



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 18, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Hanshaw Road Reconstruction Contract Awarded

The Legislature awarded the construction contract for the long-planned Hanshaw Road reconstruction project in the Town of Ithaca. The Legislature awarded the contract to Suit-Kote Corporation of Cortland for its base bid of just under \$3.5 million, pending approval by the New York State Department of Transportation. Suit-Kote's bid, the lowest of nine bids submitted, is about \$1.2 million less than the project budget. The project, first approved by the Legislature in 2005, will reconstruct 1.5 miles of Hanshaw Road, between Pleasant Grove Road and Sapsucker Woods Road. The project includes new drainage facilities and a paved walkway on the north side of the road that will connect to sidewalks at Community Corners.

The final vote was unanimous (Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was excused), but considerable discussion preceded that vote concerning the matter of how the issue of colored shoulders would be handled as part of the project. Inclusion of colored shoulders had been separated out as an alternate, but bids for that work came in at over \$1 million because of State specifications, greatly exceeding the engineer's estimate of about \$156,000, and award of the alternate was not recommended by the Highway Division. Language added by the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee would have directed the Highway Director and staff to work with the low bidder to investigate whether colored asphalt shoulders could be achieved at a more reasonable cost. After much debate, an amendment, advanced by Legislator Jim Dennis, to strike that language was approved by an 8-6 margin, with Legislators Dennis, Frank Proto, Brian Robison, Nate Shinagawa, Mike Lane, Pat Pryor, Dave McKenna, and F&I Chair Peter Stein voting to remove the language.

In discussion, Legislator Dooley Kiefer maintained that residents in the area have expected colored shoulders as part of the project, and Legislator Carol Chock said, with the feature discussed, the County needed to know more and to address the discrepancy. Chair Stein said the formal instruction was not needed, and Legislator Pat Pryor expressed concern that the Legislature could be setting an expectation to include colored shoulders in future highway projects without formal guidelines. Citing data from the County's experiment with colored shoulders on Ellis Hollow Road that showed negligible effect on traffic speed, County Administrator Joe Mareane observed that colored shoulders don't seem an effective way to slow traffic, and he cautioned against asking the State to change its specifications on the issue. Even without formal direction, Highway Director Jeff Smith indicated he and his staff would discuss the issue with the contractor.

In accordance with State requirements, the County will initially pay all construction costs from the Capital Budget, then will be reimbursed by other partners. 80% is reimbursable by federal funds and up to 15% by the State; Cornell University, the Town of Ithaca, and the Village of Cayuga Heights will also contribute to support certain elements of the project.

Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 266-7579; Highway Director Jeffrey Smith, 274-0300.

Legislature Adopts Local Law on Property Tax Cap

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, adopted a Local Law that preserves the Legislature's option to override the State's property tax cap, if that is determined to be necessary in adopting the 2014 County budget. (Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Peter Stein were excused.) The action does not mean that the Legislature will

override the cap, but it provides flexibility to exceed the cap if deemed necessary, and it ensures that any State recalculation of the limit will not make the County inadvertently out of compliance. No one commented on the issue at a public hearing held at the Legislature's last meeting two weeks ago.

Budget committee chair Jim Dennis noted that the Legislature authorized the County Administrator set a 4% tax levy goal for the County Administrator's recommended 2014 budget, and the County's cap, by current estimate, could be in the neighborhood of 2.5%. While supporting the Local Law, Legislator Pat Pryor made it clear that her support does not indicate support of the 4% levy goal, and that she will not support that level of increase during the budget process.

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

Legislature Endorses Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan

The Legislature, by a vote of 12-1, endorsed the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan, a regional, eight-county plan that includes specific actions that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35% over the next 20 years. (Legislator Frank Proto voted no; Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Peter Stein were excused.) Tompkins County, on behalf of the eight Southern Tier counties, applied for and received a million-dollar grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to develop the regional sustainability plan for the Southern Tier region. Since then, in partnership with the Southern Tier East and Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Boards, the plan has been developed over the past 18 months, with input throughout the region, and has now been accepted as final by NYSERDA, after endorsement by the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council. The next phase of the Cleaner Greener Communities program will involve competitive funding—anticipated availability statewide of \$90 million over three years—to implement regional sustainability plans.

Presenting highlights of the plan prior to the vote, County Planning Commissioner Ed Marx noted that the Plan, grounded in the strengths and challenges of the Southern Tier, discusses 65 actions that together have the potential to produce the reduction in emissions, including 22 actions identified as priorities over the next several years, as well as 77 supplemental actions identified in the planning process. The Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Plan may be viewed online at <http://www.cleanergreenerstier.org>.

Before the endorsement vote, Legislator Proto questioned language in the resolution that encourages collaboration between counties and other agencies and organizations to implement the plan's recommendations, and whether that would be consistent with endorsement of the plan.

A number of Legislators thanked and congratulated the Planning Department for its leadership of this important regional effort.

Contact: Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning, 274-5560; Carol Chock, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-9007

Aaron Simmons Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Fifteen-year-old Aaron Simmons, of Varna, is recognized by the Legislature as this month's Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. Aaron is described as a highly motivated member of the Varna community, including regular participation at events of the Varna Volunteer Fire Company, the Varna United Methodist Church, and the Varna Community Association. The nomination letter submitted by fire company member Wendy Hoose states, "Aaron has a strong commitment to his family, friends, and community, and is always willing to help at a moment's notice." Aaron is a member of the Boy Scouts of America (Troop 55, Ellis Hollow) and has served as a mentor to the Cub Scouts. Dawn Potter, Chair of the Varna Community Association, and Dennis Huff, Pastor of the Varna United Methodist Church join in the nomination, praise Aaron as an outstanding and remarkable young man who demonstrates maturity, thoughtfulness, and good decision making. Accepted into the People to People Program, Aaron will serve as a student ambassador this summer in Europe, helping people abroad. 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.

Second Public Hearing Scheduled on Changes to Code of Ethics

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-2, scheduled a second public hearing on a proposed Local Law that would amend the County Code of Ethics. (Legislators Jim Dennis and Kathy Luz Herrera voted no; Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Peter Stein were excused.) The hearing will be held on July 16, 5:30 p.m., at Legislative Chambers of the County Courthouse, 320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca. An initial public hearing was held March 19, but further review since that time has produced changes in the proposed law, necessitating the second public hearing. Before the hearing, the Government Operations Committee will once again review the proposed amendment and any further possible revisions at its next meeting June 25.

Contact: Patricia Pryor, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 319-0507

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