



Inclusion Through Diversity

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February 21, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 21, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Urges State to Consolidate State and Federal Primary Dates

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, called upon the Governor and State Legislature to change State election law to permit the federal and New York primary to be held on the same day. (Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Pam Mackesey were excused.) Without such State action to modify the standard September primary date, there will be three primaries in 2012—a presidential primary in April, a federal summer primary, perhaps in June (because of a federal court ruling), and the State primary in September. The Legislature cautions this situation will likely create voter confusion and suppress voter turnout, with a third primary creating an undue burden on county Boards of Election—in Tompkins County a \$35,000 unfunded mandated expense. Should such consolidation of primary dates not be approved, the resolution calls for New York State to absorb the cost of holding the New York primary election.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 257-7453.

Legislature Strongly Opposes Proposed Elimination of Federal Public Transportation Funding

The Legislature, without dissent, registered strong opposition to provisions of proposed federal legislation that would eliminate dedicated federal fuels taxes for public transit. The vote was unanimous among those present, with Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Pam Mackesey excused. Legislators assert that transit fund provisions of the proposed American Energy and Infrastructure Job Financing Act, now before the House of Representatives, would “create long-term uncertainty for public transportation funding for the first time in three decades.” Under the proposed legislation, public transit funding would receive a one-time appropriation, with no funding for public transportation after 2016.

The measure notes that the current funding system has successfully provided highway and transit programs and has allowed Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) and public transit systems across the country to create jobs, including those for the state’s bus manufacturing industry, and that the change would “have dire consequences for the thousands of people who rely on public transit. The action asks members of Congress to reject the bill as currently written, unless the dedicated fuel tax funding for public transportation has been restored.

Contact: Legislator Frank Proto, 277-4875.

TC3 President Delivers Annual “State of the College” Message

In his annual “State of the College” message, Tompkins Cortland Community College president Dr. Carl Haynes told the Legislature that, despite the need to make difficult adjustments as a Community College to the economic challenges of recent years—including a 21% reduction in base aid from the State over three consecutive years—the College is strong and continues to provide a quality experience for its students. The College, he said, is operating with reduced staff and continues to reduce operating expenses through efficiencies including its ongoing “Lean Office” initiatives and with an impressive 40% reduction in energy use over the past eight years. Although enrollment for the current academic year has decreased slightly (about 2.5%) after several years of substantial growth, the president noted that decline is much less than what several other New York community colleges have experienced. And he indicated that with significant growth in the College’s concurrent enrollment program (offered in cooperation with regional school districts) and the Global Connections Initiative, overall enrollment for the year should be flat or up slightly. Dr. Haynes said, “We

remain committed to small classes...and continuing with various initiatives to support the economic and workforce needs of our communities.”

Among many highlights President Haynes described: the successful, grant-funded Kaleidoscope Project to increase student success through use of open educational resources available to students electronically for free, to reduce the burden of textbook costs for at-risk students; growth beyond expectation in the College’s entrepreneurship program, and hosting more than 100 events annually at the College’s athletic and recreation facilities, bringing thousands of participants and spectators to Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

Contact: Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Received from County Administrator Joe Mareane a summary of major accomplishments of County departments during 2011. The summary is posted on the County web site at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/ctyadmin/documents/2011Accomplishments.pdf>.
- Renewed and accepted modifications to county Agricultural District No. 1, located on the east side of Cayuga Lake, encompassing the Towns of Lansing, Groton, Dryden, Caroline, and parts of Danby and Ithaca.
- Approved appropriation of nearly \$60,000 in Department of Homeland Security grant funding awarded last year to the Sheriff’s Office, to be applied toward purchase of replacement mobile computers and equipment in 2012.
- Received a year-end progress report on the County Compliance Program from Deputy County Administrator and County Compliance Officer Paula Younger. The report will be posted on the County’s web site at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/departments/detail.aspx?DeptID=65>.

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