



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
January 3, 2013  
TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **January 3, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Robertson Elected to Fourth Year as Legislature Chair; Lane Elected Vice Chair**

The Legislature has reelected Martha Robertson to lead the Legislature during 2013 and elected Michael Lane to serve in the position of Vice Chair. The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are filled each year by majority votes of members of the Legislature.

Incumbent Robertson (D – District 13/Western Dryden) and Lane (D – District 14/Eastern Dryden) were nominated for Chair at the Legislature’s 2013 organizational meeting, as was Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D-City of Ithaca) , who respectfully declined in view of family and work commitments.

Nine Legislators voted for Robertson, to six for Lane. Voting for Robertson were Legislators Frank Proto, Carol Chock, Will Burbank, Brian Robison, Nate Shinagawa, Jim Dennis, Peter Stein, Pat Pryor, and Ms. Robertson. Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Dave McKenna, Pam Mackesey, Dooley Kiefer, and Mr. Lane voted for Lane.

Robertson was nominated for Chair by Legislator Shinagawa, praising Robertson as a as an effective leader, both internally and externally who has served as a guiding force, empowering legislators during the year, and who has a strong vision for the future. In nominating Lane, Legislator Mackesey noted his breadth and depth of experience in 15 years on the Legislature, where he has chaired at least 10 committees, where he has demonstrated superb leadership, as one who gets the job done and works with all kinds of people. Legislator Luz Herrera nominated McBean-Clairborne, praising her “collaborative spirit that is both inclusive and smart” and said she serves as “a terrific role model.” Both Robertson and Lane included the issues of economic development and the need to continue to work hard to build and support the principles of diversity and inclusion in the County workforce among their goals for the year ahead.

Following the vote for Chair, Legislator Chock nominated Legislator Lane for Vice Chair. Mr. Lane, who has nine years of past experience in the position of Vice Chair, had previously indicated he was not interested in serving in that position again, however, after nomination, indicated he would be accept the position of Vice Chair if his colleagues want it, in the interest of his commitment to effective teamwork.

Chair Robertson expects to announce 2013 committee assignments at the Legislature’s next meeting January 15. *Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 272-0584; Michael Lane, Vice Chair, 844-8313 or 844-8440.*

#### **Legislature Sets Next-Term Legislator Salaries**

The Legislature, after more than an hour of discussion, set legislator salaries at for the next four-year legislative term, which begins as of the beginning of 2014. With three alternate proposals before them, Legislators opted to approve a one-time, 2% increase, raising the salaries by \$375, to \$19,075, to apply to each of the four years of the 2014-2017 legislative term, that proposal advanced by Legislator Mike Lane, although that approach had not been recommended by committee. Alternate potential options would have kept the salary level at the current \$18,700 or to increase it to \$20,000. The Chair of the Legislature receives one-and-a-half times the standard

legislator salary. Budget chair Jim Dennis again pointed out that, even with the slight increase, the total amount spent will be less, with the decrease from 15 to 14 legislators next term.

The Legislature acts on increases for the next term before the new term begins and strives to set the salary level early enough so that potential candidates have the information as they consider whether to seek to serve. There was much discussion concerning whether wording could, or should be added, to formally indicate that the Legislature recognizes its ability to reduce salaries during the course of the term—Legislator Frank Proto maintained that would be an issue of fairness, should departments be required to cut their budgets. Including such wording was not approved, with several stressing the importance of setting a salary level to maximize the number of citizens able to serve and to enable them to plan their finances.

*Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 257-7453; Legislator Michael Lane, 844-8313 or 844-8440; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058.*

### **Legislature Approves Budget Transfer in Support of Gun Buy-Back Program**

Approving a Sheriff's Office budget transfer, the Legislature voiced its official support of a local voluntary gun buy-back program, conducted in cooperation with the City of Ithaca, which will take place Saturday, January 5. The action, approved by unanimous vote, authorizes the transfer of up to \$10,000 in seized asset forfeiture funds to fund costs related to the buy-back program. In light of recent tragedies, including the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, CT, the measure notes that the Legislature "strongly supports the establishment of effective nationwide solutions that recognize and address the consequences of ready access to firearms" and that it supports the gun buy-back initiative that is "intended to diminish the number of working firearms within the county and thereby diminish the possibility of gun-related death or injury." Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera expressed some concern that the measure may not have been properly vetted through the Legislature. Many legislators agreed that while this effort is a positive step, it is only one element of what should be approached as a well thought-out, comprehensive program. The measure was advanced by Legislator Peter Stein, with informal endorsement by the Public Safety Committee, which he chairs.

*Contact: Legislator Peter Stein, 266-7579.*

#### Other business:

- County Administrator Joe Mareane reported on the two-year arbitration award that has been issued related to the bargaining agreement between the County and the Tompkins County Deputy Sheriff's Association. In part, the arbitrator awarded salary increases of 2.9% for each of two years for all of the union's uniformed personnel. The agreement covers the period of March 2008-February 2010.
- The Legislature passed, by a 9-4 vote, a sense of the body resolution expressing its position on rules of the U.S. Senate and the practice of filibuster. The resolution, advanced by Legislator Dooley Kiefer, states that "it is the sense of the County Legislature that all Americans will be better served by the U.S. Senate to be able once again to pass legislation by a simple majority vote rather than a supermajority, and to do so by returning to use of filibuster in the traditional manner (for example, as exercised by the late Senator Robert Byrd), where the person invoking the filibuster be publicly identified and has to actually speak to the body as long as he or she chooses."

**- END -**