



Inclusion Through Diversity

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

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **January 2, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Michael Lane Elected Legislature Chair**

The Tompkins County Legislature has elected Michael Lane (D) to lead the Legislature during 2014. The position of Chair is filled each year by a majority vote of members of the Legislature. The chair is responsible for overseeing all Legislative functions.

At the Legislature's 2014 organizational meeting, Mr. Lane was the sole nominee for Chair and elected by unanimous vote (Legislator Dave McKenna was excused.) Lane was nominated by Legislator Dooley Kiefer, who praised his deep interest in good government, as well as his ongoing care and concern for fairness, and his sound judgment. Seconding the nomination, Legislator Peter Stein call Mr. Lane an honest and hard-working legislator, who has demonstrated his ability to devote a tremendous amount of time to the Legislature despite carrying out his professional responsibilities as an attorney, and his commitment to carry out what he has been sworn to do, no matter what the other responsibilities in his life.

Mr. Lane, first elected in 1993, is beginning his fifth term on the Legislature, representing District 14 (Eastern part of the Town of Dryden, including the Villages of Dryden and Freeville). He served three consecutive terms, then after a one-term hiatus, was returned to the Legislature for two more. He has served as Vice Chair of the Legislature for a total of ten years, between 1997 and 2005, and again during 2013. During his 16 years of service, he has chaired numerous legislative committees overseeing the wide range of county government functions. In 2013, as well as serving as Vice Chair, he chaired the Capital Plan Review Committee. Past service includes leadership of such legislative committees as Government Operations; Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality; and Facilities and Infrastructure; and three committees that examined functions of the County Charter. He also has served as the Legislature's liaison to the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) Board of Trustees.

Legislator Jim Dennis (D) was elected Vice Chair, nominated by Nate Shinagawa, who recognized his demonstrated leadership, as chair of the budget committee and in numerous other ways. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D) was nominated for Vice Chair by Carol Chock, who described her as a particularly articulate member, valuable experience as Vice Chair, who always has an open mind, listens, offers valuable perspectives, and is firmly committed to all the diverse people of this county.

Nine legislators voted for Mr. Dennis; four for Ms. McBean-Clairborne (Legislator Dave McKenna was excused.) Mr. Dennis thanked his colleagues for their support for the position of Vice Chair and said, "I will be fair and fulfill the duties of the job to the best of my ability."

*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8440, or 844-8313; James Dennis, Vice Chair, 387-4058.*

#### **Chair Pledges Legislature's Commitment to Serve a Diverse Community**

"It's about the people," said newly-elected Legislature Chair Mike Lane, delivering the Legislature Chair's annual message—about a diverse group of County legislators working together to serve the richly diverse community of Tompkins County."The voters have elected us to serve for four years and do the people's business," said Mr. Lane. "That will take teamwork, and we will come together as a team and work in the best

interest of the people”—to address and meet the needs and concerns of the full range of people with which the county is blessed.

“Against all of this, you my colleagues, have done me the honor of electing me to serve as Chair of this Legislature; and in that role, I will do my very best for each of you, as we all do our very best for all of the people,” the Chair continued. “We will not always agree, nor should we—but we will try. We will not always be able to do everything right—but we will try. In debate we will not always be happy with one another, but we will give each other the benefit of every doubt, fully recognizing that each Legislator is doing his or her best for the benefit of the people she or he represents. But in debate we must be courteous to the other members of the team, recognizing time constraints and sharing time fairly with the others.

“I need your help to form and steer our team,” Mr. Lane continued. “I am not an executive or a mayor--I am your equal. I will work hard for each of you, and do my best to always treat of you fairly. As chair, I will assist our committees to steer policies that will enable our amazing staff and employees to deliver the vital services that people need, and at a cost that our taxpayers are able to afford.”

Chair Lane said he will announce committees for 2014 at the Legislature’s next meeting January 21, when he will also comment about the needs and direction of county government in difficult times. Chair Lane’s full message is posted on the County Legislature website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/legislature>.  
*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8440, or 844-8313*

### **Two New Legislators Begin Service; Legislature Reduced to 14 Members**

The Legislature welcomed two new colleagues for the four-year term that runs through the end of 2017. The newly elected Legislators, along with eleven of 12 incumbents (Legislator Dave McKenna was excused), were sworn in by Tompkins County Clerk Aurora R. Valenti just before the Legislature meeting. With this term, the Legislature is made up of 14 members (reduced by one from its former complement of 15), due to redistricting as a result of the 2010 Census.

New to the Legislature is Daniel Klein (D), representing District 7 (Caroline, Danby, and a portion of the Town of Ithaca) and Michael Sigler (R) who, after serving from 2006-2009, is returning to the Legislature for a second term to represent District 6 (Town of Lansing).

With the reduction to 14 legislative districts, district numbers have changed for three of the returning Legislators (Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D-now District 1), Kathy Luz Herrera (D-now District 2), and Jim Dennis (now District 5), and district boundaries for most have been adjusted to accommodate the new district alignment.

*Contact: Legislator Dan Klein, 272-7582; Legislator Mike Sigler, 339-7978.*

### **Legislature Urges Local Option to Distinguish Between Residential and Commercial Energy Systems**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Dave McKenna was excused), urged the State Legislature to amend a section of Real Property Tax Law to provide by local option the ability of localities to distinguish between residential and commercial energy system related to a 15-year exemption from real property taxation for qualifying solar, wind, or farm-waste energy systems. The measure notes that the Legislature would like to encourage residential installations, and would also like to encourage installation of large-scale production facilities, such as wind or solar, but without providing a 15-year tax abatement. It has no mechanism under current law to distinguish between the residential and commercial systems for the purposes of taxation.

*Contact: Legislator Mike Lane, Vice Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8440, or 844-8313.*

Among other business:

The Legislature voted to accept a \$1,975 grant from the Community Foundation of Tompkins County Social Justice Fund to support continuation of the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion (WDIC) Committee Reading and Discussion program in 2014. An identical amount has been granted by the Community Foundation for 2015.

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