



Inclusion Through Diversity

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December 3, 2013
THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **December 3, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Accepts Livable Wage Report

The Legislature, following the recommendations of its Government Operations and Budget Committees, accepted, but did not adopt, the recommendations of a County work group following an extensive study of how the County's decade-old Livable Wage Policy should apply to County contracts. The vote was 13-2, with Legislators Carol Chock and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne dissenting. The action gives the County Administrator time to apply procedural guidance established by the work group as part of its report, before taking a more formal action to either adopt or amend the group's recommendations.

The work group report recommends the Living Wage policy, in place since 2003, remain in place without modification, as a statement of the Legislature's aspirational goals, with procedures put in place to ensure consistent interpretation and application of the policy, and to establish accountability for performance. It recommends, in part, that the policy apply only to service contracts involving over \$50,000 per year in County funds, that certain types of employees and positions be exempted, with criteria used to determine whether it is "practical and reasonable" to incorporate the living wage standard into a contract.

Noting that the County Administrator responsible for determining implementation of Legislative policy, and relevant procedures recommended by the work group, the Legislature directs that the Administrator report to committee by July 2014 with any recommended changes to the County's Livable Wage Policy, based on experience with 2014 contracts and information gathered as part of that process.

Legislator Chock noted that she cannot support acceptance of the report since she believes the committee's work, while a good start, is not yet done and that the recommendations do not move the County far enough "toward being the livable wage employer it claims to be." As a strong supporter of the living wage, Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera praised the committee for its work, and said the work of the Legislature is not yet completed, as it strives to address the issue in a compassionate way that reflects the County's values.

As part of its action, the Legislature expressed its thanks to all who contributed to the Work Group's report. *Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Patricia Pryor, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 319-0507; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

Legislature Thanks and Recognizes Members of the Special Committee on Broadband

The Legislature expressed official appreciation to the volunteer members of its Special Committee on Broadband, as the committee begins to wind down three years of work. The resolution, approved without dissent (Legislator Will Burbank was excused), expresses the Legislature's deepest gratitude to members of the committee "for their commitment, dedication, and innovative thinking that will help many Tompkins County residents and businesses to soon realize the benefits of high-speed connectivity. The committee is made up of 16 volunteer members with varied professional experience and technical expertise, who used their best thinking to identify, evaluate, and propose solutions to address gaps in Broadband accessibility in the county.

Legislator Pat Pryor, who has chaired the Broadband Committee since its inception, recognized and thanked the members, whom she described as "the most incredible group of community volunteers without who the

Broadband project would never have happened.” Legislator Pryor and Legislator Dave McKenna, vice-chair presented letters of appreciation to committee members appearing before the Legislature. Ms. Pryor also thanked the Legislature which, through Chair Martha Robertson, recognized the need for all county residents for high-speed Internet access and took the necessary steps to initiate the project, with the full Legislature remaining supportive throughout. She also thanked the many county staff who assisted—especially Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger for her expertise, hard work, and guidance. “Without Paula’s experience and expertise, I’m not sure this project would have gotten off the ground,” Pryor said. “The broadband expansion project is only happening because of substantial and continuing commitment of resources from Tompkins County,” she added.

Legislator Pryor reported that installation is beginning, with customers being added to the service now. She said that Chuck Bartosch, CEO of primary corporate partner Clarity Connect, lead applicant for the state grant received, currently estimates that installation of project infrastructure could be completed by July of next year, and it is projected that currently unserved and underserved areas will be activated by the end of 2014.

Chair Martha Robertson, and many others, thanked Legislators Pryor and McKenna for their leadership of this important effort on behalf of the residents of Tompkins County.

Contact: Patricia Pryor, Chair, Government Operations Committee and the Special Committee on Broadband, 319-0507.

County Diversity and Inclusion Policy Adopted

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, adopted a comprehensive County Diversity and Inclusion Policy—a policy that codifies the County’s commitment to “create a workplace environment that is inclusive, and to recruit, retain, and support a workforce that supports the diversity of our community.” The policy builds upon the Diversity Statement adopted by the Legislature in 2005 and Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines adopted by the Legislature in 2006 as the initial framework for policy development. The policy outlines objectives, expectations, functions, responsibilities, and accountability measures related to Diversity and Inclusion.

The Legislative Policy Statement included in the new policy notes: “The Tompkins County Legislature believes that a diverse and inclusive workforce provides internal and external advantages. Internally, cultivating an inclusive culture enhances employee potential and encourages a variety of perspectives that ultimately drives creativity and innovation. Externally, a diverse workforce increases the County’s ability to serve the entire community. The Tompkins County Legislature is committed to creating and sustaining a diverse, fully inclusive, and flexible workplace environment that continually strengthens the organization and demonstrates this commitment.”

Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair Leslyn McBean-Clairborne thanked all WDIC members and the broad-based working group who worked to draft and refine the policy, and all county staff who commented on it. Chair Martha Robertson thanked Legislator McBean-Clairborne for her many years of hard work and leadership that led to the policy that was adopted.

The full County Diversity and Inclusion Policy may be viewed on the County web site at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/Tompkins%20County%20Diversity%20%26%20Inclusion.pdf>.

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee, 277-5104; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058.

Legislature Apportions Mortgage Tax Proceeds for Mass Transportation

The Legislature, by unanimous vote took formal action to apportion additional mortgage recording tax proceeds for mass transportation, according to the use for those proceeds approved by New York State. The Legislature’s action directs the County Clerk to allocate 85% of the proceeds to Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) and 15% to the County Director of Finance. It also directs the Finance Director to allocate the funds from that 15% toward the County’s ongoing contribution to TCAT. The “additional” proceeds from the Mortgage Recording Tax are projected to generate approximately \$800,000 total, around \$680,000 (the 85%) allocated directly to TCAT, to support TCAT operations and capital needs.

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

Among other actions,

Chair Martha Robertson proclaimed Tuesday, December 10, 2013 as Human Rights Day in Tompkins County, marking the 50th anniversary of the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne noted that 50 years of doing human rights work in this county is a huge and meaningful achievement, and serves as a model for all of New York State.

The Legislature held a public hearing regarding the 2013 New York State Housing Trust Fund Office of community Renewal Community Development Block Grant Program Application. In the application, grant funding will be sought to support the County's successful Homeownership Program. Legislator Mike Lane urged that, while that program continues to be valuable, that the county begin to focus attention on the issue of manufactured homes in Tompkins County and how to help improve that stock for homeowners. Several other legislators expressed support for examining that issue.

The Legislature approved a number of standard year-end resolutions, including those implementing provisions of the approved 2014 County Budget and establishing the date of the Legislature's 2014 organizational meeting Thursday, January 2.

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