



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **October 7, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Program Income Funds Committed to Continue Housing Fund**

The Legislature approved the funding commitment necessary to continue its partnership role in the Tompkins County Housing Fund for another six years. The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislators Martha Robertson and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused) committed the County to provide up to \$600,000 over six years to be loaned or granted through the Housing Fund, provided that the City of Ithaca also commit at least that amount and Cornell University at least \$1.2 million for the period 2015-2020. The commitment is also contingent upon the Legislature, City of Ithaca, and Cornell University accepting and approving a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to continue the Housing Fund.

The action would extend the arrangements made among the three parties in 2009, when the Housing Fund was created, and would replace the initial MOU, which expires in April of next year. The County's funding has come from repayment of homeowner assistance loans using Community Development Block Grant awards from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and New York State. Under HUD rules, the program income funds must be re-spent for like purposes as the original grants.

The Housing Fund assists with pre-development costs associated with residential and mixed-use real estate development projects that primarily benefit low- and moderate-income households and supports a housing trust to ensure that newly constructed or rehabilitated homes made available to such households remain affordable to future buyers.

In a presentation to the Legislature before the vote, Senior Planner Megan McDonald called housing affordability "a persistent and growing challenge in our community." She reported that more than \$1 million has been drawn from the Fund since the program began, with 88 units built and 119 more awarded and expected to move toward construction, and noted that Housing Fund awards have leveraged over \$18 million in outside development funds so far.

Commissioner of Planning Ed Marx said any adjustment in the commitment, based on actions by the other parties, as well as a proposed Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Housing Fund will come back before the Legislature.

*Contact: Senior Planner Megan McDonald, 274-5560; Carol Chock, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 273-9007*

#### **Hearing Scheduled on the 2015 County Budget**

The Legislature by unanimous vote scheduled Monday, November 10 as the date for the public hearing on the 2015 Tompkins County Budget and 2015-2019 Capital Program. (Legislators Martha Robertson and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused.) The hearing will take place at Legislature Chambers, Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (Second Floor), Ithaca, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

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

**Tourism Capital Grants Awarded**

The Legislature, without dissent, approved payment of \$100,000 in multi-year Tourism Capital Grants for 2014 (Legislators Martha Robertson and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused.) The allocations are awarded to five organizations—the Cayuga Nature Center, Museum of the Earth, State Theatre, Sciencenter, and the Chamber of Commerce Foundation (on behalf of the first phase of the Stewart Park Rehabilitation), part of multi-year funding for capital improvements as recommended by the County’s Strategic Tourism Planning Board. The Tompkins County Tourism Program and Tourism Capital Grants are funded entirely by Room Occupancy Tax. Tourism Capital Grants support capital improvements expected to produce a positive impact on tourism in the county.

*Contact: Will Burbank, Chair, Economic Development Committee 272-7555.*

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