



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **March 3, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Adopts 2015 Comprehensive Plan

The Tompkins County Legislature adopted the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, representing the first full update of the Plan since it was first adopted by the Legislature eleven years ago.

The Plan was adopted by an 8-2 vote, with Legislators Mike Sigler and Dave McKenna voting no, and Legislators Glenn Morey, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Jim Dennis excused.

The Plan, as described to Legislators by Planning Commissioner Ed Marx last month, presents a vision for the future of the community based on a set of principles that reflect community values as expressed by the County Legislature. Overarching principles addressing Sustainability, Regional Cooperation, and Fiscal Responsibility, are reflected throughout the Plan, with topical principles also included related to the economy, housing, and transportation; the environment; climate change; and neighborhoods and communities. The Plan addresses climate adaptation for the first time, as well as healthy communities. It includes 28 recommended action items for County government to initiate within two years.

Explaining his opposition before the vote, Legislator Sigler said, that while he appreciates the Planning Department's hard work on the Plan, from feedback he's received from his constituents in Lansing, he can't support adoption since he feels that it is too focused on the City, especially in the area of infrastructure such as natural gas, with areas that don't have the infrastructure yet bearing the brunt of its provisions.

Legislature Chair Mike Lane thanked everyone involved in preparing the new Comprehensive Plan, especially the Planning Department which carried forth the update and solicited public input over a two-year period, with a result that he said serves the County well.

The Plan is available for review on the County website at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/compplan.

Contact: Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning, 274-5560; Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 257-7453; Legislator Mike Sigler, 339-7978.

TC3 President Haynes Cites Accomplishments, Challenges in Annual "State of the College" Message

Delivering his annual "State of the College" message to the Tompkins County Legislature, Tompkins Cortland Community College President Dr. Carl Haynes characterized the year as one of exciting accomplishments in the context of financial challenges.

"If you look at TC3's accomplishments this past year, you might find it unlikely that a college so clearly committed to developing cutting-edge, innovate programs finds itself in the midst of one of the more financially challenging periods in its history," President Haynes said. "But through all of the challenges...we have maintained our commitment to developing programs that respond to community needs and have also managed to strengthen our commitment to student success through a variety of initiatives."

Among the many accomplishments President Haynes highlighted were the successful new Farm to Bistro program; a 10-acre solar farm to provide 90% of campus power, honoring the College's commitment to become a sustainable campus, and main campus building and Library improvements to better serve students, as well as a Network Peer Mentor program through the Office of Multicultural Services; a successful global connections program; and professional staff development and workforce-focused programs.

The College's new financial reality, he said, is evidenced by a decline in enrollment, influenced by increased restrictions in Federal and State student aid and increased competition for students from four-year colleges experiencing the same dynamic, as well as increased media attention on higher education that calls into question the "value" of a college degree. Taxpayer support is also down—with State support per full-time equivalent student still \$168 below its level of five years ago, and State dollars supporting only 26% of the College's budget. The demand for accountability and compliance, he said, continues to increase, which can be taxing on resources. The College, he said, has accepted this reality and is excelling in dealing with it—creating cutting-edge programs that meet employment needs and prepare our students for work and transfer. With 82% of employed recent graduates working in New York State, and a little more than half of them working in our area, he called TC3 "an essential component of local workforce development," which continues to innovate and remain ahead of local needs.

"TC3 has always believed that change is good. And we understand that not all change is easy," President Haynes concluded. "Recent changes have provided serious challenges. But we have not shrunk from those challenges. We have not hidden in our shell and cried for assistance. We have made our own way, never breaking from our vision and our mission of student success. From introducing a revolutionary Farm to Bistro concept, to developing new classrooms and a solar farm that moves us toward energy independence, we have continued to innovate and ensure that taxpayers get the most from their investment."

Contact: Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.

County Administrator Distributes Briefing Document on Governor's Circuit Breaker Proposal

County Administrator Joe Mareane distributed to Legislators a briefing memo on Governor Cuomo's circuit breaker proposal, a \$1.66 billion dollar plan that would provide a sliding-scale income tax credit for homeowners and renters whose property tax bill exceeds 6% of household income. The credit, which would be phased in over a four-year period would be linked to the property tax cap, and would apply only to those residing in "tax cap compliant" jurisdictions.

Mr. Mareane's "white paper" memo summarizes how the circuit breaker would work; notes concerns with how it could impact the County's ability to provide services in the future; and recommends that the \$1.66 billion be redirected to pay for the cost of State programs and obligations, such as Medicaid, that have been shifted to counties. Through such mandate relief, the report states, the State could reduce county property taxes across the state by one-third and provide broad-based property tax relief to all property taxpayers, rather than to only some homeowners and renters.

Read Administrator Mareane's report, posted on the County website, at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Authorizes Interim Hydrilla Funding.

The Legislature authorized the County to enter into a contract with the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District to provide up to \$200,000 to the District, on an interim basis, to support the eradication of Hydrilla in and around Cayuga Lake. The vote was unanimous, with Legislators Mike Sigler and Dave McKenna voting no and Legislators Glenn Morey, Kathy Luz Herrera, and Jim Dennis excused. The agreement will enable the District to meet the up-front "full reimbursement" requirement for Hydrilla-eradication funds committed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Through the contract, the District will be obligated to repay the County as NYSDEC reimbursements are received. The Ithaca City Common Council is also considering a similar arrangement to commit \$100,000 in up-front interim Hydrilla funding for the District.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 257-7453

Jack Hopper Appointed as 2015 Tompkins County Poet Laureate

Legislature Chair Mike Lane announced the appointment of Ithacan John “Jack” Hopper as Tompkins County’s Poet Laureate for 2015. Mr. Hopper was recommended by the Community Arts Partnership, the unanimous recommendation of the selection committee, according to CAP executive director John Spence. In his submitted Statement of Purpose, the new Poet Laureate states: “I would want to reach out to students of all ages grade school through college through seniors by holding clinics in which we could read and discuss work by many different poets...I’d want to work with veterans groups, interracial audiences...Writers, like everyone else must be engaged...Poetry’s goal is to tell the truth.” More information on Mr. Hopper’s background can be found at www.johnhopperauthor.com.

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

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Authorized a temporary increase in salary for Public Health Director Frank Kruppa to reflect his service also as interim Commissioner of Mental Health Services, as requested by County Administrator Joe Mareane, following the recent resignation of Mental Health Commission Sue Romanczuk,. Mr. Kruppa will provide executive-level management for Mental Health while continuing to serve as Public Health Director, until a new Commissioner of Mental Health Services is selected and can begin employment. Mr. Kruppa’s salary is increased by about \$10,000 to \$108,202.
- Approved the award of 2015 grants for Arts and Culture Organizational Development, funded through County room occupancy tax dollars.

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