



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **July 17, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves Aquatic Invasive Species Law

The Legislature, after more than an hour of discussion, approved a new Local Law to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, such as Hydrilla, in Tompkins County. The final approval vote was 12-1, with Legislator Dooley Kiefer voting no. (Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera and Nathan Shinagawa were excused.)

The new Local Law prohibits anyone from launching, hauling, or attempting to enter or exit a watercraft from a water body with any plant or animal material visible to the eye in or attached to the watercraft. It also prohibits transportation into or within the county with such material visible or attached to such a craft, and bars anyone from introducing any invasive aquatic material into any body of water. The law requires that any such material removed from watercraft must be discarded away from the shoreline, in a manner that prevents the items from reentering a body of water.

Much of the discussion related to penalties for violating the Law. The Law states that anyone who engages in any activity prohibited by the law will be subject to a violation under law and a maximum fine of \$250.00, if convicted. Citing the seriousness of the issue, Legislator Pat Pryor proposed an amendment that would have escalated repeat offenses to the level of a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000. After discussion, the amendment failed by a 3-10 vote, Legislators Pryor, Pam Mackesey, and Dooley Kiefer voting in favor. Several Legislators suggested setting infractions at the misdemeanor level now could potentially be counterproductive and lead to problems with enforcement and posing a considerable burden on public safety staff.

Legislators, by a 10-3 vote, also added dredging, as approved by the State Department of Environmental Conservation or another appropriate regulatory agency, to exceptions to prohibitions under the Local Law. Legislators were told some concern had recently been expressed by the City of Ithaca that the law, as written, could interfere with plans to dredge the Cayuga Inlet. Legislators Kiefer, Mackesey, and Carol Chock did not support that addition—Kiefer maintaining that change was unnecessary and not timely, and making it clear the addition of that provision was the sole reason she did not vote to support the Local Law.

Legislator Will Burbank, Chair of the Legislature's Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, thanked his fellow Legislators for giving attention to the invasive species law to enable it to get in place this season. Mr. Burbank also thanked staff and members of the Hydrilla task force for their advice and assistance in preparing this important Local Law.

Contact: Will Burbank, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee 272-7555

Bids Awarded for Human Services Annex Renovation

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, awarded construction contracts for the renovation of the Human Services Annex, located in the 200 block of Ithaca's West Martin Luther King, Jr./State Street, new home for the County Office for the Aging. (Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera and Nathan Shinagawa were excused.) Contracts were awarded to F.E. Jones Construction, Inc., of Binghamton, as General Contractor; Climate Control Technologies, Inc., of Endwell, Mechanical Contractor; Richardson Brothers of Ithaca, Electrical Contractor; and Ackerman Plumbing, Inc., Plumbing Contractor, for a total contract cost of \$1,092,444.

Capital Program Review Committee Chair Mike Lane reported that, although initial bids had come in about \$200,000 over budget, modification in some project features have brought the cost down to a level where the County can accept the bids, and avoid the need to re-bid or delay the start of construction. Such delays would prevent the relocation of the Office for the Aging from the County Courthouse by the end of the year. Lane said the Committee will continue to work with staff and architects to examine the project plan, and may come back to the Legislature at a later time, to ask for contingency funding for the project, as needed.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Capital Plan Review Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440.

Tourism Capital Grant Awarded for Emerald Necklace Enhancement Project

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, awarded a \$15,000 Tourism Capital Grant to a project, sponsored by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, to enhance access to a portion of the Emerald Necklace greenway. (Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera and Nathan Shinagawa were excused.) The Emerald Necklace is a crescent of forest lands that stretch in an arc around the City of Ithaca, through Schuyler, Seneca, Tompkins, and Tioga Counties, from the Finger Lakes Natural Forest to Hammond Hill State Forest. The grant, supported entirely through County Room Occupancy Tax funds, will be used primarily to help support construction of an elevated boardwalk above a wetland ecosystem, providing access and connection between the Yellow Barn and Hammond Hill State Forests in Dryden, linking two elements of the Emerald Necklace. The Strategic Tourism Planning Board also has recommended award of another \$5,000 in grant funds in 2013.

Contact: Will Burbank, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee 272-7555.

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Awarded G. DeVincentis & Son Construction Company, Inc., of Binghamton, the construction contract to replace the West Seneca Road Bridge over Boardman Creek in the Town of Ulysses for the firm's bid of \$689,160, pending approval and confirmation of funding by the New York State Department of Transportation. The Legislature also authorized a contract with C&S Engineers, Inc., of Syracuse, of an amount not to exceed \$122,752, for bridge construction inspection and supervision services related to the project. The \$845,000 project is 80% supported by Federal aid, with the Town of Ulysses contributing 4% of project cost. Tompkins County's share is 16% (\$135,200).
- Adopted a new Local Law to amend Article 9 of the County Charter related to the Department of Health, reflecting the closure of the County's Certified Home Health Agency, and the operation of a Licensed Home Care Services Agency, and approved amended bylaws for the County Board of Health to reflect current procedures.
- Authorized the County to file an application for a State Grant-Aid for Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling that would fund up to half of the cost of capital improvements to the County's Solid Waste and Recycling Center—\$1.3 million of the project's \$2.6 million cost—and to sign the associated contract with the State of New York.
- Authorized acceptance of a grant from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services of a \$40,000 grant to the Department of Social Services (no local match) to develop and implement a program to identify, investigate, and prosecute instances of day care fraud.
- Authorized the County to submit a \$750,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to continue the County's Homeownership Program.
- Approved a contract with the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District for stream corridor and flood hazard mitigation program projects, at an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for 2012.

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