



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 21, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves Financial Arrangement for Development of Amici House Supportive Housing

The Legislature approved County financial support to enable Tompkins Community Action to develop the Amici House Project, which will serve homeless and housing-vulnerable young people. The action authorizes the County to acquire a parcel of land at 661 Spencer Road, owned by TCAAction, at a cost of \$118,000, and amend the County's 2001 financing agreement for acquisition and development of TCAAction's adjacent headquarters, to incorporate the parcel. The existing 20-year payback agreement with TCAAction will be extended by two years, to 2023, to reimburse the County for the additional expense. Approval came by a vote of 13 in favor, with Legislator Carol Chock recusing herself due to her family connection with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, which is involved in some aspects of development of the project.

Amici House will house otherwise homeless young people, age 18-25, some of whom may have children. Operated by TCAAction, the project will provide up to 23 units of supportive housing, as well as five Early Head Start Classrooms. It will consist of two structures, one for the residential units, the other for the classrooms. The action consolidates ownership of the entire TCAAction complex. TCAAction will use the sale proceeds to help develop the Amici House project, which is also expected to draw outside grant support.

Noting the action's significance, Legislator Martha Robertson praised the initiative as "a terrific project", which will meet a significant need for child care and infant care, providing 42 Early Head Start spaces for kids, serving "an unserved population we have been hearing about since 2001," and creating 25 living wage jobs.

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 277-5104; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Lee Dillon, Director, Tompkins Community Action, 273-8816.

Legislature Approves TC3 Operating Budget, Roof Replacement Project, and Child Care Center

The Legislature took five separate actions regarding Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). All were approved by unanimous vote.

Following a public hearing, it approved adoption of the College's \$41.6 million 2016-17 Operating Budget. The Budget contains no increase in the sponsoring counties' contribution from current-year levels, and must also be approved by the Cortland County Legislature.

Legislators also approved an increase in the College's current year Operating Budget, to incorporate an \$831,941 increase in revenue from an increase in concurrent enrollment, enabling such revenue to be used for operating purposes. The modification has no effect on the sponsoring counties' share.

The Legislature endorsed the Tompkins Cortland Community College roof replacement project, following severe damage incurred to a section of the roof during a significant rain/wind storm in early May. The project must also be approved by the Cortland County Legislature. The estimated \$3.5 million cost will be borne half by State University of New York emergency funds and half by the County sponsors, and the Legislature formally agreed to secure funding for Tompkins County's portion of the local share (63% based on proportional student enrollment from the two counties.) In a related action, the Legislature authorized issuance of up to \$1.1

million in serial bonds and notes to pay for facility and infrastructure improvements at the College related to the roof reconstruction project.

The Legislature went on record in support of the TC3 Child Care Center project, which will construct a stand-alone child care center adjacent to the College's main campus building. The \$4 million project will be funded through \$1 million in State grants, \$1.5 million in SUNY Capital Project Funds, and a \$1.5 million local share, through private funds already received (no County sponsor cost.)

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206; Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.

Legislature Opposes Provisions of Proposed Federal Energy Legislation

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-3 (Legislators Mike Sigler, Glenn Morey, and Dave McKenna voted no), went on record opposed to some provisions of the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2016, approved in the U.S. Senate, with a modified version passing in the House of Representatives. The legislation expedites approval of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals, review of new mining permits, and oil and gas permitting and drilling through a 2,000-well pilot program.

The Legislature cites objections to provisions which, in part, include

- Requiring the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to approve LNG export terminal projects no later than 45 days after the final environmental review is filed;
- Making FERC the lead agency over all federal authorizations for natural gas projects;
- Requiring all state and other federal agencies conducting authorizations to defer to the FERC;
- Authorizing \$175 million to fund expansion of methane hydrates research and development;
- Proposing a study of the potential for ethane storage in the Marcellus, Utica, and Rogersville shale, factoring in only economic impacts, and not environmental or climate change.

The resolution states, "We can only conclude that the proposed bill will lead to more hydraulic fracturing for natural gas across the country, resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions, and incentivizing the construction of new domestic natural gas-fired power plants." The measure urges Congress to remove the provisions from final energy legislation, and urges Congress to pass energy modernization legislation that greatly advances energy efficiency, builds on policies to expand clean energy sources, and reduces economic and energy dependence on fossil fuels."

