



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **August 4, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Travis Hyde Group Selected as Preferred Developer of Old Library Site**

The Tompkins County Legislature tonight overcame its prior deadlock at two previous meetings and approved the Travis Hyde Group as preferred developer of the County's Old Library site, located at the corner of Ithaca's Cayuga and Court Streets. Travis Hyde proposes 60 senior-focused market-rate rental apartments, with professional office space and space for the senior services organization Lifelong.

While prior repeated attempts to reach a decision on the preferred developer failed to achieve the eight votes needed for passage, after an hour of discussion, tonight's proposal to endorse Travis Hyde passed by a vote of 8-5, Legislators Will Burbank, Carol Chock, Dooley Kiefer, Dan Klein, and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no. Legislator Martha Robertson abstained in all votes related to the Old Library issue. The action came in response to a member-filed resolution advanced by Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera, who voted no on resolutions considered at the Legislature's last meeting July 21, a resolution identical to one considered at that time, but which removed reference to a ground lease. After careful consideration during what she characterized as a long, but productive process, Luz Herrera said that while both Travis Hyde and the competing Franklin Properties project had positive aspects, she decided to support the Travis Hyde proposal "as the best proposal for my county, my community, my city, and the economy."

Franklin Properties proposed adapting foundation and structural elements of the current building into uses including 22 condominiums, and ultimately it was Legislator Nate Shinagawa, who had previously expressed conditional support of Franklin, who changed his vote tonight to vote in favor of Travis Hyde. Continuing to praise both projects, Shinagawa said his vote tonight was a vote in support of progress and to move the issue forward to its next stage of City review, saying he did not consider it responsible to delay a decision further.

During the hour of discussion prior to the final vote, Legislator Kiefer proposed an amendment that would have changed the preferred developer to Franklin and add language that would have included language providing assurance that Franklin would apply for State Regional Economic Development Council grant funding to accommodate new construction for Lifelong; that measure failed by a 6-7 vote. A motion from Legislator Chock to postpone action for two months, until the October 1 meeting, in part to enable more work by the Old Library Committee, failed by a 4-9 vote, only Legislators Chock, Burbank, Kiefer, and Klein voting in favor.

The Legislature's action notes that the designation of a preferred developer is the first step in a review process that will include completion of a coordinated State Environmental Quality (SEQR) Review with the City of Ithaca before any decision to sell the property is made, and directs staff to meet with the preferred developer to establish a project that can move forward through the approval processes including any needed landmark preservation approvals, the coordinated SEQR review, and consideration of a sales and development agreement by the Legislature.

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

### **Legislature Authorizes Housing Fund Administration Agreement**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote with Legislator Carol Chock abstaining, accepted and approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Ithaca and Cornell University for continued administration of the Community Housing Development Fund (formerly known as the Tompkins County Housing Fund) for another six years. Last October, the Legislature authorized funding over the next six years (allocated from funds originally received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, not local tax dollars), contingent upon renewed financial commitments from the City and Cornell, and approval of the MOU.

The administration agreement continues through 2021 the successful joint initiative to assist in the development of local housing units that will remain affordable for low- to moderate-income households, established in 2009. Over the next six years the County has committed a total of \$600,000 towards the program, Cornell a total of \$1.2 million, and the City an initial \$100,000 for the first year with work underway to provide an additional \$500,000.

The fund's name has been changed to the Community Housing Development Fund to more clearly communicate that the program is meant to spur the development of housing in the community and eliminate confusion with the County's Homeownership Program.

Legislator Chock was given permission to abstain, since she wished to avoid any appearance of impropriety due to a family connection to an organization that may receive funding from the Community Housing Development Fund.

*Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 257-7453; Megan McDonald, Senior Planner, Tompkins County Planning Department, 274-5560.*

Among other business,

The Legislature accepted the County's audited financial report for the 2014 fiscal year, conducted by the audit firm of Ciaschi, Dietershagen, Little, Mickelson & Company. Presenting highlights of the 2014 Financial Report, Finance Director Rick Snyder told Legislators the County received excellent findings from auditors, including "no material instances of noncompliance and no material internal control weaknesses at the financial statement level." The County's Unassigned Fund Balance increased by \$4.4 million in 2014 and as a percentage of General Fund Revenues, stands as 15.3% in 2014, up from 13.2% for the year before. Mr. Snyder reported that the Transportation Fund (Airport Fund) had a deficit unassigned fund balance of just under \$338,000 as of year's end 2014.

The Legislature took several actions concerning operations at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport—authorizing acceptance of a \$3.6 million Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grant to help finance the Runway 14-32 Rehabilitation Project, and a more than \$800,000 FAA grant to finance an aircraft rescue fire fighting vehicle, protective gear, and fire equipment. Agreements were also approved with C&S Engineers, Syracuse, NY, for services related to the runway rehabilitation project and the GA Apron Rehabilitation project. Gateway café, Inc. was awarded a five-year contract for provide the terminal café at the airport.

**- END -**