



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the April 16, 2013 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Old Courthouse Renamed in Honor of Governor Daniel Tompkins

The Legislature approved the permanent renaming of the Old Tompkins County Courthouse as the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, in honor of Governor Tompkins, who served as Governor of New York State from 1807-1817. (The vote was 13-1, with Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no and Legislator Brian Robison excused.) Tompkins County was formed in 1817 by the New York State Legislature, named in honor of Governor Tompkins, who left the governorship that year to become Vice President of the United States.

The historic Tompkins Building, built in 1854 to replace the wooden courthouse erected on its site at the time the county was founded, is the oldest Gothic Revival courthouse in New York State and will become the home of the Tompkins County Legislature later this year. It has been known as the Old Courthouse since 1931.

County Historian Carol Kammen briefed the Legislature on Governor Tompkins and his role in sponsoring and signing into law the legislation that forever abolished slavery in New York State. She said naming the building in honor of Governor Tompkins will provide an opportunity for education on these issues. Legislator Mike Lane also noted Governor Tompkins' other contributions, including his leadership in marshaling and funding the New York State Militia during the War of 1812, in compliance with federal directives, which secured the northern and western frontiers of our state and nation.

A few legislators, including Legislator McBean-Clairborne, expressed concern that there be an opportunity for public input into the future naming of such buildings. Legislator Carol Chock inquired about how the slaves in the county who were emancipated at that time could be recognized. Chair Martha Robertson directed that the Capital Plan Review Committee develop an appropriate recognition plan related to the building designation, and applauded committee chair Lane for taking the initiative to propose naming of the building in honor of Governor Tompkins.

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

Legislature Delays Action County Code of Ethics

After discussion, the Legislature delayed action on a proposed new Local Law that would amend Chapter 32 of the Tompkins County Code: the Code of Ethics. Legislators voted 10-4 to delay consideration until the Legislature's June 18 meeting, to ensure the opportunity for staff input. (Legislators Frank Proto, Dave McKenna, Carol Chock, and Dooley Kiefer voted no; Legislator Brian Robison was excused.)

The Code has been reviewed and revised, as recommended, by the County's Ethics Advisory Board and the Legislature's Government Operations Committee, following a 2010 ethics audit by the New York State Comptroller, and has been the focus of study for nearly two years. No comments about the proposed new law were registered at a public hearing before the Legislature March 19. Government Operations Chair Pat Pryor said that she sees the delay in action important, since the revised Code affects County staff, and in light of potentially inconsistent language between the new code and the County's administrative policy regarding standards of conduct.

Contact: Patricia Pryor, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 319-0507; Legislator Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Tompkins County Ethics Advisory Board, 257-7453.

Kai Haskins Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Kai Haskins, of Enfield, an 11th grade student at New Roots Charter School is honored as Tompkins County Distinguished Youth for April. Described as an environmental activist concerned with issues of climate change and the environmental impact of our energy choices locally, Kai is described by principal Tina Nilsen-Hodges as someone who is “generous in bringing his considerable talents to service to his school and the wider Tompkins County community”—an actor who uses his gifts in communication and drama to increase community awareness by hydraulic fracturing. He is praised as an excellent student who also strives for enriching experiences outside the classroom. Called a natural leader among his classmates, whose leadership impacts the quality of the school environment, Kai is described as someone “whose maturity and leadership have a ripple-effect throughout the classroom, making it easy for others to get involved.” The Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by A&B Awards and Engraving, Bangs Ambulance Service, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Among other business, the Legislature

- Observed a moment of silence in honor and memory of the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing April 15th. Chair Martha Robertson also commended the courageous actions of emergency responders and others who ran toward the danger, instead of away from it, to aid the victims.
- Awarded nearly \$400,000 in Tompkins County tourism grants, funded entirely through county room occupancy tax, as recommended by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board.
- Approved the appropriation of Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funds to implement the 2013-2014 operating budget of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC), as approved by the Council last month, and affirmed the Council’s recommendation to increase Staff Director Fernando de Aragon’s annual salary by 2%, to \$80,085, effective retroactively to January 1, 2013.

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