



Inclusion Through Diversity

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **April 3, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Foundation Grant to Support County Broadband Outreach

The Legislature, without dissent, accepted a nearly \$10,000 grant from the Park Foundation to support a two-pronged effort by the Tompkins County Broadband Committee to engage the community and enable informed decisions about improving broadband accessibility throughout Tompkins County. (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused.)

The \$9,878 grant will underwrite the Committee's ongoing series of six Community Engagement Forums, being held in various rural parts of the county, to gather information and public input concerning the need for broadband Internet access, and will fund a formal study of end-user broadband demand, surveying county residents, businesses, and institutions regarding broadband access and affordability.

"We're very pleased that the Park Foundation is willing to support the effort to bring broadband Internet access to every home and business in Tompkins County," notes Legislator Pat Pryor, Chair of the Broadband Committee. "The phone survey will be done by the Survey Research Institute, a widely recognized and well-respected professional survey company affiliated with Cornell University. The data collected will provide another opportunity for the community to be engaged in the broadband expansion effort and will also provide hard data that can be used as we seek funding sources for the implementation step of the project. With highly committed volunteer members on the committee and a strong outreach effort, this project is truly community driven. We hope that anyone who receives a call requesting participation in the survey will take a few minutes to do so. The input is needed and valued."

The Broadband Committee's initial recommendations to the Legislature, handed up in January, may be reviewed online at the Legislature's website at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/legislature/Broadband/Broadband%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

Future Broadband Community Engagement Forums are scheduled for April 19 at the Ulysses Town Hall and May 9 at the Newfield Town Hall.

Contact: Legislator Patricia Pryor, Chair of the Broadband Committee, 319-0507

Hearing Conducted on Community Development Needs

The Legislature asked for public comment regarding county needs and priorities and possible community development projects to be considered for support as part of the 2012 New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal Community Development Block Grant Program. John Spence, director of Better Housing for Tompkins County, stated his agency once again desires to partner with Tompkins County to apply for support to continue the Tompkins County Home Ownership program, which provides assistance for first-time homebuyers. Legislator Pam Mackesey, who serves on the program board, praised it as a "wonderful" program and said it is "incredibly important that this program be supported to every extent that it can be."

Legislator Mike Lane noted that the County has dedicated its grant funding to home ownership over the past 20 years and suggested that the county look carefully each year at how to focus the purpose of this funding, perhaps for some alternate public purpose.

Contact: Planning Commissioner Ed Marx, 274-5560.

Among other actions,

- The Legislature approved a budget transfer in the amount of \$35,000 from the Highway Fund Balance to support personnel services of an engineering firm (LaBella Associates) to assist in implementation of the County's Road Preservation Law.
- Legislature Chair Martha Robertson proclaimed April 2012 Fair Housing Month, beginning a year-long commemoration of the United States Fair Housing Law in Tompkins County, noting the Legislature's commitment to address discrimination in our community, to support programs to educate the public about the right to equal housing opportunities, and to plan efforts in partnership with other organizations to help assure every American of the right to fair housing.
- Chair Robertson also proclaimed the week of April 8-14, 2012 as Public Safety Telecommunications Week in Tompkins County, honoring the Public Safety Telecommunicators at the Tompkins County Department of Emergency Response who, through their diligence and professionalism, keep our County and citizens safe.

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