



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
July 2, 2013  
TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **July 2, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Approves TC3 Budget**

By unanimous vote, the Legislature adopted the 2013-2014 operating budget for Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). The \$38.3 million budget includes a total sponsoring community contribution of about \$4.4 million (split between Tompkins and Cortland Counties), a 3% increase in sponsor contribution over the current year's budget. Tompkins' share of the sponsor contribution is just under \$2.8 million (63%), based on a funding formula related to the proportion of students enrolled from each county. For Tompkins County, the 3% rise is an increase of about \$81,000. The Cortland County Legislature has already approved the budget.

Budget Chair Jim Dennis on expressed the Legislature's appreciation for the College's presentations on the budget and its continued good work, saying the County is totally supportive of all that the College does,

College president Dr. Carl Haynes thanked the Legislature for its continued support and for its increase in sponsor support by 3% this year. And he referred to proposed State legislation that might in the future remove support for community colleges from limits of the New York State property tax cap, expressing hope that might facilitate future levels of support.

In a separate action related to TC3, the Legislature, also by unanimous vote, approved a \$250,000 transfer of College surplus funds to replace lost state aid and tuition revenue in the current year's operating budget, from lower-than-projected enrollment over the past two budget years.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.*

#### **Legislature Adopts Fund Balance Policy**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, adopted a new Fund Balance policy, one that increases the County's unassigned General Fund balance to 10%, from the former level of 5%, which had been proscribed under County fiscal policy. County Administrator Joe Mareane characterizes a 10% general fund balance as a modest, but prudent level of reserves to address both cyclical and unanticipated cash flow needs of county governments.

Budget committee chair Jim Dennis said that an adequate fund balance enables the County to respond to unforeseen circumstances, positively affects the County's credit rating, and should have a positive effect on taxes for the long term. Both he and Legislator Brian Robison noted that the County has been able to weather very difficult times for county governments while preserving its fund balance, and that the County is at this level already.

The policy also revises the County's definition of General Fund Balance to be consistent with the current standard definition of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), a step the administrator said would enable long-term consistency and transparency in how fund balance targets are calculated.

*Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5555; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058.*

### **Sale of K-House, on Biggs Property, Authorized**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized the County Administrator to sell property commonly known as K-House, located on the Biggs property on Harris B. Dates Drive in the Town of Ithaca. The K-House parcel, of just under an acre, is one of three subdivided from the nearly 36 acres of Biggs land that the County as it prepared to vacate the former County Health Department building (Biggs B) for the department's current quarters at 55 Brown Road. The property, last used as a State Police substation, has been vacant for several years. The County Administrator has accepted a purchase offer for the property of \$184,000, contingent upon Legislature approval, from Joerg Steffen Schuhmann, of Buffalo, NY, an amount that exceeds the property's appraised value, according to the County Assessment Director Jay Franklin. Sale proceeds are committed toward offset renovation costs for the new Health Department building.

Prior to authorizing the sale, the Legislature, in separate unanimous votes, declared that the property is no longer needed for public use, and that the sale carries no environmental significance under provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act, those steps required with provisions of the County Code governing sale or lease of County property.

*Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 266-7579*

### **County Departments Recognized for Exemplary Achievements**

The Legislature recognized staff of two County departments who recently received statewide awards for excellence.

Legislators recognized departments and employees of Tompkins County, including County Clerk Aurora Valenti, Deputy Clerk Maureen Reynolds, Principal Recording Clerk Alanna Congdon, and Information Technology Services Director Greg Potter, for statewide recognition for the County from by the New York Association of Local Government Record Officers. The association honored the County with the Robert Arnold Award for Distinguished Service for its achievements in developing its electronic document management system, and extending that service to other towns in Tompkins County.

The Legislature recognized staff in the County Personnel Department for receiving a state organization's highest award for developing the County's online employment application system. For its achievement, a staff work team made up of Jackie Thomas (Team Leader), Heather Buck, Doreen Lauper, Anna Smith, and Stephen Estes received the New York State Association of Personnel and Civil Service Officers 2013 Merit and Fitness Award for Contributions in Support of the NYS Constitution, the Civil Service Law and the Association.

Chair Martha Robertson observed that Tompkins County is often referred to as special and these departments are one of the reasons why.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Patricia Pryor, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 319-0507.*

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Heard several citizens express opposition to repowering the coal-fired Cayuga Power Plant with natural gas, and urging repowering with renewable instead. Legislature Chair Martha Robertson noted that it is not the Legislature, but the State Public Service Commission that is empowered to act on this issue.
- Authorized renewal of a five-year lease for the Tompkins County Board of Elections of property on Hanshaw Road in the Town of Dryden to house the County's voting machines;
- Approved revisions to County administrative policy concerning benefits for County Management staff, including provisions related to payment of compensatory time.

**- END -**