



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **November 7, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Authorizes Energy-Saving Public Safety Building Improvements Through Low-Interest Stimulus Financing**

The Legislature took the necessary steps to make needed energy-saving improvements to the County's Public Safety Building, funded through low-interest energy conservation bonds allocated as part of the Federal stimulus program.

Legislators by a vote of 12-1 (Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voted no, and Legislators Carol Chock and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused) authorized the County to enter into an energy performance contract with Johnson Controls, Inc. of Syracuse to perform the deferred maintenance and energy efficiency improvements, at an estimated cost of more than \$1.3 million, to be funded largely through Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds. Tompkins County was allocated just over \$1 million in the zero-interest bonds as part of the 2009 federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The improvements will include roof, boiler, heat pump, and window replacement, and retrofitting of exterior lighting expected to reduce annual Greenhouse Gas emissions by 39.25 metric tons and save nearly \$15,000 in energy costs. Under the energy performance contract, Johnson Controls will monitor the energy savings from the improvements, as it has under the energy performance contract for past County building improvements. The action also includes the project in the five-year Capital Plan.

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, also authorized the issuance of up to \$1.4 million in serial bonds and notes to support the project. (Legislators Carol Chock and Carol Chock were excused.) The New York State Association of Counties is coordinating joint issuance of the Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds by multiple counties in New York State. The Legislature's action authorizes the County to be a member of the bond pool. *Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Dooley Kiefer, Vice Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 257-7453.*

#### **Legislature Requests Continued Sales Tax Authorization**

In the first of a series of procedural actions that will be necessary, the Legislature, by a vote of 12-1 (with Legislator Frank Proto voting no and Legislators Carol Chock, Kathy Luz Herrera excused), requested the County's State legislative delegation to sponsor and support legislation to extend the County's additional one percent sales tax rate in Tompkins County, which expires at the end of next year, an authorization requested and received since 1991. Under state law, the authorization, beyond the 3% authorization possessed by counties by law, must be approved by the Legislature every two years. The measure notes that should the additional one percent authority expire, it would require a more than \$10 million reduction in County expenditures or a 24% increase in County property tax rates, and would also significantly affect other county municipalities. The current tax authority expires as of November 30, 2013. Legislator Proto noted that this would be extension of what was approved as a "temporary" measure more than two decades ago.

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

#### **Legislature Approves Amendment for Solar Exemptions for Commercial Projects**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, amended a resolution passed in 1966, to exempt solar installations to commercial projects from local sales and use taxes, under the New York State tax law. (Legislators Carol

Chock and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused.) The exemption is similar to that currently in effect for residential installations of solar panels. The exemption will take effect as of March 1, 2013. Legislators were told there is no estimate of the amount of sales tax revenue that will be affected by the new exemption, but that it is not expected to be significant.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

Other actions:

- County Administrator Joe Mareane reported that the County has received a call from the State regarding highway equipment and operators available to potentially handle debris removal downstate in the wake of flooding from Storm Sandy last week, and said the County has identified resources that could be available for deployment there without compromising local needs, if mobilized by the State. The County has indicated its willingness and ability to assist and is awaiting direction from the State.
- Caroline Town Supervisor Don Barber urged the Legislature to seriously consider including in the 2013 County Budget \$48,000 in over-target spending for Youth Services programs. Mr. Barber maintained such funding is significant to enable Youth Services to continue to fulfill its mission and, most important, to make a difference for youth, so that they can learn life skills to become productive members of society.
- Legislators recognized their colleague Nathan Shinagawa for the honor he brought to the Legislature through his campaign to represent the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District in Congress. Legislator Mike Lane noted that Shinagawa is the latest in a number of members over the years who have sought higher office and thanked him for once again “bringing honor to us as a Legislature.” Chair Martha Robertson said Shinagawa “made Tompkins County proud.”
- The Legislature authorized the Highway Division to purchase a used temporary bridge structure, known as a “Bailey Bridge,” for \$55,000, funds available in the Highway Fund Balance from prior years’ rollover. The 90-foot span can be used as a temporary bridge and will reduce the need for detours while an existing bridge is closed for repair or replacement.
- A supplemental design services agreement was approved in the amount of \$22,000 with Fisher Associates for the Hanshaw Road reconstruction project.
- The Legislature approved the transfer of more than \$146,000 in state and federal emergency management reimbursement funding into Highway Division accounts, reflecting work performed to repair damage from the flooding in September of last year.

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