



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Still No Decision on Preferred Developer for Old Library Site

The Tompkins County Legislature again tonight failed to reach a decision on selecting a preferred developer for the County's Old Library property. After failing to muster the necessary eight votes for any development proposal at the Legislature's June 16 meeting, then deadlocking July 10 at the committee level on proposals to forward a new recommendation to the full Legislature, the Legislature tonight, in 90 minutes of comment and deliberation, considered three member-filed resolutions, each of which failed to win support.

The Legislature heard more than a half-hour of public comment—seven of the ten people who spoke voiced support of the Franklin Properties group, which would adapt the structure of the current building into uses including 22 condominiums. Also among those who spoke was Brian Wilbur, chair of the Board of Directors of Lifelong, who stressed that his board must look out for the interests of the senior services non-profit, which may extend beyond the current development issue. He urged the Legislature to make its decision based on the larger community perspective, beyond Lifelong. The Travis Hyde proposal, which would build 60 senior-focused rental apartments as part of its project, includes space for Lifelong in its proposal.

A renewed recommendation, advanced by Chair Mike Lane, to designate Travis Hyde as preferred developer failed by a 5-7 vote, with Legislators Will Burbank, Carol Chock, Kathy Luz Herrera, Dan Klein, Dooley Kiefer, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, and Nate Shinagawa voting no. Two proposals to designate Franklin as preferred developer also failed, one advanced by Dooley Kiefer defeated 5-7 (Legislators Mike Sigler, Peter Stein, Kathy Luz Herrera, Jim Dennis, Shinagawa, and Chair Mike Lane dissenting); another from Legislator McBean-Clairborne (which did not include some wording from Kiefer's resolution) failing by a 4-8 margin (Legislator Kiefer changing her vote and voting no). Legislator Martha Robertson abstained in all votes; Legislator Glenn Morey was excused.

Prior to the votes, Legislator Shinagawa said he has changed his positions over time in deciding between two good projects, that he wants to achieve a project that is good for downtown, will bring development to a place where it is vacant, and to serve the community the best way it can—and to achieve a project, rather than no project. While at this point he plans to support Franklin, he said it is critical for him that the project apply for New York State Regional Economic Development Council grant funding, as developers have suggested to enable new construction to accommodate Lifelong. Lack of such assurance at this time, Shinagawa said, was the reason for his "no" vote on the two Franklin resolutions. In discussion, a number of Legislators spoke about their feelings and priorities on the issue, among them Legislator Mike Sigler, who said he would want the committee to ask advice of the County Administrator and County Attorney regarding options at this point, and said he would support including the option of putting the property on the open market.

The matter will once again head back to the Old Library Committee for further deliberation and to determine how to proceed.

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

Delivering Mid-Year Budget Projection, Administrator Directs Spending Adjustments

County Administrator Joe Mareane delivered a sobering mid-year report on budget projection to the Legislature, reporting that, with receipt of second-quarter sales tax numbers from the State, mid-year sales tax collections are nearly 3% below last year's level, a projected shortfall for the year of \$500,000 to \$800,000. Coupled with projected shortfalls in overtime spending in the County's 24/7 operations, in the cost of Jail board-outs, and in the mandated PreK Special Education program, Administrator Mareane said that, after recognizing surpluses expected in other parts of the budget, it appears the County could be on track to exceed the 2015 budget by \$750,000 to \$1 million this year unless mitigation measures are taken.

In response to this situation, the Administrator is taking the following actions:

- Limiting overtime to emergency needs and essential functions.
- Implementing a "flexible" hiring freeze and filling vacancies only through internal promotions and transfers. The hiring freeze will not apply to 24/7 operations.
- Requesting that all departments refrain from making non-essential discretionary purchases.

Administrator Mareane said the restrictions will be relaxed if the situation improves as the year progresses.

He cautioned that the adverse developments also impact what can be accomplished in development of the 2016 budget, though he said he is determined to present a recommended budget allows current levels of service to be maintained.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Trumansburg Seniors Recognized as Distinguished Youth

The Legislature recognized five Trumansburg High School seniors as Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. Michelle Peterson, Jacob Cozzarin, Merin Ketchum, Luke Parker-Zielinshi, and Julia Tantillo, have been involved with the school's SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) program, a student-led club that is part of a national organizations whose goal is to "empower young people to successfully confront the risks and pressures that challenge them in their daily lives." A letter of nomination from Tompkins County Youth Services planner Kris Bennett highlights several recent activities, including such programs as the "Tag It" program to be above the influence of negative behaviors; "Ghost Out Day" to demonstrate those no longer here as the result of a decision made by themselves or someone else; and "Hang Up and Drive", an initiative to increase awareness among Trumansburg drivers of the risk of driver distraction of texting while driving. In her nomination letter, Bennett said, "These students serve as positive role models to students in their school and larger community...They are all very deserving of recognition as Distinguished Youth."

The Tompkins County Distinguished Youth Award is cosponsored by Bangs Ambulance Service, Specialty Trophies and Awards, Purity Ice Cream, and Cayuga Radio Group.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Tourism Capital Grant Awarded for Lake Street Park Project

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-2 (Legislators Will Burbank and Dooley Kiefer voted no; Legislator Glenn Morey was excused) awarded a \$10,000 tourism capital grant, funded through Room Occupancy Tax, toward the Lake Street Public Park enhancement project in the City of Ithaca, as recommended by the County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board and the Tourism Capital Grant Review Committee. As the City prepares to replace the Lake Street bridge over Fall Creek, improvements are proposed to the sidewalk, crosswalk, and overlook park to increase safety and access to viewing the Ithaca Falls, and to provide seating, bike racks, and interpretation. There was discussion related to the project, at the stage of considering a negative declaration regarding environmental impact (which passed 10-3). Legislator Kiefer said her no vote relates to information she has received that the latest EPA monitoring results regarding to lead contamination in that area have not yet been received. Legislator Burbank said his dissent came in response to concerns voiced to him that the City's Natural Areas committee had not been involved in the City's process.

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

County Achieves Favorable Results in Recent Bond Sale

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported on the results of the County's recent sale of bonds and Bond Anticipation Notes (BANs) on July 10. The County sold \$1.35 million in one-year BANs (to TD Securities (USA) LLC) at a net interest rate of 0.7610%. The BANs were issued to finance the Pine Tree Road construction project. The County, with its reaffirmed and positive Moody's bond rating of Aa1 (stable) sold \$9.72 million of 15-year Public Improvement (Serial) Bonds at a net interest rate of 2.715% (to Raymond James & Associates, Inc.) Proceeds of the 2015 long-term bonds redeem nearly \$3.8 million in bond anticipation notes that matured July 14, and provide \$5.39 million in new monies for various purposes, including such projects as facility restoration, road and bridge improvements, Mental Health Building Renovations, Recycling & Solid Waste Center Upgrades, the South Street stabilization project, and other improvements.

Contact: Finance Director Rick Snyder, 274-5544.

Funding Agreement Approved for Newfield Covered Bridge Preservation Project

The Legislature authorized a supplemental construction funding agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation for the covered bridge preservation project in the Town of Newfield. The agreement makes available \$334,000 in the Bridge Contracts account as up-front funding for total construction phase costs; reimbursement of 80% Federal and an increased 15% level of State funding, leaves an expected County cost of just over \$11,000, with a just over \$5,500 contribution from the Town of Newfield.

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Highway Director Jeff Smith, 274-0300.

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