



Inclusion Through Diversity

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September 18, 2012
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the September 18, 2012 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Urges State Ban on Synthetic Drugs

The Legislature is urging New York State to ban the manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of dangerous unregulated synthetic drugs. The vote was 11-3, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer, Will Burbank and Carol Chock voting no and Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera excused.

Maintaining that the sale, use, and abuse of these synthetic “designer drugs” such as those commonly known as “bath salts,” pose “a significant and immediate public health threat and danger to public safety,” the Legislature urged the State Legislature and Governor to “pass and sign further meaningful and effective legislation criminalizing manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of these substances, and their future derivatives, by anyone of any age in New York State with the intent of protecting the health and safety of all citizens of New York State.” The action came upon the recommendation of the County Board of Health and the Legislature’s Health and Human Services Committee. The Legislature applauds State Health officials for amending the State sanitary Code banning such substances, calling that an important first step, but maintains that State legislation must be passed to ban these dangerous substances.

Much of the debate during more than half-an-hour of discussion related to the appropriate wording and terms that should be used to describe the substances—phenethylamines, synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones. Legislator Chock expressed concern that, with the drug trade creating new synthetic substances all the time, legislation such as this merely puts a band-aid on the issue, rather than getting at the root of the problem, the need to create synthetic substances. Several Legislators stressed that what is truly important is for the Legislature wants to urge the State to act to address this serious problem through legislation. After the vote, Sheriff Ken Lansing pointed out that the frustration in discussion mirrors that law enforcement agencies have experienced in dealing with this problem.

Contact: Frank Proto, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-4875; Legislator Peter Stein, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 266-7579; Sheriff Ken Lansing, 257-1345.

Legislature Authorizes Development Corporation Bonding for Kendal Refinance

The Legislature by a 12-2 vote (Legislators Brian Robison and Jim Dennis voted no; Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused) authorized the Tompkins County Development Corporation to issue up to \$10 million of tax-exempt revenue bonds for Kendal at Ithaca, Inc. The bonding refinances bonds initially issued by the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency for the acquisition and construction of Kendal’s life care community in the Village of Cayuga Heights in 1994. The bonds issued by the Development Corporation will not be an obligation of the County or the Development Corporation and will be issued on the full faith and credit of the applicant. State legislation requires the County Legislature to approve issuance of the bonds.

Contact: Will Burbank, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee 272-7555; Heather Filiberto, Tompkins County Area Development, 273-0005.

County Participation in Regional Interoperable Communication Alliance Approved

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused) authorized the County, through the Department of Emergency Response, to partner with seven other counties in the region through the Southern

Tier East Emergency State Interoperable Communication Alliance, which seeks to develop a common communications network and obtain funding to support it.

Emergency Response Director Lee Shurtleff told Legislators such collaboration is critical, to build seamless communication with agencies in other counties to protect the public and to access outside funding needed to build coordinated systems to make that happen. The need for counties to cooperate and establish such networks, he said, is encouraged by the federal government through federal and state grant programs, and recognized as an important element in planning interoperable communications systems.

Recalling the County's past experience with the Statewide Wireless Network interoperability program, where significant state funding for the County public safety communications system was promised, then never materialized, several Legislators asked whether could be some future cost for the County arising from the partnership. Shurtleff characterized the probability, over time, of receiving funding through this effort as quite high, saying that the approach now appears to be to begin at the local level and integrate upward. Legislator Brian Robison pointed out that the Legislature's action simply authorizes discussions with other participating counties to begin the alliance, with any future funding issues up to the Legislature to decide at that time.

In a separate action, the Legislature, by unanimous vote of those present, also authorized the County to accept nearly \$250,000 in State Homeland Security Grants on behalf of the Department of Emergency Response, to support procurement and training expense related to the new Computer Aided Dispatch/mobile data/records management system.

Contact: Lee Shurtleff, Director of Emergency Response, 257-3888; Legislator Peter Stein, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 266-7579.

Capital Reserve Funds Approved for Likens Property Conservation Easement

The Legislature approved appropriation of funding from the Capital Reserve Fund for National, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection in the amount of \$13,250 to secure a conservation easement for the Likens property, located in the Town of Caroline, in collaboration with the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Approval came by unanimous vote, with Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera excused. The 250-acre parcel is located in the Forestlands Natural Features Focus Area designated in the County's Comprehensive Plan, adjacent to the Shindagin Hollow State Forest, near the Finger Lakes Trail, and within the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt.

Contact: Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability, 274-5560; Burbank, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee 272-7555.

Among other business, the Legislature

- Accepted a two-year \$75,000 grant from the federal Drug-Free Communities Support Program to the County Youth Services Department, to enable the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth to mentor the Schuyler County Commission on Underage Drinking and Drugs, to reduce underage youth substance use and abuse within the Finger Lakes region.
- Allocated \$30,000 from the contingent fund to support one-time expense related to transfer from a paper to electronic filing system in the Personnel Department.
- Heard a presentation from Ithaca Town Supervisor Herb Engman about development of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

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