



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **April 21, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Local Law Adopted Governing Oil and Gas Waste

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Mike Sigler was excused) adopted a new Local Law that prohibits in Tompkins County the sale, application, and disposal of waste associated with oil and natural gas exploration, extraction, and storage activities. The Law notes that toxins and radioactive materials found in oil and gas waste are detrimental to the public health and should be kept out of the county water supply and off county roadways. It states, “Due to the significant public health risks, and to ensure the safety of future generations and the natural environment, this Legislature hereby finds it necessary to prohibit the introduction of such waste into treatment facilities, onto roadways, and onto real property located within Tompkins County.”

In 2012, the Legislature passed a resolution prohibiting the use of natural gas and oil by-product brine from hydrofracking on roads and property for which Tompkins County is responsible. The new Local Law prohibits the application of natural gas or oil waste on *any* road or real property located within Tompkins County for any purpose; the introduction of such waste into any wastewater treatment facility or solid waste management facility within the County; and any sale, acquisition, storage, handling, treatment, and processing of such waste within Tompkins County.

Responding to an inquiry from Legislator Dooley Kiefer, County Attorney Jonathan Wood acknowledged enforcement will be a challenge; he said he will consult with other counties that have passed similar laws regarding how enforcement is handled in their jurisdictions.

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

Legislature Hears Comment, Delays Action on Proposed Law Governing Sparkling Devices

The Legislature took public comment, but delayed scheduled action on a proposed new Local Law that would allow the sale of sparkling devices in restricted periods during the year. The law would exercise a local option to allow the devices to be excluded from the “Dangerous Fireworks” definition under New York State Penal Law. Government Operations Committee Chairman Dan Klein withdrew the action resolution, with expectation to return it for consideration May 5, after hearing comment at the hearing—among those speaking Ithaca Fire Chief Tom Parsons, Ithaca Board of Fire Commissioners Chair Bill Gilligan, and County Director of Emergency Response Lee Shurtleff, who all expressed concern about the safety of the devices, both from their use and to responders related to their storage. The Board of Fire Commissioners has officially opposed the law. Director Shurtleff said, “When the discussion is not about whether a product is dangerous, but, in fact, how dangerous, we’re entering a slippery slope.” Legislator Klein said he had heard from five fire and emergency services organizations in the county concerning the proposed law. At the hearing, two representatives of the fireworks industry countered that the law would give the County the opportunity to regulate the devices, which they said are sold in compliance with safety requirements of the New York Department of State.

Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582.

Legislature Expresses Concern About Trans-Pacific Partnership and Use of “Fast-Track” Authority

The Legislature passed a resolution voicing official concern about trade negotiations between the US and eleven Pacific Rim nations that have occurred without transparency over the past six years toward the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and about President Obama’s request to Congress for “Fast-Track” authority for the TPP. “Fast-

Track”, in part, limits Congress’s role, requires Congressional action within 90 days, allows no amendments, and only a single yes or no vote on the total package. The resolution calls both TPP and “Fast-Track” “non-transparent, undemocratic, and potentially harmful to the United States economy, workforce, legal systems, food safety, environment, and residents, and are opposed by numerous environmental, health, labor, and good government organizations.”

The Legislature, in its action, asks Congress and the President to halt the “Fast-Track” process of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and instead to allow the TPP ‘a fully transparent, public debate in Congress’ to allow its impacts to be fully assessed, and protect the rights of the people in Tompkins County, the best interests of our local business and workforce, the health of our environment, and the sovereignty of local governments in Tompkins County. The Legislature also urges its Federal representatives—Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and Representative Tom Reed—to vote against any legislation in favor of the “Fast-Track” process.

The vote was 12-1, with Legislator Peter Stein voting no (Legislator Mike Sigler was excused). Mr. Stein said he sees the issue as extremely complicated and difficult to understand. He said he fears the real motivation of the move to defeat “Fast-Track” may be political, an attempt to undercut the President, and that sometimes the use of international tribunals are necessary in the negotiation of treaties between nations. But others spoke to its importance, even down to the level of local government. Legislator Martha Robertson warned that, under the tribunal process, a foreign corporation could sue any federal, state, or local subdivision of a signatory country, for alleged wrongs or perceived future wrongs. Legislator Carol Chock said the system, if it’s implemented, will decimate small business, and needs to be opposed to preserve our economic way of life. Calling the issue “critically important,” Legislator Will Burbank said the County may be the first county in the nation to oppose it and has the ability to affect the conversation.

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

Public Hearing Scheduled on Law to Establish Sustainable Energy Loan Program

The Legislature scheduled for its next meeting May 5 a public hearing on a new proposed Local Law that would establish a sustainable energy loan program in Tompkins County. The program would provide property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing for local energy-Related improvement projects, as authorized under State law. The PACE program offers low-cost long-term financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, supporting up to the entire project cost, for owners of existing non-residential properties, with repayments collected by the municipality through a charge on the tax bill.

The hearing will take place on May 5 at 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (second floor), 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Economic Development Committee, 272-0584.

Among other business, the Legislature

- Awarded the contract for Phase 2 of the Ellis Hollow Road Reconstruction project in the Town of Dryden to Suit-Kote Construction, Cortland, NY, for its bid of just over \$2.1 million. The project will rebuild just over a mile of roadway from where Phase 1 of the project left off in 2011, west of Genung Road to Dodge Road. Construction will begin next month.
- Accepted a \$65,000 grant from the Park Foundation to support the Solar Tompkins Renewable Heating and Building Efficiency Program, an initiative to accelerate the transition of home heating from fossil fuels through deployment of super-efficient air and ground source heat pumps in combination with improved building efficiency through better insulation and air-sealing. The County Planning Department will act as fiscal sponsor and is prepared to administer the grant.
- Awarded more than \$190,000 in Spring 2015 County Tourism grants, funded through County Room Occupancy Tax revenue.

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