



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **March 1, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves More Money for Pine Tree Road Project, Awards Contract

The Legislature amended Tompkins County's Capital Program to increase cost of the Pine Tree Road Bike and Pedestrian Paths project, in the Town of Ithaca, appropriating \$163,729 for the project from the Highway Fund, and awarding the construction contract to Economy Paving, Inc., of Cortland. The vote was 11-2, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Peter Stein voting no, and Legislator Dan Klein excused. Economy Paving's low bid of more than \$1.6 million came in an estimated \$188,729 over the project budget.

The project, included in the County's Capital Program since 2009, will create separate pedestrian and bicycle facilities and widen road shoulders at the old railroad overpass, providing safe, accessible accommodations for pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles. It will build a 10 foot wide, paved ADA-compliant patch connecting existing sidewalks at Maple Avenue and East Hill Plaza to paths on Cornell's campus at the Pine Tree Road/Route 366 intersection, as well as with the East Ithaca Recreation Way, that trail carried over Pine Tree on a new pedestrian bridge.

Federal and State governments have committed approximately \$1.2 million in non-transferable aid to the project; Cornell University previously committed \$400,000; and the Town of Ithaca \$70,000. The Legislature's action increases the County's investment by up to \$163,729, which, when combined with an additional \$25,000 contribution from Cornell, will allow the project to move forward as designed and without delay. The action increases the total project budget to just over \$2 million, and the County's funding contribution to just under \$395,000.

Legislator Stein said his constituents along Pine Tree Road have had, and continue to have, serious concerns about increased traffic in their neighborhood, and how the project would exacerbate that. He said he doesn't think the paths will be used to the extent people think they will be. Legislator Kiefer said she could not in good conscience support the increase since she believes the project benefits Cornell and not everyone along Pine Tree Road. Legislator Martha Robertson countered that, in fact, Cornell, with its \$425,000 contribution is paying more than 20% of the cost, with the County paying less than 19% of the more than \$2 million project. She called the project "a key link, a decades-long investment, a matter of safety, and a matter of sustainability." *Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Highway Director Jeff Smith, 274-0300.*

City-County Police Consolidation Study Resolution Passed

The Legislature, which late last year, endorsed a joint effort with the City of Ithaca to secure State grant funding and other aid to fund a detailed analysis of the feasibility and opportunities for consolidation or further sharing of police services between the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County, authorized continued work on the first stage of the application process for such grant funding from the New York Department of State. The focus at this point is a draft Project Charter, a summary statement required as part of the application process, which includes such elements as project description, objectives, and potential for public benefit such shared services might achieve. The Legislature's action also authorizes the County Administrator, jointly with officials from other participating municipalities, to prepare and release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to carry forth such a study, if the funding application is successful.

The authorization vote came by an 8-5 vote, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Mike Sigler, Will Burbank, and Carol Chock voting no (Legislator Dan Klein was excused). Several Legislators expressed concern regarding whether there had been adequate opportunity for public input at this stage, and also whether any eventual RFP would come back to the Legislature for consideration. Much discussion before the vote dealt with proposed wording changes, most of which were not approved. County Administrator Joe Mareane told Legislators that there will be considerable time to incorporate input into the project scope, and while the County's normal process of reviewing the RFP would take it to Public Safety Committee, several Legislators expressed their view that review by the full Legislature would be important, with some members of Public Safety indicating that they would want any such document reviewed by the full Legislature.

The funding application must be submitted to the State by March 15. Representatives of the County, the City of Ithaca, and other potential parties, will meet with representatives of the Department of State March 2, to consult and further refine the draft Project Charter.

Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 266-7579; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Urges Upstate/Downstate Parity in Transportation Funding

As recommended by the Legislature's new Transportation special committee, the Legislature, without dissent, called upon the State to restore funding parity between the capital plans for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the New York State Department of Transportation (Legislator Dan Klein was excused). The measure notes that, as part of a recent agreement between Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, the Governor is committing \$8.3 billion in State resources to cover the MTA capital plan's five-year deficit. And it calls upon the Governor and our State Legislative delegation to work with the County and other local governments to develop and fully fund a five-year capital plan that will "provide the necessary and proper funding to New York's counties" through substantial increases in highway funding and establishing a five-year State Aid to Local Bridge and Culvert Program, "to give them the ability to adequately maintain their infrastructure." Restoring such parity between the DOT's highway and bridge capital program and the MTA's capital program, the Legislature notes, will assure that each program is funded at \$26.1 billion, providing resources to help fund local needs.

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

Capital Funds Appropriated to Assist in Acquiring Six Mile Creek/Midline Road Property

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Dan Klein was excused) appropriated \$25,000 from the County's Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection, to provide partial financial support to the Finger Lakes Land Trust toward acquiring 125 acres along Six Mile Creek and Midline Road in the Town of Dryden. The acquisition is intended to protect the Six Mile Creek corridor, connect important adjacent public and private open space resources, and improve public access to recreation resources. Located in the Forest Lands Natural Features Focus Area, as designated in the County's Comprehensive Plan, the property is included in a Priority Protection Area in the Tompkins County Conservation Strategy. Legislator Carol Chock thanked staff for working on this proposal, calling it a "model application."

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584; Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Planning, 274-5560.

Jonathan Gomes Selman Recognized as Distinguished Youth

Ithaca High School Senior Jonathan Gomes Selman is recognized as the latest Tompkins County Distinguished Youth. A letter of nomination filed by Tompkins County Youth Services planner Kristin Bennett, on behalf of the Joint Youth Commission (for the Towns of Ithaca and Caroline and Villages of Cayuga Heights and Lansing) recognizes the many accomplishment of Jonathan, who has served actively for the past four years as the Commission's only youth member. But Bennett's letter states that "there is much more to Jonathan than his involvement with the JYC. In a nutshell, Jonathan is the 'complete package.' He is smart, kind, committed to making a difference, a leader, a musician, a scholar, an athlete, a volunteer, an innovator, and a friend."

Among his many accomplishments cited: a prestigious research internship at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Cornell, three years teaching children as a volunteer at the Sciencenter; communicating about interesting developments from the world of math and science through his blog, *Stumbling Into Science and Math*; three years as co-president of the IHS Computer Science Club, two years on the IHS Code Red Robotics Team, and two years as a leader in the high school's Link Crew mentoring program. He is a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist, a member of the National Honor Society, a member of the high school's concert band and pep band, and a member of the high school's (undefeated) tennis team.

"Jonathan has set a high standard for his peer group," Bennett's letter states. "He serves as a positive role model to students at Ithaca High and in the larger community. He is very deserving of recognition by Tompkins County as a Distinguished Youth."

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

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434.

Legislature Urges State to Assist Counties in Complying with Federal Child Care Law Changes

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislature Dan Klein was excused), urged New York State to provide technical and financial assistance to counties in complying with federal child care law changes, so that local child care slots are not lost due to increased costs of meeting new federal mandates. The new regulations, covering such requirements as background checks, annual inspections, and health and safety training, the measure notes, will affect the accessibility and affordability of child care as a critical work support, with added implementation costs reducing subsidies to low-income families who need child care in order to go to work. The Legislature calls upon the Governor and State Legislature to hold counties harmless financially to preserve existing child care slots and subsidies provided by counties as the new federal standards are implemented.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584.

Among other business, the Legislature

- Received its annual report on Tompkins County's Compliance Program from Deputy County Administrator and County Compliance Officer Paula Younger.
- Accepted a \$70,000 grant from the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc., in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, to the County's Workforce Development Board, to fund a Disability Resource Coordinator position offered through Challenge Workforce Solutions.
- Awarded \$197,000 in Arts and Culture Organizational Development grants, divided among a dozen local organizations, allocated from County Room Occupancy Tax revenue, as recommended by the Community Arts Partnership and the Strategic Tourism Planning Board.

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