



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **December 2, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Approves Release of Request for Proposals for Old Library Property**

The Legislature authorized release of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for redevelopment of the site of the Old Tompkins County Library, the latest step in a process begun a year ago to seek a developer to purchase or lease the property for redevelopment. As recommended by the special Old Library Committee, the Legislature authorized release of the RFP to all four remaining sponsors of active concept proposals, in response to the County's Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI), inviting them to respond to the more detailed Request for Proposals, which seeks specific and detailed proposals and commitments regarding the project.

The prospective developers are DPI Consultants, LLC; Franklin Properties, MCK Building Associates, STREAM Collaborative, Taitem Engineering, and Dr. Marne O'Shae, MD; Rochester's Cornerstone Group, Ltd. and Cayuga Housing Development Corporation; and Travis Hyde Properties and HOLT Architects. (Two others had also responded to the RFEI, but over the course of the review period withdrew from consideration.)

Approval came by a 10-1 vote, with Legislator Dooley Kiefer reluctantly opposed, and Legislators Nathan Shinagawa and Kathy Luz Herrera excused. Legislator Kiefer, a member of the Old Library Committee, said she had to vote no since she strongly feels the full RFP should be included as part of the minutes, a motion that failed by a vote of 6-5, lacking the required 8 votes. Before the final vote, Legislator Carol Chock proposed what she saw as stronger wording regarding "green" building provisions in the RFP, which failed by a 4-7 margin.

All responses to the RFEI proposed using the site solely, or primarily, for housing. Among selection criteria listed in the RFP is that all proposals include mixed uses (at least one other use in addition to residential) and that housing be designed to serve a diverse population and provide ownership opportunities, if possible. The RFP expresses the County's interest "in selling or leasing the property at fair market value for redevelopment that will make a positive contribution to the community and that is not only compatible with, but also will strengthen and enhance the quality of the surrounding neighborhoods."

The final RFP will be released this month, with responses due by March 2015.

*Contact: Legislature Chair Michael Lane, Chair of the Old Library Committee, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440.*

#### **February 10 Proclaimed for Special Legislative Election**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved February 10, 2015 as the date for the Special Election in District 9 to fill the unexpired term of Legislature Brian Robison. (Legislators Nate Shinagawa and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused.) Mr. Robison resigned at the end of November to accept appointment as Tompkins County Undersheriff. District 9 includes the Town of Groton and portions of the Towns of Dryden and Lansing. The County Charter specifies that a special election must be held within 75 days of the position becoming vacant.

"This is something that doesn't happen very often in Tompkins County," Legislature Chair Mike Lane noted. "This gives an opportunity for the people in District 9 to pick their own representative through an election." He said the political parties will move expeditiously to nominate candidates, and independents who want to run

must circulate petitions. Especially since the election will occur at an atypical time, Chair Lane urged people in the district to keep it in mind and get out to the polls to vote.

Anyone interested in running for the seat should contact the Tompkins County Board of Elections.

*Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Vice Chair, Government Operations Committee, 257-7453; Contact: Legislature Chair Michael Lane, Chair of the Old Library Committee, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440.*

### **Airport Property Lease to City Authorized for Renewable Energy Partnership**

The Legislature, without dissent, authorized the lease of approximately 10 acres of airport land to the City of Ithaca for the purpose of building and operating a solar array—a key element of a renewable energy partnership between the County and the City that will generate solar power to meet a substantial portion of City government electricity needs. (Legislators Nathan Shinagawa and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused.) The firm SolarCity will construct the 2MW solar array on the property; the City will purchase the power and benefit from a remote net metering arrangement. That means the electricity generated by the solar array will be directed into the electric grid, and the City will get credit for each kilowatt of electricity in the form of a reduced electric bill. The project is made possible by competitive funding from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). SolarCity, the preferred solar vendor for the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA), which applied for the incentive funds on behalf of the two municipalities. The 20-year lease is pursuant to an agreement with SolarCity, and the Legislature’s determination that all requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act have been satisfied and the Legislature authorizes the project to proceed.

*Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Vice Chair, Government Operations Committee, 257-7453; Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440.*

### **Highway Crew Thanked for Winter Storm Recovery Assistance**

The Legislature recognized the County Highway crew that volunteered last month to help with winter storm disaster recovery in the Buffalo area. The crew—Willie VanDeMark, Matt Watros, Kevin Hulbert, and Joe Sidle—were in Buffalo for five days, using the County’s front-end loader and three of its dump trucks to cart snow off the streets of Buffalo, along with crews from Caroline, Danby, Dryden, and from throughout New York State. “We are glad they were ambassadors of good will,” Chair Mike Lane said.

Thanking the Legislature on behalf of the crew, Highway Director Jeff Smith noted that the crew wants the Legislature to know that this is just a part of their job, that everyone in the Division would have jkoined in if asked, and that the Highway Division has always extended a hand to our neighbors when they needed help.

*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440.*

### **Resolution of Support Passed Regarding Services for Those with Limited English Proficiency**

The Legislature reaffirmed its commitment to provide meaningful access to all individuals with Limited English Proficiency seeking or requiring access to County programs, activities, services, and benefits. The resolution states that the Legislature expects to provide individuals with free interpreter and translation services when it appears the individual’s inability to communicate effectively in English may adversely affect such access to needed County services, and that it expects all County personnel and subcontractors to act in accordance with the County’s LEP Plan. County Administrator Joe Mareane noted that the County is mandated to provide these services for departments receiving federal funds, and has for some time, but is shifting from a departmental to a county approach, and indicates through the Legislature’s action, that it is committed to going beyond its mandated requirement.

*Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Vice Chair, Government Operations Committee, 257-7453; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

Among other business, the Legislature

- Approved revised bylaws for the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission, with purposes stated—to foster understanding and respect among all persons in Tompkins County, and to encourage equity; discourage discrimination; and to serve as an Advisory Board to the Office of Human Rights and to the Legislature.

- Passed a number of standard year-end resolutions—including authorizing County Finance Director Rick Snyder to issue and sell up to \$10 million in Revenue Anticipation Notes, if needed, in anticipation of State Aid to be received during the 2015 fiscal year, and setting January 6, 2015 as the date of the Legislature’s 2015 organizational meeting.
- Proclaimed, through Chair Mike Lane, December 12, 2014 as *Audrey Cooper Day in Tompkins County*, extending on behalf of the Legislature, “admiration, respect, and profound gratitude for Audrey and her extraordinary heart and achievements during years of selfless, important service to the Tompkins County community, and “encourag(ing) all citizens to recognize, on the occasion of her retirement, her many contributions to promote an end to oppression, protect the diversity and inclusion for residents, and improve the cultural competency of the people of Tompkins County.”
- Also, through proclamation from Chair Lane, extend the Legislature’s deepest gratitude and recognition to members of the Groton Fire Department on the occasion of the department’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**- END -**