



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **August 18, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves White Collar Labor Agreement, Sets Management Salaries

The Legislature ratified a new, three-year collective bargaining agreement between Tompkins County and its White Collar Unit (Civil Service Employees Association, Civil Service Employees Association, Local 855), the County's largest employees union. Approval came without dissent, with Legislator Dan Klein abstaining since a family member is covered under the White Collar contract. Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused. Union membership ratified the tentative agreement July 30.

The agreement, which covers the years 2015 through 2017, provides wage increases of 2.25% for each of the three years, with provisions retroactive to January 1 of this year for those on the payroll as of the date of the ratification agreement. The new contract succeeds the prior bargaining agreement with the White Collar Unit, which expired as of the end of 2014.

Budget, Capital, and Personnel Chair Jim Dennis and County Administrator Joe Mareane both thanked the union's negotiating team for its work. Administrator Mareane recognized the team for demonstrating courage and good faith to get through a number of difficult issues.

Among contract provisions are a \$50 per year increase in annual Longevity pay for employees with ten or more years of service and adjustments in the formula for the employee "VEBA" health reimbursement account for new employees hired after the ratification date. New employees hired after the ratification date also will enroll in the "90 Platinum Plan" provided through the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium.

By legislative policy, provisions of the White Collar Unit agreement also apply to the County's Confidential employees.

In a separate related action, the Legislature, also by unanimous vote (with Legislator Luz Herrera excused), established salaries for County Management positions consistent with the salary and benefit provisions of the White Collar contract, and authorized the transfer of funds to support those salary adjustments. County Administrator Joe Mareane noted that by custom and practice the salary increases for management employees in recent years have paralleled those negotiated by the CSEA White Collar Unit.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 387-4058; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Extends Agreement to Procure Electricity

The Legislature voted to authorize a new agreement to supply electricity to support county government operations, which extends the County's electricity procurement agreement with the former Integrys Energy Services, now Constellation Energy, for a two-year period, from the time the current agreement expires in September of next year, through September 30, 2018. As in the past, the power purchase comes through a collective public bid process by the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA). As was the case for the two prior agreements, the electricity procurement includes purchase of Nationwide Renewable Energy Credits

(RECs) to offset 100% of the purchased energy use by County structures during that two-year period. The RECs are a tradable commodity created when harnessing energy from wind, sun, water and other renewable energy sources.

County Administrator Joe Mareane told the Legislature that approval of a new contract now, before the existing agreement expires, comes on the advice of energy experts through MEGA, to lock in a lower rate that can be expected to reduce the County's electricity cost by 13%, while leveraging development of renewable power in this country through the purchase of RECs.

Approval came by an 11-2 margin, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock voting no (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused). In discussion, both Kiefer and Chock maintained that acting now to enter a new contract is premature, Kiefer saying she wished to wait another year, in part because of process considerations, and Chock agreed, saying that with impending changes in energy production, savings have the potential to increase exponentially in New York State. Chock advanced a proposal to delay action for seven months, which failed to win support by a 2-11 vote, only Chock and Kiefer voting in favor.

Administrator Mareane noted that if other energy procurement opportunities arise during the contract period, the County could still take advantage of those opportunities, since the agreement specifies no minimum purchase amount and the County will still have the option to buy from other sources off-line. Mareane said the new agreement can be expected to save \$60,000 per year of the County's \$450,000 electricity cost over the two-year life of the agreement.

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Bond Resolution Approved for Ithaca College Refinancing

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused), authorized the Tompkins County Development Corporation to issue up to \$50 million in Tax-Exempt Revenue Bonds to enable the refinancing of prior bond debt by Ithaca College. The action, which has no effect on the bond indebtedness of Tompkins County, refinances earlier bonds secured by the College in 2007 through 2009 from the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency (Civic Facility Revenue Bonds) and the New York State Dormitory Authority to fund a number of capital construction projects and related campus improvements. Pursuant to Section 147(f) of the Internal Revenue Code, approval by the Legislature enables interest on the bonds to be excluded from gross income for Federal income tax purposes.

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

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Awarded McPherson Builders, Inc., of Ithaca, the contract to construct a Tipping Shelter for use in food scrap recycling drop-off at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center, for its submitted bid of \$60,439.
- Authorized the Department of Social Services to accept a \$40,000 grant from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for a Non-Custodial Parent Employment program to assist those persons to earn the means to satisfy their court-ordered child support obligations. DSS will enter a performance-based contract with Challenge Industries to provide such services, with \$15,000 to be expended during 2015.

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