



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislature Takes Comment on 2016 Proposed Budget

The Tompkins County Legislature tonight held its annual public budget hearing, the formal part of the County's budget process devoted to inviting public comment on the County's 2016 Tentative Budget and Capital Plan for the next five years. The proposed budget incorporates the County Administrator's Recommended Budget and amendments adopted by the Legislature.

Five people addressed the Legislature at the hearing, which lasted about 15 minutes.

Grace McMenamain, resident of the Town of Ithaca, expressed her concern about rising taxes, noting that taxes that rise every year "are like compound interest, they just don't go away." She asked Legislators to think about those who live in outlying areas and those, such as seniors, who live on fixed incomes. She noted that, as a realtor, she knows that most houses in the Town of Ithaca are valued at about \$200,000, higher than the County median value. She said, "I know you are doing the best you can...but there has got to be some relief somewhere."

Kevin Kelly, board president for OAR (Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources) thanked the Legislature for its continued support of OAR and for the \$100,000 in contingent funding targeted for a comprehensive inmate reentry program that is included in the Tentative Budget. He said, "Thanks to your support and support of the community, we are leading by example here."

Both Library Director Susan Currie and Nathan Fawcett, president of the Friends of the Library, thanked the Legislature for its support to the Tompkins County Public Library over the past three years to help enable it to close the Library's structural deficit. Currie expressed "great appreciation" for the many hours Legislators devote to developing the budget.

Christian Shaw, of the organization Plastic Tides, spoke to the potential local law, under legislative review, that would ban sale in Tompkins County of personal care products containing microbeads. He said that, if the legislation is passed, his organization wants to ensure that the County's Department of Weights and Measures, which would be charged with enforcement of the law, is properly funded.

The Tentative Budget, amended by the Legislature from the recommended spending plan presented by County Administrator Joe Mareane, would increase the County tax levy by 1.12%, compared to the 1.3% included in the Administrator's budget to meet the Legislature's 2016 levy goal. The recommended tax rate of \$6.73 per thousand is down by 1.77% from 2015, representing an increase of \$13.61 in the tax bill for the median-valued county home, currently valued at \$170,000, compared to \$165,000 last year. As part of the amended budget, the County Solid Waste Fee, after decreasing by \$4.00 for 2015, would increase by \$3.00, to \$55.00 per household.

The Legislature can further amend the budget before final passage. The adoption vote is scheduled for the Legislature's next meeting on Tuesday, November 17, which begins at 5:30 p.m. at Legislative

Chambers at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (second floor), 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The 2016 Recommended Budget and the amendments adopted by the Legislature are posted for review online at the budget page of the County website at www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/2016budget. Paper copies of the budget are available at the County Legislature office and at County Administration, 125 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206.

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