



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
March 15, 2016
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **March 15, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

New Hydroelectric Agreement Expected to Meet Two-Thirds of County Government Electricity Needs

The Tompkins County Legislature has authorized a hydroelectric utility remote net metering agreement, between Tompkins County and Gravity Renewables, Inc., which is expected to produce electricity to meet roughly two-thirds of county government electricity needs through clean, local, and renewable generation. The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized the County Administrator, in consultation with the County Attorney, to negotiate and execute the hydroelectric remote net metering agreement between the County and Gravity Renewables.

The agreement will enable the County to purchase renewable hydroelectric power from a 2 MW hydro facility located in Waterloo, which, on average, will produce approximately 3.8 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year, representing about 63% of Tompkins County government's annual electric usage of 6 million kilowatt hours. The 20-year agreement (which includes an option for one five-year renewal option at the end of the term on mutual agreement) will guarantee the County a steady stream of electricity at a stable price during the contract period.

The Gravity Renewables option is the result of a joint procurement involving Tompkins County and the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA), authorized by the Legislature in 2013.

Through the remote net metering agreement with Gravity, the County will purchase electric power from the Waterloo hydro facility at a mutually agreed-upon price, and will receive a deduction from its electric bill based on the amount of electricity that the facility injects into the grid. It's expected that the County's deductions each year will slightly exceed the cost of the electricity, providing an economic benefit to the County—estimated at about \$39,000 per year, or about \$735,000 over the 20-year period.

There is no cost to the County, other than its purchase of power, and the purchase agreement will enable Gravity to acquire the century-old facility and support modest refurbishment. The initiative, officials note, represents an important element in meeting the County's greenhouse gas emissions goals, and complements both wind and solar power. In his presentation to the Legislature, Omay Elphik, of Gravity, said the hydropower arrangement involves a projected 2,620 metric Tons in avoided carbon each year, with the County retaining rights to its environmental attributes.

Legislature Chair Mike Lane said, "This is one more example of where Tompkins County is a leader and is out in front, and what better way to generate our needs, in terms of our history, to generate power." He added that the arrangement is also an example of inter-municipal cooperation, since it also supports jobs and economic benefit in neighboring Seneca County.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584.

Environmental Declaration Issued for Red Mill Bridge Project.

The Legislature issued a Negative Declaration of Environmental Significance, in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act, related to the capital project that will reconstruct the Red Mill Road Bridge

over Fall Creek in the Town of Dryden. The authorization vote, following discussion about the project, was 12-2, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock voting no. Reconstruction replaces the 1887 truss bridge, which has been closed for years, with a new bridge that will better comply with current-day engineering standards. The existing bridge will be moved to the Dryden Highway Department for use as a future pedestrian bridge. As part of the capital project, and based on community input, the neighboring Malloryville Road bridge will be refurbished to keep it a passable bridge, while Red Mill will be reconstructed. The bridge projects were approved as part of the County's capital program, with the SEQR action the next step in the process.

Both Legislators Kiefer and Chock questioned the need for the project, in terms of potential vehicle use and the volume of population served. Legislator Martha Robertson countered that the project is a wise investment and a critical piece of infrastructure for that rural area. The Town of Dryden will be supporting 20% of the project cost.

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; County Highway Director Jeff Smith, 274-0300.

State Grant Accepted to Address Issue of Sexually Exploited Youth

The Legislature authorized acceptance of a \$35,000 in Safe Harbor Sexually Exploited Youth funding from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services by the Youth Services Department, to strengthen capacity of the department's Runaway and Homeless Youth programming. Funds will be used to support community engagement and education to dispel the myths regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as well as runaway and homeless youth; to train agencies, organizations, and individuals concerning the issue; and to provide additional support for the department's runaway and homeless youth programs.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584; Youth Services Director Amie Hendrix 274-5310.

Other business:

Public Health Director Frank Kruppa provided an informal briefing to legislators regarding the issue of elevated lead levels found in sampling from some Ithaca schools, including the Health Department's role, regulatory factors, and communication with the public. As part of his report, the Director said his department has re-sampled Ithaca schools on public water, where a District contractor had found elevated lead levels, believed to have been caused by a sampling error, and is awaiting results from a state laboratory.

County Administrator Joe Mareane reported that the application has been filed for State funding to investigate potential for some type of consolidation or shared services for County and City law enforcement. He said the first installment, expected at about \$50,000, would relate to proof of concept and be focused on identification of potential options, to bring back to municipal governing bodies, and that he expects community input would be part of the study process.

The Legislature awarded two service contracts to Green Scene Lawn and Garden of Ithaca, both three-year contracts, with option for renewal: for exterior landscaping at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, and for exterior landscaping and snow removal services at the County Solid Waste Division.

County Finance Director Rick Snyder reported he has received word from the State Gaming Commission that the County can expect close to \$1.2 million from licensing fees for the Lago Casino in Tyre (Seneca County).

Legislature Chair Mike Lane proclaimed April 2016 as Organ Donation Month in Tompkins County. Noting that approximately 10,000 people in New York State are awaiting an organ transplant and that 500 New Yorkers die every year while waiting for an organ transplant, Chair Lane said the County Clerk's Office and Department of Motor Vehicles are promoting the need for organ donation, and he encouraged all residents of Tompkins County to enroll as an organ and tissue donor at our local DMV Office.

- END -