



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **January 20, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Chair Lane Delivers Annual Message, Announces 2015 Organizational Structure**

In his annual message before the Tompkins County Legislature, Legislature Chair Mike Lane said Legislators “are poised to continue the People’s work in a manner that is serious, progressive, and fiscally responsible” during 2015. Challenges for the year ahead come in the context of county residents’ needs—where, he said, despite a statistically low unemployment rate, many members of a “shrunk middle class” are underemployed, stuck in entry-level jobs, and struggling to meet their families’ basic needs. “We need more good-paying jobs,” Mr. Lane said, along with workforce training to ensure those jobs are filled with well-qualified county residents.

As part of his message, Mr. Lane also spoke out against New York State for unfairly saddling counties with what he called New York State’s “smoke and mirrors gimmick of real property tax cap legislation,” now in its third year, while the State continues to require that State-mandated programs, such as Medicaid, be paid through counties’ real property taxes, instead of the broad-based State income tax. “Seventy-four percent of Tompkins County’s real property tax goes directly to pay those mandates that we do not control,” he noted. “Meanwhile, roads, bridges, law enforcement services, youth, elderly, health, library, and mental health programs, to name a few, all suffer from lack of proper funding.” He called upon State legislators to stop their “hand-wringing” and to “vote against budgets that contain unreasonable, unfunded mandates to be paid for by county residents’ property taxes,” and said the County Legislature “must constantly apply the necessary pressure to get real changes made in this unjustifiable travesty.” As part of its charge, the Chair has asked the Legislature’s Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee to provide leadership in the push-back against unreasonable mandates and restrictions from New York State.

Legislature committee structure remains the same for 2015, with seven standing committees (Budget, Capital, and Personnel; Economic Development; Facilities and Infrastructure; Government Operations; Health and Human Services; Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality; and Public Safety.) Many committee leadership positions, however, have changed. Legislature Vice Chair Jim Dennis will continue to chair the Budget committee, and Legislator Peter Stein Health and Human Services. Legislator Dan Klein will become chair of Government Operations, and Nate Shinagawa chair of Public Safety. Dave McKenna will assume the chairmanship of Facilities and Infrastructure, while continuing to lead the Broadband Subcommittee, reporting to GO. Martha Robertson will chair Economic Development, and Dooley Kiefer, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality. Two special committees—on the Old Library and Charter Review—both led by Chair Lane, will continue their work. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne will continue to lead the County’s Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Concluding his message, Chair Lane thanked his fellow legislators for their hard work last year for the people of Tompkins County. “Every year it gets harder and more complicated to serve,” he said. “This year there will be lots of challenges, but with your good will, your ideas and your remarkable service, 2015 will be a great year for our county. With my trust in the People, our employees, and in each of you, I am confident that we will go about our work and get it done in a manner of which we can all be very, very proud.”

Mr. Lane’s full remarks are posted on the Legislature website at  
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/legislature/2015%20Chairs%20Remarks%20V2.pdf>  
Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8313 or 844-8440

## **Legislature Accepts Homeland Security Grants**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote of (Legislators Dan Klein, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, and Kathy Luz Herrera were excused) authorized acceptance of more than \$350,000 in New York State Homeland Security grants on behalf of the Department of Emergency Response. The funding will be used to complete previously and partially funded projects, including enhancement to the computer aided dispatch system with a “text-to-voice” incident response paging module; update of the system’s “Pictometry” mapping integration system; procurement of a web-based Emergency Operations Center management software system; and purchase by the Sheriff’s Office of a scenario-based virtual training simulator system for law enforcement and emergency management agencies.

*Contact: Lee Shurtleff, Director, Department of Emergency Response, 257-3888; Jim Dennis, Vice-Chair, Public Safety Committee, 387-4058.*

Among other business, Legislators

- Approved an adjustment to the 2015 budget to apply State grant funding received through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to support a feasibility study, in collaboration with the City of Ithaca, regarding relocation of the NYS Department of Transportation facility located on Cayuga Inlet. The Legislature accepted the grant award last year, but the County’s contract with the State was not yet executed before year’s end, but should be early in 2015.
- Requested that State legislators representing Tompkins County sponsor and support legislation continues the authority of the Tompkins County Legislature to extend the additional 1% local sales tax in Tompkins County beyond its scheduled expiration in November 2015. Authorizations have been requested and renewed since 1991. Expiration of the 1% sales tax would mean the loss of \$10.8 million in revenue.
- Began to discuss the Governor’s proposal for a tax rebate for some property owners in taxing jurisdictions that have met the tax cap. County Administrator Joe Mareane told legislators he plans to prepare a briefing memo on the issue for the Legislature.
- Heard from five residents who expressed deep concern about the proposed West Dryden Road pipeline and NYSEG statements at a public meeting before the Dryden Town Board last week. Legislator Martha Robertson, who had attended that meeting, and several other legislators also expressed concern during subsequent discussion.

**- END -**