



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **November 5, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Approves Pursuit of Funding for Law Enforcement Consolidation Study**

The Tompkins County Legislature, by a vote of 10-2 (Legislators Mike Sigler and Dooley voted no), authorized the County, jointly with the City of Ithaca, to pursue a State-funded study to examine the potential feasibility of consolidation of City and County law enforcement agencies. The action, which has also been approved by the City of Ithaca Common Council, authorizes the two governments to jointly apply for funding to support the study, and to develop a request for proposals to seek expert consultant to assist with the study. The measure notes that, “as a result of years of cooperation and previous successful consolidation efforts, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County are especially well positioned to achieve efficiencies through the consolidation of further shared services between the City of Ithaca Police Department and the Tompkins County Sheriff’s Office,” and that the State has encouraged consolidation and shared services, and has established various grant funds, including a \$150 million allocation Governor’s Municipal Restructuring Fund in this year’s State budget, to support such efforts.

Legislator Sigler said he opposes the initiative, since he does not see that any such an arrangement would benefit Tompkins County, and he said he doubts that the Town of Lansing, which he represents, would support it. Legislator Kiefer said her opposition stems from the fact that the measure does not address mention establishing a County Department of Public Safety as an option, without reference to the City. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne cautioned that any effort should proceed carefully and consider all options.

Assuring that there are no foregone conclusions, Legislature Chair Mike Lane said, “What we are doing now is applying for money from New York State...to see if we can qualify and take a look at this feasibility study...I support this, because it’s time...Individuals may have strong opinions about what should happen, (but) as a body there is no drift, there is no plan, there is no agenda.”

*Contact: James Dennis, Acting Chair, Public Safety Committee, 592-3206; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.*

#### **Legislators Welcome New Colleagues**

Chair Michael Lane and members of the Legislature welcomed the two new members who are expected to join the Legislature after results of this week’s special election are certified by the Tompkins County Board of Elections.

Legislators Anna Kelles (District 2) and Richard John (District 4), according to unofficial results, have been elected to fill the two vacant seats on the Tompkins County Legislature to complete unexpired terms that run through the end of 2017. Ms. Kelles will fill the seat left vacant by the resignation of Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera, and Mr. John will assume the seat formerly held by Legislator Nathan Shinagawa. Both Legislators-elect told their colleagues they look forward to working with every one of them.

A number of Legislators also paid tribute to their departed colleagues, saying it is difficult not to have had the chance to say goodbye. Legislator Jim Dennis, who began his service on the Legislature at the same time as Mr. Shinagawa, praised Shinagawa’s energy, knowledge, integrity, and many accomplishments. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was one who voiced thanks for Ms. Luz Herrera, who “served with a lot of valor on this

body and with a trueness to her convictions.” Legislator Carol Chock said, “I will miss both of them and the ‘fire they both had in their bellies’.” Welcoming the Legislature’s new members, she said, “Elections by their very nature mean there is a loser...It isn’t easy to put yourself out there, and to run. I want to thank the people who ran, and thank the voters who came out.”

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

### **Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Microbeads Law**

The Legislature scheduled November 17 as the date for a public hearing on a proposed Local Law that would prohibit the sale in Tompkins County of personal care products containing microbeads. The hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, located on the Second Floor of the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

“Microbeads” are synthetic, plastic particles added to personal care products, such as facial cleansers, shampoos, and toothpastes. The proposed law notes that microbeads, which enter bodies of water through disposal down household drains following the use of such personal cosmetic products and collect harmful pollutants already present in the environment, pose a serious threat to Tompkins County’s environment. The County, through its Department of Weights and Measures, would have jurisdiction to enforce the proposed local law.

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

### **Funding Targeted to Hancock Street Redevelopment Authorized**

The Legislature authorized funding, through the Housing Fund (a joint initiative involving Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca, and Cornell University) to support Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services’ 210 Hancock Street Redevelopment project. The vote was unanimous, with Legislator Carol Chock abstaining, due to her family connection to INHS. The action authorizes County disbursement of \$100,000 to the Housing Fund (now known as the Community Housing Development Fund) in support of the project, and also authorizes the County, as fiscal agent for the Housing Fund, to enter into an agreement with the City of Ithaca to accept \$100,000 in City funds toward the project.

The Housing Fund Program Oversight Committee recommended funding at \$200,000, \$100,000 each from the City and County. The project will provide 53 rental units, 43 of which are within the maximum income limits permissible for funding with the County’s share of funds (which come from federal homeownership program loan repayments.) The Housing Fund assists with pre-development costs associated with residential and mixed-use real estate development projects that primarily benefit low and moderate-income households.

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

Among other actions, the Legislature

Authorized acceptance of a more than \$86,000 Homeland Security Grant by the Department of Emergency Response, to acquire and install mobile-data terminals in fire and emergency medical services apparatus, enhancing coordination and information sharing.

Authorized acceptance of a nearly \$150,000 shared-services grant award by the County Clerk, which will extend to all town and village courts in Tompkins County use of the Countywide electronic documents management system.

Scheduled for the Legislature’s December 1 meeting, public hearings related to grant administration of the New York State Community Development Block Grant Award for the Tompkins County Healthy Homes Rehabilitation Program (phase two) and the Tompkins County Homeownership program..

Authorized execution of a contract with C&S Engineers for design services for the latest phase of the Ellis Hollow Road improvement project (Pine Tree Road to Game Farm Road in the Town of Ithaca), and a funding agreement with New York State related to that project.

**- END -**