

## **Highlights of the August 19, 2014 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature**

### **Deborah Griffith Palermo Appointed County Personnel Commissioner**

Deborah Griffith Palermo, SPHR, has been appointed Tompkins County Commissioner of Personnel, following a national search. County Administrator Joe Mareane's appointment of Ms. Palermo was confirmed by the Tompkins County Legislature by unanimous vote (Legislature Kathy Luz Herrera was excused). The appointment is for an initial six-year term, as required under the provisions of New York State law.

Ms. Palermo brings to this key County leadership position 28 years of high-level professional experience in Human Resources administration in both public and private sectors. She most recently served as Vice President of Human Resources at Monro Muffler Brake, Inc., headquartered in Rochester, NY— an \$800 million publicly traded chain of 937 auto care stores with over 5,000 employees throughout the United States, where she was responsible for all aspects of human resources and employee relations.

The new Commissioner's experience also includes seven years with the seven-county Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority, where she served the public transportation agency in the positions of Manager of Labor Relations, Vice President of Human Resources, and Chief Administrative Officer—with responsibility for all employee, human capital, policy, and customer service-related aspects of the business.

For more than 20 years, Ms. Palermo served in human resources administration for Monroe County, advancing from the position of Employee Safety Technician, through several other administrative roles, to the position of Manager of Labor Relations & Employment Support, providing support to all Monroe County departments and 4,200 County employees in multiple geographic locations. As Manager of Labor Relations & Employment Support, her responsibilities included oversight of the County's in-house payroll process, benefits administration, cost containment, and benefit plan design; administration of New York State pension plan enrollments and retirements, the Workers' Compensation Program, organizational development/training; and management of all labor relations activities for Monroe County, with its eight employee unions.

Deborah Palermo holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Labor Relations from the State University of New York at Potsdam.

In requesting confirmation of Ms. Palermo's appointment, County Administrator Joe Mareane stated, "I believe we have found a uniquely qualified successor to Anita Fitzpatrick, and someone who will build on the successes that Anita and her staff have achieved."

Tompkins County's Personnel Commissioner leads and manages all aspects of the County's personnel, human resources, civil service, and labor relations programs and activities. The Commissioner serves as the County's chief labor negotiator and is responsible for maintaining positive labor relationships, handling disciplinary actions, and working with management and staff to foster a positive, productive, fulfilling workplace environment. She succeeds Commissioner Fitzpatrick, who is retiring, after 22 years as Personnel

Commissioner.

Ms. Palermo will begin her service with Tompkins County September 2.

*County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

### **Bonding Approved for TC3 Capital Improvements**

The Legislature, without dissent, authorized up to \$3.525,000 in bonding, through bonds and notes, to finance the local sponsor share of capital improvements at Tompkins Cortland Community College, which are included in the TC3 five-year master plan approved by the Legislature in 2012. (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused.) The principal payments on the debt issued by the County will be supported by Capital Chargebacks received from other counties whose residents attend TC3, with the local sponsors—Tompkins and Cortland Counties— supporting the interest cost. Improvements include reconstruction of some student and administrative space, parking lot areas, and related drainage improvements, and construction of additional classroom space.

The bond authorization represents the financing that would be required to support the total cost of the improvements—both the 62% (\$2,185,500) for which Tompkins County is responsible and the remaining 38% (\$1,339,500) for which Cortland County is responsible, according to the counties' student enrollment shares. The counties are engaged in discussions regarding Tompkins issuing the bond to support the entire local sponsor cost of the project, with Cortland County then paying Tompkins its share of the periodic debt service payments associated with the bond issue. In the event of such a consolidated financing, Tompkins County will require a commitment of Cortland County to pay its share of the debt service costs. If a consolidated approach is not used, the County will bond only for its share.

The Legislature, in a separate unanimous vote (with Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera excused) authorized the County Administrator to enter into an intermunicipal agreement with Cortland County, as a condition of issuing a consolidated bond, that would obligate payment by Cortland County to Tompkins its share of principal and interest payments as those payments become due.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

### **Issuance of Refunding Bonds Approved**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera excused), authorized the refinancing of more than \$21 million dollars in Public Improvement (Serial) Bonds, issued between 2005 and 2010, through issuance of Refunding Bonds, as authorized by the State's Local Finance Law. Based on current conditions and projections, Finance Director Rick Snyder advised legislators that, due to a reduction in interest rate, the refinancing of the long-term debt is projected to result in debt service savings in the neighborhood of \$1.6

million, or \$92,500 per year for 18 years.

*Contact: Finance Director Rick Snyder, 274-5545.*

### **Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Amendment to County Smoking Law**

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing for September 2, 5:30 p.m., regarding a proposal to amend the County law restricting smoking in places of employment, restaurants, and taverns to also include electronic nicotine delivery systems, such as “e-cigarettes.” The County Board of Health last month formally requested the Legislature to consider amending Chapter 72 of the County Code, to include prohibition of such delivery systems anywhere smoking tobacco is currently prohibited. The proposed amendment notes that the as-yet-unregulated devices pose a potential public health risk. Much of the discussion before the vote focused on whether the amendment should characterize the devices as a risk or a potential risk. It was acknowledged that such language should be modified, if desired, after the hearing and before Legislature action.

The September 2 hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m., at Legislature Chambers, located at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (second floor), 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

*Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 266-7579; Frank Kruppa, Director of Public Health, 274-6674.*

### **Among other actions, the Legislature**

- Heard a presentation on the Jail Alternatives Task Force Report from Task Force co-chairs Suzi Cook of the County Attorney’s Office and Deborah Dietrich of OAR . Chair Mike Lane and several legislators recognized and thanked the Task Force for its work. The Legislature will be asked to accept the report at a future meeting. The Task Force report and the report’s Appendix are posted for review on the County’s web site at [www.tompkins-co.org](http://www.tompkins-co.org).
- Authorized acceptance of two major grants—a \$500,000 grant from the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications to fund replacement of the County’s 9-1-1 telephone system and related enhancements; and a more than \$200,000 grant from the New York State Department of Health (spread over two fiscal years) to the County Office for the Aging to extend the County’s Care Transitions Support Program to Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Authorized the granting of an access easement to build and service a solar energy facility at TC3—an action requested by the solar energy company, SEC LHN Solar One, LLC, to facilitate project financing.