



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **October 21, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Amendments Adopted to 2015 Tentative Budget

The Legislature formally adopted amendments to the County Administrator's 2015 Tentative Budget and the Capital Program for the next five years, as recommended by the Expanded Budget Committee. The vote was unanimous, with Legislator Martha Robertson excused.

The amended budget would increase the County tax levy by 2.5% and decrease the countywide average tax rate by 0.45%. The recommended tax rate of \$6.86 per thousand is about a penny higher than in the Administrator's budget, representing an increase of \$8.67 for the median-valued \$165,000 home. Since the increase would be below the adjusted 3.14% State property tax cap, the amount would be returned to the homeowner under the new property tax freeze law. The amended budget also includes a \$4.00 decrease—to \$52.00 per household—in the County Solid Waste Fee.

Budget chair Jim Dennis said the budget keeps services operating at a very high level while satisfying needs of departments, while maintaining a strong fund balance.

Despite their votes supporting amendment of the Tentative Budget, both Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock both expressed some concern that the budget is not addressing all County needs. Ms. Kiefer remarked, however, that she believes the amendments to the budget did produce some improvement.

The amended package, now known as the Legislative Tentative Budget, replaces Administrator Joe Mareane's recommended budget as the basis of budget deliberations and will be sent on to public hearing. The Legislature will hold the public budget hearing on Monday, November 10, beginning at 7 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, located at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (Second Floor), 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The Legislature's final budget adoption vote is scheduled November 18.

Amendments to the Tentative Budget, as well as other information regarding the 2015 budget process, are available for review online at the County website at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/budget>.
Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058.

Legislature Sets Hearing on Proposed Repeal of Tax Levy Limit Override Law

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing for its next meeting, November 6, on proposed repeal of the Local Law approved by the Legislature earlier this year to override the State tax cap as part of the 2015 budget. The hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street (Second Floor), Ithaca. Repeal of the law would be required under the State's new property tax freeze law for homeowners to qualify for the amount of increase. The action is proposed since the County does not anticipate adopting a budget that would exceed the cap. Any action on repeal of the override law would not occur until right before the budget is passed. The hearing was approved by a 12-1 vote, Legislator Dooley Kiefer dissenting (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused). Ms. Kiefer said believes the action is premature, since she understands the action would not need to take place until the Finance Director officially certifies the 2015 budget in December.

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

Legislature Authorizes Design Services for Two Bridge Projects

The Legislature authorized contracts for design services for two bridge projects—both projects included in the Highway Division’s five-year bridge plan and the County’s Capital Budget.

A \$41,000 contract design services with LaBella Associates. of Rochester, NY, was authorized for replacement of the Groton City Road bridge (Town of Groton), approved by a 12-2 vote, Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock were opposed and Legislator Martha Robertson excused.

A \$49,100 contract with Barton and Loguidice, of Syracuse, NY, was authorized for design of reconstruction of the West Malloryville Road bridge in the Town of Dryden, approved by a 12-1 vote, Legislator Carol Chock opposed and Legislator Martha Robertson excused. As part of that project, the feasibility of the options of closure, repair, or rehabilitation as a one-lane bridge will all be studied. There was much discussion of a proposed amendment, advanced by Legislator Kiefer but ultimately not approved, that would have included in resolution language that the project would include study of the feasibility to alternate stream crossings in the West Malloryville/Red Mill Road area.

Contact: Kathy Luz Herrera, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 273-8169

Other Actions:

- The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized funding to support design and implementation of a workplace climate survey of County employees by The Kaleidoscope Group, Chicago, IL. (Legislator Martha Robertson was excused.) The County’s Diversity and Inclusion Policy directs that the County demonstrate its commitment to diversity and inclusion by administering such a survey every three years, to assess work-life climate, professional development and advancement, and equity and inclusion. This will be the County’s second workplace climate survey. The funding comes from \$10,200 budgeted for workforce diversity and inclusion initiatives, and \$21,000 of General Fund balance, including unspent “rollover” funds from prior years’ funding for WDIC activities.
- The Legislature, as recommended by its Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, approved by a 12-1 vote (Legislator Peter Stein voted no; Legislator Martha Robertson was excused) a resolution joining other municipalities in opposing underground hydrocarbon storage adjacent to Seneca Lake. It respectfully requests that the New York State Department of Environmental conservation withhold or rescind approval of any plan for gas storage adjacent to Seneca Lake. Mr. Stein said he feels he doesn’t know enough about the issue to be able to vote in favor of it.
- The Legislature, without dissent, authorized acceptance of a \$49,745 grant from the United States Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to conduct a high-hazard pipeline inventory, to be administered by the Planning Department. The County’s updated Hazard Mitigation Plan includes an action to develop a plan to analyze and prioritize pipeline crossing mitigation.

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