



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **August 5, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Bonding Authorized for Capital Projects**

Supporting capital projects approved in the County's Capital Program for the next five years as part of the 2014 budget process, the Legislature authorized bonding for \$8.76 million to support three projects that are part of the Capital Program.

The Legislature, by unanimous vote of those present, authorized the issuance of up to \$1.6 million in serial bonds and notes to support part of the cost of facility restoration projects—buildings and grounds capital improvements—at several County buildings during 2014 and 2015. (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused.) The capital improvements include roof replacements, mechanical system replacements and upgrades, life safety alarm system replacements, masonry improvements, and parking lot improvements.

Legislators without dissent also authorized issue of up to \$3.24 million in bonds and notes to support highway improvements, including financing for Phases II and III of the Ellis Hollow Road Reconstruction project. (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused.) Phase II work will include pavement, shoulder, and drainage reconstruction between Genung and Game Farm Roads; Phase III will provide pavement rehabilitation from Game Farm to Pine Tree Road. Offsetting revenue and aid, and anticipated savings from other projects is expected to eventually reduce the project cost by about \$1.3 million.

The Legislature authorized up to \$3.92 million in bonding for repair and replacement of bridges, by a vote of 11-2. Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock voted no; Legislator Martha Robertson was excused. Bonds and notes will be issued to support replacement of the 70-year-old Game Farm Road Bridge on the Ithaca-Dryden town line; and of two more than 100-year-old bridges—the Waterburg Road Bridge in the Town of Ulysses; and the Groton City Road Bridge. The bonding also supports design work for replacement of the Malloryville Road Bridge in the Town of Dryden.

The final vote followed more than half-an-hour of debate on a motion by Legislator Kiefer to substitute two alternate resolutions she proposed, which would have separated the decision to bond for the Groton City Road Bridge from that for the other bridges. Legislator Kiefer has long opposed replacement of that bridge and told her colleagues tonight that, in line with current funding realities, roads and bridges should be considered as a system and that she does not believe this bridge fits a changing reality. Legislator Carol Chock voiced concern that the County cannot continue to do everything, and said a bridge policy is needed. Facilities and Infrastructure Chair Kathy Luz Herrera spoke against the motion, expressing concern that such action would set a precedent that could affect rural residents and noting that the county is a vital mix of rural and urban roads. Legislator Brian Robison, who represents Groton, said lack of the bridge would have significant effect on residents of that section of his district, and expressed concern about the Legislature overriding advice of experts, such as Highway Director Jeff Smith. Legislator Peter Stein expressed concern about overriding what had been considered and recommended in committee. The motion to substitute failed by a 5-8 margin, Legislators Kiefer, Chock, Will Burbank, Dan Klein, and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne in favor.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; Legislator Dooley Kiefer.257-7453.*

### **Corrections Unit Labor Contract Ratified**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused) ratified a new two-year bargaining agreement between the County and Corrections Officers Unit, Local 2062. The agreement, which covers the years 2013 and 2014, provides a retroactive 2% pay increase for 2013 and an increase of 2.25% for 2014. The prior contract expired as of the end of 2012.

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

### **Legislature Accepts Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy**

After hearing a presentation by Tom Knipe of the County Planning Department, the Legislature by unanimous vote (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused) accepted the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy, a vision for networked trails in Tompkins County. The strategy, developed through collaboration involving the County Planning Department and Tourism Program, and the Creating Healthy Places Project of the Human Services Coalition and Health Planning Council, identifies 23 specific near-term actions that can be taken collectively by municipalities, the County, State, groups, and other stakeholders to develop and sustain five key trails that will move the County toward a cohesive trail network and local recreation and transportation resource.

County acceptance of the strategy demonstrates its support for key actions and priorities expressed in the strategy, but does not commit the County to specific future funding or action.

*Contact: Tom Knipe, Tompkins County Planning, 274-5560.*

Among other actions:

- The Legislature approved the appointment of Chad Coates, PhD, Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University, to the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) Board of Trustees. Budget Chair Jim Dennis said Coates brings to the position considerable experience in residential life and in many facets of higher education and that, after considering a number of candidates for the seat, the interview committee recommended him as an excellent choice for TC3.
- Finance Director Rick Snyder reported second-quarter county sales tax receipts up by 9.71% from the same period one year ago, the best second quarter on record and the highest quarterly increase, in terms of total dollars, collected for any period.
- Several resolutions related to the Airport were approved without dissent on the consent agenda—including acceptance of a \$360,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration for design and bidding services in connection with runway rehabilitation at the Airport, and authorizing a consultant agreement with C&S Engineers, Inc. for those project services.
- Two resolutions related to bonding related to the County's share of capital improvements at TC3 were withdrawn from the agenda and will be considered at a future meeting.

**- END -**