



Inclusion Through Diversity

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December 4, 2012  
TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **December 4, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Calls for More Time for Review of Revised Hydrofracking Regulations**

The Legislature urges that the public comment period on revised State regulations on high volume hydraulic fracturing be extended to at least 90 days, now that the New York State Department of Environmental (DEC) has extended its rulemaking process to permit the State Commissioner of Health to complete its review of potential public health aspects. The vote was unanimous, with Legislators Carol Chock, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Nathan Shinagawa excused. The Legislature's action calls the 30-day public comment period the DEC specifies "completely inadequate for a thoughtful and thorough public review of the released documents," especially during the time of major religious and national holidays. Because of Open Meeting Law advance notice requirements, the measure notes that the 30-day comment period essentially eliminates or severely limits the ability of regulatory or advisory organizations, such as the Tompkins County Board of Health, to review and issue comments.

As well as an extension of the comment period to at least 90 days, the Legislature calls upon the DEC to allow public comment on results of the independent review of potential public health impacts during that 90-day period, and states that no final decision on whether to allow fracking in New York State should be made without full consideration of the public comment on the regulations, the health impact review, and the revised draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement.

The resolution was member-filed by Legislator Frank Proto, on advisement of the Health and Human Services Committee. Legislator Dooley Kiefer also advanced an alternate version with some wording changes, some of which were incorporated into the version that was adopted.

*Contact: Legislator Frank Prot, 277-4875.*

#### **Legislature Briefed on Update to Capital Plan**

The Legislature heard a presentation from Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability Ed Marx regarding the update to the County's 20-Year Capital Plan, prior to a scheduled adoption vote at the next Legislature meeting. Commissioner Marx noted that major changes since the Plan's initial adoption in 2006 affect the Capital Plan—including completion of a new Health Department facility; mandated relocation of the Office for the Aging and the Legislature; digitization of County records eliminating the need for a Records Center; lack of a business case for a new Center of Government building; and less costly alternatives to a new Public Safety Building emerging.

As an alternative to the 1% annual levy increase for capital that the Plan originally specified, which could not be sustained during the economic crisis, Marx said the updated investment target would set a goal of a 0.75% increase in the levy in 2014 and 2015 (providing approximately \$328,000 in additional support each year), followed by a goal of a 0.50% levy increase thereafter (generating approximately \$219,000 in additional annual support thereafter).

The \$91.2 million Plan, a combination of specific projects and ongoing maintenance, includes as some of its early elements the first phase of County Facilities capital maintenance (\$2.4 million) and Legislature Relocation (\$1 million) for 2013; Malloryville Road, Waterburg Road, Game Farm Road, and Seneca Road bridge projects

(over \$4 million total) through 2013; the first four-year phase of ongoing Highway capital maintenance beginning in 2014 (\$1.2 million each year); and support for TC3, the County Library, and TCAT, beginning with \$0.9 million for TC3 in 2013. The biggest single project in the Plan would be a possible rebuild of the Public Safety Building, projected at \$25 million, but which would not occur until 2024. The Plan is scheduled for review every five years. County Administrator Joe Mareane said the recommended approach would come very close to achieving a break-even point over the first five years.

“This is a plan, a roadmap of how we can get to where we need to be” noted Capital Plan Review Committee chair Mike Lane. “It is biting the bullet starting next year....I think this is a responsible thing to do...and I think it will make us a stronger County, and I hope it will support our bond rating.”

*Contact: Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability, 274-5560; Michael Lane, Chair, Capital Plan Review Committee, 844-8313 or 844-8440.*

### **Legislators Hear Highlights of Older Adults Needs Assessment**

Director Lisa Holmes reported on the County Office for the Aging 2012 Needs Assessment of Persons Age 60+, a wide-ranging assessment focusing on factors such as demographics, employment, housing, transportation, isolation, activities and volunteering, technology and information sources, health, food and nutrition, caregiving, awareness of services, and health coverage and prescriptions. Director Holmes noted that the county’s population of 60 or over has increased by 34% since the last assessment was conducted in 2004, with an 89% increase in “younger seniors” aged 60-64, attributed largely to the first wave of “baby boomers” entering this age group, a trend that she said could be seen throughout the study results. Among the elements: the highest-ever percentage of respondents employed (29%); a high rate of home ownership, with about a third indicating they need major home repairs; for transportation, 88% reported driving themselves; and regarding technology, 88% with a computer and internet access in the home, and 80% having both a land line and a cell phone.

“This looks like and is a rosy pictures of Tompkins County,” said Director Holmes. She said all must remember, however, that there are seniors in high age groups with needs to be addressed, and since the younger seniors will be aging through the ranks in the years to come, and that it is very important to continue planning with an eye to the future.

*Contact: Lisa Holmes, Director, Tompkins County Office for the Aging, 274-5482.*

Among other business:

- Legislature Chair Martha Robertson proclaimed December 6 as “Lifelong Day in Tompkins County,” on the occasion of the organization’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Acknowledging the many contributions of Lifelong over the past half-century, the proclamation “urge(s) every citizen to take time...to honor our older adults and the professionals, family members, and volunteers who care for many of them,” noting that “recognition and involvement of older Americans can enrich our entire community’s quality of life.”
- Chair Robertson also proclaimed December 6 as “Dr. Rob Mackenzie Day in Tompkins County,” expressing appreciation and gratitude” to Dr. Mackenzie on the occasion of his retirement after a decade as President and CEO of Cayuga Medical Center “for his enormous contributions to the community and the quality of health care it enjoys.”
- The Legislature approved a number of year-end resolutions, including approving Thursday, January 3 as the date of the Legislature’s 2013 organizational meeting.
- The Legislature thanked outgoing Tompkins County Poet Laureate Gail Holst-Warhaft, who is nearly the end of her two-year term. She said it has been a “great pleasure” to serve, in part working on poetry with immigrants to the County and working with students, relating poetry and art to water.

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