



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 7, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Shinagawa Elected Legislature Vice Chair

Legislator Nathan Shinagawa (D-District 4/City of Ithaca) will serve as Vice Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature for 2012. With Legislators Frank Proto, Kathy Luz Hererra, Pam Mackesey, and Shinagawa nominated, Mr. Shinagawa was elected on the fifth ballot after four deadlocked votes, after Legislator Proto respectfully withdrew from consideration. The final tally was 8 votes for Shinagawa, 2 for Luz Herrera, and 5 for Mackesey. (Legislators Jim Dennis, Peter Stein, and Will Burbank, who had also been nominated for Vice Chair at the Legislature's last meeting January 17, withdrew their nominations from consideration before tonight's voting began.)

In nominating Shinagawa, Legislator Burbank called Shinagawa "a man of extraordinary energy and intelligence"...someone who is willing to take different positions and "knows about how to disagree without being disagreeable." Seconding the nomination, Legislator Pat Pryor said Shinagawa demonstrates commitment to finding areas of commonality instead of focusing on differences, and would bring the valuable perspective of a younger member of the Legislature and a person of color. Shinagawa said he would work to bring a different way of thinking to senior level discussions; could bring perspective to tough budget decisions; and would strive to rely on the experts on this body and people's strengths, while respecting process.

A member of the Legislature since 2006 and in his second term, Mr. Shinagawa in the past has chaired the Budget and Capital, Health and Human Services, Public Safety, and Government Performance and Workforce Relations Committees. Since 2011, he has served as vice chair of the Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, with specific focus on personnel matters, a role he will continue this year.

Contact: Vice Chair Nathan Shinagawa, 280-7557.

Reflecting on the Year Ahead, Chair Robertson Announces Committee and Chair's Appointments

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson announced her appointments and the Legislature's committee structure for 2012, appointments she noted maintain much consistency with 2011 according to requests of individual legislators. The Legislature retains six Standing Committees (Budget, Capital and Personnel; Government Operations; Health and Human Services; Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality; Facilities and Infrastructure; and Public Safety) and two Special Committees (Capital Plan Review and Broadband). Much of the committee leadership remains the same—Jim Dennis remains Chair of the Budget Committee; Frank Proto continues to lead Health and Human Services, Carol Chock Facilities and Infrastructure, and Peter Stein Public Safety—but there are a few leadership changes. Will Burbank succeeds Pam Mackesey as Chair of the Planning Committee; former Legislature Vice Chair Dooley Kiefer takes over leadership of the Government Operations Committee from Mike Lane, while Lane assumes chairmanship of the special Capital Plan Review Committee, which Chair Robertson had led since its inception. Pat Pryor will continue to lead the Broadband Committee, with Dave McKenna as Vice Chair. Leslyn McBean-Clairborne will continue to chair the county Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee (WDIC). Much of this year's committee membership also remains the same. The committee appointments will take effect as of the end-of-day February 16; until then, 2011 committees will remain in place.

Robertson directed all committees in 2012 to focus on opportunities for shared services, beginning with concentrated discussion at their March committee meetings, and encouraged greater collaboration between committee chairs and vice chairs. Among goals for the year ahead, Robertson said responsibilities of the Capital Plan Review Committee will be important. “This is the year that the Office for the Aging will move out of the courthouse, and it may be the year that we (the Legislature) do, too,” she said. “And I hope this will be the year that we make a decision on the future location of the Community Justice Center, and the future of the Old Library.”

Among responsibilities of other committees, Robertson noted Government Operations will prepare for the once-a-decade County Charter review; asked Health and Human Services to monitor State cuts to agencies and support agencies’ potential sharing of space and administrative functions; and asked Planning and Development to focus on economic development and job creation in closer cooperation with Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD). For Public Safety, Robertson added review of Public Safety Building needs to its responsibilities, and for Facilities and Infrastructure asked the committee to continue to focus on leadership and communication in the Highway division. Presentation of a county employee Climate Survey and development of a county Diversity Plan will be among projects of the budget and personnel committee, and WDIC.

The Chair stated that, while early analysis shows fewer cost-shifts to local government in the proposed State Executive Budget for fiscal 2012, the “mandate relief” promised is not all it is advertised to be—with Medicaid and pension, for example, costing more in the near term, not less. “It’s excellent that the Governor has picked up the message about mandate relief from his own Medicaid Redesign Team, but his proposals will not have the intended effect of reducing property taxes for years to come. Robertson said achieving meaningful mandate relief must be a top priority for counties in 2012. She said county leaders from across the state emerged from their recent conference “with renewed vigor” to make 2012 the year State lawmakers enact meaningful mandate relief.

