



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
September 20, 2016
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **September 20, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Hears Report on County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Results

The Tompkins County Planning Department presented the Legislature with results of its 2014 inventories of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy Use by the Tompkins County community and Tompkins County government operations.

Results from the Community Inventory, accounting for all GHG emissions from within Tompkins County, show a 21% reduction in emissions between 2008 and 2014, and a reduction in emissions for County government operations of 53% over the same period—both achievements greater than the Legislature’s 20% reduction goal. The 2014 inventory also showed that renewable energy generation in the county during that time increased by 136%.

Deputy Commissioner of Planning Katherine Borgella cautioned, however, that those results are based on methodology used in the County’s previous GGE inventory in 2008. New accounting methods, which take into account emissions effects from methane leakage from fracked natural gas, however, indicate that emissions may have actually increased for the community by 67%, and for government operations by 10%, from 2008 to 2014.

Introducing the presentation, County Planning Commissioner Ed Marx remarked, “This is probably one of the most complicated areas of government I have been involved in...an evolving area, and we will continue to learn more week by week to learn about these issues.” The use of natural gas, transportation issues, and continuing to increase the use of renewables are recommended as areas of focus moving forward.

For further detail, and to view the inventories and their supporting documents, visit the Planning Department website at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/planning/energy-climate>.

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

Legislature Approves Comprehensive Title VI Policy

The Legislature approved amendments to County policy reaffirming the commitment of County government to serve all persons without discrimination, and in compliance with requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin. Title VI applies to all recipients of federal funding; as a recipient of federal funds, Tompkins County is required to have a Title VI program.

“For clarification, this policy, which addresses our ‘commitment to serving the public without discrimination,’ is not new. The policy was established in 1993,” Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger, the County’s Compliance Officer, told the Legislature. “Regulatory requirements have changed since then, as well as directives on how we demonstrate Title VI compliance specifically, so the policy has been updated to meet those requirements.” The contents of the policy and the complementary program document have been well researched, meet best practice in Title VI implementation, and model recommendations by regulatory authorities, she said.

The Legislative Policy Statement which introduces the policy states: “Tompkins County government is committed to equally serving all persons in a customer-friendly and culturally sensitive manner and without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origin, alienage, disability, medical condition, military status, familial status or any other status or category protected by law.” Ex-offender status will also be specified, at the request of the Legislature. The policy, in part, designates all County departments as responsible for identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices that prevent equal access to County programs, services, and activities. It directs that such efforts must address such factors as program participation, access to treatment and other related services, contractor or vendor opportunities for minority-owned and women-owned businesses, proactive investigation of complains, allocation of funds, and prioritization of projects.

To support policy implementation, a companion Title VI Program Plan has also been developed that explains Tompkins County’s obligation under Title VI, requirements for Title VI administrative structure, and guidance for ensuring full compliance.

Approval came by a vote of 11-1 with Legislator Dooley Kiefer voting no (Legislators Martha Robertson and Peter Stein were excused). Legislator Kiefer’s dissent related to concerns about a reference and a procedure citation that were not included in the policy document.

Contact: Deputy County Administrator and Tompkins County Compliance Officer Paula Younger, 274-5551; Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582.

Legislature Approves Additional Funding for Homeownership Program

The Legislature authorized the granting of an additional \$500,000 in Small Cities and New York State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Income funds Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, which administers the county Homeownership Program on behalf of the County, and extended its contract with INHS for another year, through April 2018. The vote was 12-0, with Legislator Carol Chock abstaining due to her family connection with INHS. (Legislators Martha Robertson and Peter Stein were excused.) The amount supplements a \$200,000 award approved by the Legislature in January. The current CDBG grant award funding the program does not expire until the end of next year, but it is expected that existing funds will be exhausted by early 2017 due to increased interest in and applications to the program.

Contact: Megan McDonald, Tompkins County Planning, 274-5560; Dooley Kiefer, Vice-Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 257-7453

Among other actions, the Legislature

- Approved more than \$149,000 in certified “rollover” funding, unspent by 13 County departments in the 2015 and prior years’ budgets, to support current-year spending.
- Recognized and thanked eleven retiring employees for their County service. Recognized were Jacque Washington, Yvonne Carroll, and Sue Wrolstad from Mental Health; Lynda Halstead and Sharon Reagin of Finance; Mary Monkman and Theresa Lyczko of Public Health; Lisa Siegard and Michael Searles from the Sheriff’s Office; Barbara O’Brien of Facilities; and Gwen Wilkinson, retired District Attorney.
- Scheduled a public hearing for October 4th, 5:30 p.m., on a proposed Local Law enacting a late application procedure for the low-income senior citizen real property exemption through the Department of Assessment. The hearing will be held at Tompkins County Legislature Chambers, second floor of the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

- END -