Legislator Sigler remarked that he didn't think the County should be taking up the issue, since it is a complex global issue that involves much more than just the Legislature.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584; Legislator Anna Kelles, 342-2036.

Energy and Economic Development Final Report Presented

The Legislature heard a presentation on the final report of the county's Energy and Economic Development Task Force, from task force chair Charlie Trautmann. The Task Force, comprised of local business leaders, government officials, and environmental advocates, was brought together by Tompkins County Area Development at the request of Legislature Chair Mike Lane. The group has studied ways to advance the County's greenhouse gas emission goals over the next five years while supporting the growth of jobs and the economy.

The report includes eight recommendations that could be initiated within the next five years, would be under local control, and would support the County's economic development goals:

- Work with the Public Service Commission and NYSEG to reduce dependence on natural gas;
- Provide secure and reliable energy to local industry;
- Reduce fossil fuel use in commercial buildings;
- Develop energy infrastructure needed to support renewable energy;
- Reduce fossil fuel use in transportation;

- Develop housing in ways that limit energy use both in buildings and transportation;
- Educate decision makers, contractors, developers and the public on critical facets of energy and economic development; and
- Implement the strategies and evaluate progress regularly.

Read the final report at <http://tcad.org/final-report-available/>.

Contact: *Katie Borgella, Deputy Commissioner of Planning, 274-5560.*

Tax Cap Override Local Law Approved

By a vote of 10-4, Legislators Glenn Morey, Mike Sigler, Peter Stein, and Dave McKenna voting no, the Legislature adopted a Local Law permitting the Legislature to override the tax levy limit for 2017. The law does not necessarily mean that the Legislature will override the cap, but provides the Legislature flexibility to exceed the Cap if it is deemed necessary. The Legislature has routinely passed such laws since the State Property Tax law was passed, and the law can be rescinded later. The Legislature has already directed the County Administrator to prepare a Recommended 2017 Budget based on a maximum 3% tax levy increase, which is half-a-percent above the projected cap. Before the vote Administrator Joe Mareane said that, without such a law in place, he believes he would be bound by the cap in preparation of the budget, and would need to adjust budget preparation targets already provided to departments and agencies.

Contact: *James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206.*

New Local Law on Residency for Certain Positions

The Legislature, following a public hearing, adopted a new Local Law that creates a new chapter of the County Code, revising residency requirements for the positions of Corrections Officer and Assistant District Attorney, intended to assure an adequate pool of qualified applicants and to retain such applicants if hired. The law exempts the positions from the requirement of New York State Public Officers Law the positions be restricted to residents of the County and permits such positions to be held by residents of any county in New York State.

The vote was 12-2, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no. Legislator Kiefer had unsuccessfully proposed that such positions be open to residents of any contiguous county or any county contiguous to those counties. Legislator Kiefer said she finds the provision for hiring statewide “excessive”.

Contact: *James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206*

Among other actions,

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized creating the position of Compliance Program Coordinator to assist with administration of the County’s Compliance Program within the Department of County Administration, under direction of Deputy County Administrator and County Compliance Officer Paula Younger, and appropriated \$38,321 from the Contingent Fund to support salary, fringe, and office supply costs associated with the position for the remainder of this year. Government Operations Chair Dan Klein said he sees the position as “a very cost-effective insurance policy” for the county.

County Administrator Joe Mareane reported on results of the New York State Legislative session, including legislation that, pending the Governor’s signature, would over the next seven years shift the cost of indigent defense to New York State. Such a change, he said, would ensure the quality of indigent defense across the state and provide true, meaningful mandate relief. Administrator Mareane also reported progress, in collaboration with representatives of the City of Ithaca, in preparing a draft Request for Proposals related to consultant services for the Police Consolidation Study. He said the draft will be brought to the Public Safety Committee, then to the Legislature at its next meeting, to provide the opportunity for Legislature review and public input before the RFP goes out. Public involvement will be a critical element of the study process, Mareane said.

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