Chair Robertson called upon the County to make the most of the valuable opportunity presented by the Regional Economic Development Council process. “We can be proud that our Planning Department will receive \$1million to lead an intensive, region-wide sustainability planning effort,” Robertson said. “It is very exciting that applicants in Tompkins County were awarded funding for many housing projects in the first round. In addition the award for the million-dollar revolving loan fund, for energy projects in commercial and institutional facilities, is already changing the landscape locally.” She said the County must take advantage of three additional pots of money received by the Council— for agriculture-based business development, development of shovel-ready sites for industry, and for downtown redevelopment, with a new round of funding promised, applications due in early summer. She has initiated meetings with local representatives to the Council and its working groups to start the process of developing new applications for these funds, and invited legislators are welcome to participate in that exciting process. With its residents’ creativity, energy, and initiative, she said, Tompkins County is poised to lead the way.

“So for 2012, we have a lot to look forward to and much work ahead,” Robertson concluded. “Let’s commit to pulling together as a group, leading when possible and following when necessary, and working together on behalf of our community.”

The Chair’s message and complete list of committee appointments will be posted on the Legislature web site at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/legislature>.

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

Industrial Development Agency Members Appointed

Among the Chair’s appointments, the Legislature approved reappointment of Legislators Nathan Shinagawa, Will Burbank, Jim Dennis, and Martha Robertson to the Tompkins County Industrial Agency, with Robertson to be reappointed as Chair. The vote was 13-1, with Legislator Mike Lane voting no and Legislator Carol Chock excused. Also appointed was Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick as an elected municipal official to serve for a two-year term, that seat formerly occupied by Dan Cogan.

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

Legislature Establishes Management Salaries, Salaries for County Clerk and Sheriff

The Legislature, by a vote of 12-2 (Legislators David McKenna and Frank Proto opposed and Legislator Carol Chock excused) authorized salary and benefit adjustments for County management employees that mirror provisions of Civil Service Employees Association White Collar employees, approved by the Legislature last November, and authorized the necessary transfer of funds to support the adjustments.

Those provisions, covering a five-year period retroactive to 2010, include salary increases of 0% for the calendar years 2010 and 2011; for 2012 a one-time cash payment, that does not add to base wages, of \$1,250 for full-time employees (prorated for part-time employees); and 2% increases in 2013 and 2014. (The 2013 increase is based on 2010 wages.) Prescription drug coverage employee copayments will also increase at beginning in 2013 and again mid-year in 2014—with higher copayments specified for non-generic drugs. As of the beginning of 2012, employees also have access to vision and dental coverage, paying 100% of premium expense through payroll deduction.

By a separate, unanimous vote of those present, Legislators also approved similar adjustments for the elected positions of County Clerk and Sheriff.

The CSEA White Collar agreement, by established policy backed by resolution, also applies to the County's Confidential employees. The Legislature, by unanimous vote (with Legislator Chock excused), also authorized fund transfers for the salary adjustments already approved for White Collar and Confidential employees.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058.

Legislature Authorizes Temporary Move of Sustainability Center Into Human Services Annex

The Legislature, by a vote of 13-1 (Legislator Mike Lane voting no and Legislator Carol Chock excused), authorized the Tompkins County Sustainability Center's temporary use of 1,800 feet of unused space in the new Human Services Annex, located in the 200 block of West Martin Luther King, Jr./State Street. The space is provided as in-kind support for development of the Center, with the Center to bear all other costs. Use of the space would terminate at the time that another county department's need for the space is identified, and the use will be reviewed two years after occupancy. Lane said his experience shows matters such as this can grow and request more support from the County and that, considering fiscal pressures, he does not think this is the time to take on a new program in a space that we have without potential benefit, such as a short-term lease.

Contact: Pamela Mackesey, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-6203; Legislator Michael Lane, 844-8313 or 844-8440; Planning Commissioner Ed Marx, 274-5560,

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Supported continuation of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Ithaca-Tompkins County area. It has been proposed that such organizations serving population smaller than 200,000 be required to justify their status, or eligibility would be eliminated.
- Accepted on behalf of the County Office for the Aging a \$75,000 RESTORE grant to assist low-income seniors to make emergency health and safety-related repairs to their homes, serving the home repair needs of an estimated 35 income-eligible senior households.
- Presented the National Conference on Undergraduate Research at Ithaca College and Mark Wenham of the Turkey Shoot Lacrosse Tournament Tompkins Tourism Partner Awards. The award recognizes individuals, organizations, and associations who through their activities have made an impact on the local economy by attracting visitors to Tompkins County. The award is the first of its kind presented since 2006.

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