadership, recognizes Mr. Dates as “having a profound and positive impact” on the community, which benefited both county residents and County government.

Among those many accomplishments—establishment of Tompkins Cortland Community College, transition of the old Tompkins County Hospital (now Cayuga Medical Center) to private, non-profit status and its building of new facilities, a new jail, a County library, service on the Tompkins County Area Development board leading to development of the Cornell Research Park, establishing 25 new County departments, laying the groundwork for a new airport terminal, consolidation of Solid Waste facilities, restoring the Tompkins County Arts Council, and work with the Chamber of Commerce.

The resolution notes that Mr. Dates “willingly gave of his time to oversee transition (to the Board of Representatives), while encouraging those serving with him to stay the course, always remaining the gentleman statesman he was, knowing he had the generous support of his family.”

Director of Emergency Response Lee Shurtleff, who served as a high school intern with the Board of Representatives, said he is one of the many Mr. Dates inspired to become involved in public service and county government. He said the resolution does not just memorialize Harris Dates, but serves as a tribute to what public service is all about.

*Contact: Legislator Frank Proto, 277-4875; Lee Shurtleff, 257-3888.*

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Authorized Tompkins County to apply for up to a \$1 million grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) under the “Cleaner, Greener Communities Regional Sustainability Planning Program” on behalf of a consortium of Southern Tier communities and regional planning agencies.
- Heard a presentation from Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger on the County’s new Grant Management Database system.
- Approved payment of more than \$100,000 in Tourism Capital Grants for 2011, funded through County Tourism Program funds, supported entirely by Room Occupancy Tax.
- Scheduled a public hearing for its November 15 meeting for continuation and modifications to Agricultural District No. 1, located on the east side of Cayuga Lake, in the Towns of Lansing, Groton, Dryden, Caroline, and parts of the Towns of Danby and Ithaca.

**- END -**