



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 7, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Funds Jail Reentry Program

The Tompkins County Legislature has authorized funding to implement a Reentry Plan for inmates of the Tompkins County Jail, as advanced by the County's Criminal Justice/Alternatives to Incarceration Board (CJATI), following more than a year of intensive study. Authorization came by unanimous vote.

The action releases to the Department of Probation and Community Justice \$100,000 in contingent funding, set aside during the 2016 budget process to support reentry programs, and authorizes development of a Request for Proposals to support implementation of the Reentry Plan put forward by CJATI. The program will focus on helping released inmates access to the county's many services and ease their transition back into the community, aimed at reducing rates of recidivism.

Under the Plan, the County will contract for approximately \$65,000 to be committed to case management services, approximately \$25,000 for enhanced basic education services and life skills training offered through the County's Day Reporting Program, and approximately \$10,000 for grant writing services aimed at augmenting local funding for reentry services.

The full Reentry Plan is posted at the CJATI page of the County website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/CJATI>.

The resolution notes that the Legislature supports the increased investment in reentry services as a means to reduce recidivism, lower the high cost of incarceration, and provide greater opportunities for individuals who have been incarcerated to live meaningful and productive lives. Legislator Martha Robertson said, "This is fulfilling what we asked staff and the non-profits to collaborate on, and they are ready to move forward."

Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 266-7579.

Legislature Urges PSC to Allow Customers to Retain Ownership of Renewable Energy Certificates From NYSERDA-Funded Projects

The Tompkins County Legislature has come out firmly against a proposed retroactive policy change by the New York State Energy and Resource Development Authority (NYSERDA) which would claim NYSERDA ownership of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) from NYSERDA-supported customer-sited projects, with transfer of those RECs to investor-owned utilities, at no cost, enabling the utilities to claim the environmental attributes of those customer-sited projects as their own. The opposition resolution was passed by a 13-1 vote, with Legislator Dooley Kiefer voting no. Legislator Martha Robertson remarked, "What they are doing is getting everybody to register their RECs, then they are sweeping their value and calling their value totally under their control, with the intention to give their value to the utilities—then they will be able to say how 'green' the grid is...This has legal meaning and financial value." Although no Tompkins County government projects are affected, the policy change would impact other entities, including other local governments and Cornell University.

The resolution, in part, urges the Department of Public Service and NYSEERDA to reaffirm that those investing in customer-sited renewable energy projects retain ownership of RECs associated with NYSEERDA-supported projects; states that municipalities and other entities that currently own such RECs will need to be appropriately compensated if the State's plan proceeds as currently proposed; and cautions that the NYSEERDA plan will undermine the State's policy goals of encouraging motivation for the public sector and private customers to invest in renewable installations, as they will lose their ability to claim leadership on renewable investments. It calls upon the Public Service Commission and NYSEERDA to work with counties, local municipalities, and other impacted entities to "develop a solution that will promote—rather than undermine—continued broad-based green investments." Legislator Kiefer cited inaccuracies and inconsistencies within the wording of the resolution for her "no" vote.

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

Legislators Briefed on "The Ithaca Plan"

Prior to the Legislature meeting, at a special session of the Health and Human Services Committee, Legislators received a 90-minute briefing by Ithaca City Mayor Svante Myrick, along with District Attorney Gwen Wilkinson and Lillian Fan, of the Southern Tier Aids Program, on "The Ithaca Plan: A Public Health and Safety Approach to Drugs and Drug Policy". Communicating information that has been covered in prior community presentations, Mayor Myrick and the other presenters talked about the process that produced the plan, its findings, and recommendations.

While some Legislators indicated that they may not agree with everything that is in the plan, several did urge that the approach to the problem be handled as a coordinated, countywide issue. Legislator Peter Stein said, "I think our social unit is now the county...I would like to believe that this problem is not only a city problem...I would like to see us really seriously doing this as a unit, together. Legislator Jim Dennis added, "I hope that as we move forward, the county, the city, and the agencies can sit down and figure out how we can do this." And Legislator Martha Robertson observed that involvement of County departments, such as Social Services, Public Health, and Mental Health, will be critical in seeking funding from outside funders, to support Plan initiatives such as job training, housing, and a local detox center. "You can't do what you're proposing without County departments," she said. Committee Chair Leslyn McBean-Clairborne said that this is widely considered a draft plan, with room for tweaking and input, and that she looks forward to working with this to develop a comprehensive Tompkins County plan.

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-5104

Bonding Approved for William George Agency

The Legislature by a 12-2 vote (Legislators Carol Chock and Dooley Kiefer voted no) approved the issuance of up to \$3.1 million in tax-exempt revenue bonds for the William George Agency for Children's Services, in the Village of Freeville. The bonds, issued by the Tompkins County Development Corporation, will support construction of a 15,000 square-foot, 24-bed residence hall, as well as renovation of other existing buildings on the campus. The Legislature's action has no effect on the indebtedness of Tompkins County; authorization by the Legislature as the County's governing body is required to exempt the non-profit from taxes on the bonds under the federal Internal Revenue Code. Legislator Kiefer cited inconsistencies between documents and the resolution for her "no" vote. Legislator Chock cited her concerns related to expansion of a facility that requires those being treated to do so far away from their families..

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

Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Tax Cap Override Law

The Legislature, by a vote of 10-3 (Legislators Peter Stein, Glenn Morey, and Dave McKenna dissenting, and Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne excused) authorized a public hearing for June 21, 2016, 5:36 p.m., regarding a Local Law to permit the County to override the New York State Tax Levy Limit for 2017. The hearing will be held at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. Under New York State Property Tax Cap legislation, if a county government decides to adopt a county budget with a property tax levy that exceeds the level set by the State, the county government must pass a local law to override that cap. While it does not mean that the County necessarily will override the cap, the

law, which has routinely been passed each year since Property Tax Cap legislation took effect, would provide the Legislature flexibility to exceed the Cap if it is deemed necessary.

Contact: Legislator James Dennis, 592-3206.

Airport Revitalization Grant Approved

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized the County to accept a nearly \$350,000 grant from the New York State Department of Transportation under its Statewide Opportunities for Airport Revitalization (SOARs) program to assist with marketing and promotion at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport.

The grant will be used to offset the cost of marketing and associated consulting fees to help improve and increase service at the Airport. Airport Manager Mike Hall notes acceptance of the grant will enable the Airport to increase the promotion and marketing of the airport as part of its work to obtain additional service, without increasing the airport's operating budget for marketing.

Contact: Airport Manager Mike Hall, 257-0456, X2643; David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243

Among other business

The Legislature formally supported application by Lounsbery Farm in the Town of Caroline for New York State Assistance payments for farmland protection implementation project funding to hold a conservation easement on the farm. The Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board has identified the farm as a high priority farm for protection and preservation.

Legislature Chair Mike Lane reported that high winds have caused severe problems with the roof on the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) main building, and the roof will have to be replaced. Half of the \$3.5 million cost will be paid by the State, the remainder must be supported by the sponsoring counties—over \$1 million from Tompkins County; about \$600,000 from Cortland County.

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing on the TC3 2016-2017 operating budget for June 21, 2016 at 5:32 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The proposed budget includes no increase in sponsoring county contributions for the coming year.

The Legislature also scheduled two other public hearing on June 21, 5:34 p.m.—one on a proposed new Local Law that would create a new chapter of the County Code regarding Residency, revising residency requirements for the positions of Correction Officer and Assistant District Attorney; and another regarding continuation and modification of Agricultural District No. 2, located on the west side of Cayuga Lake.

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