



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 6, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Funding Approved for Airport Consulting Services

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved funding to support expert consulting services for Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, as part of a proactive effort to address recent declines in passenger activity at the airport. The Legislature authorized appropriation from the Contingent Fund to support a one-year contract, at a cost not to exceed \$50,000, with Ewan J. Barr, of Groton, as recommended by Airport Manager Bob Nicholas and the County Air Service Board. Mr. Barr, who has more than two decades of senior-level experience with national and regional airlines, will serve as the County's expert liaison with the airline industry to address a variety of factors that may be contributing to the decline in passenger activity.

While passenger numbers had steadily increased in recent years, and reached record levels in 2010-2012, boardings have declined since 2013, after federal sequestration briefly threatened federal funding for contract towers, such as the Airport's. While the funding was quickly restored, passenger concerns about safety and reliability of airline flight schedules contributed to an abrupt decline in passenger activity, currently 13% below last year's level.

Airport Manager Nicholas told legislators the problem, which began with the effects of sequestration, has been compounded by the airlines' reducing capacity. "If you don't have seats available, you can't sell them," he said. The proactive effort will be focused on reversing the decline and returning passenger activity to its pre-sequestration level.

It was noted that the Airport is a self-sufficient Enterprise unit of county government and it is the County's goal and intent that it remain so in the future. Chair Mike Lane said the effort is important. "What's at stake here is the commercial viability of our airport," he said.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Airport Manager Bob Nicholas, 257-0456, X543.

Legislature Takes Position on State and Local Primary Date

The Legislature, without dissent, passed a resolution supporting passage of legislation requiring counties to conduct the State and Local Primary Election to coincide with the Federal primary election. The measure notes that conducting only one primary election in New York State will reduce costs, and that the State's 2% tax cap and insufficient relief from State-imposed mandates have placed an unprecedented strain on local governments to provide services with less funding. Government Operations Chair Nathan Shinagawa reported that this year's Federal primary is set for June 26.

Contact: Nathan Shinagawa, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 280-7557.

County Administrator Reports on County Department Accomplishments

County Administrator Joe Mareane presented to the Legislature his annual summary of major accomplishments by County departments during 2013. Chair Mike Lane expressed thanks "to the wonderful employees we have and the good ideas that staff and administration move forward."

The Administrator's presentation is available for review on the County Administration section of the County website at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Among other actions,

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in tribute to former Legislator George Totman, who passed away earlier this week. Mr. Totman served 12 years on the Legislature, representing Groton. Legislator Brian Robison, who current represents Groton, said, "In my eyes he took volunteerism to a whole new level...I know our district has lost a good public servant...We should all thank him for his service. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, who is one who served with him, praised Mr. Totman as "a stellar public service," who was always very kind to her.

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