



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **October 4, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

New Local Law Approved Regarding Late Application for Low-Income Senior Exemption

Following a public hearing, the Legislature approved, without dissent, a new Local Law that enacts a late application procedure for the low-income senior citizen real property exemption through the Department of Assessment. As part of the 2016 Budget Bill, the New York State Legislature allowed by local option the ability to extend the filing deadline to the last day to pay school taxes without interest, in cases where the assessor deems that a property owner has good cause to miss the application deadline.

Before the vote, Legislator Dooley Kiefer noted that “good cause”, as defined by the Director of Assessment, would be indicated by a death of the applicant’s spouse, child, parent, brother or sister; or an illness of the applicant or of the applicant’s spouse, child, parent, brother or sister, which actually prevents the applicant from filing on a timely basis, as certified by a licensed physician.

Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582; Jay Franklin, Director of Assessment, 274-5517.

Legislature Delays Vote to Schedule Hearing on Proposed Charter Amendments

The Legislature postponed action to schedule a public hearing November 1st on proposed amendments to the Tompkins County Charter, following two years of line-by-line review of the Charter by members of the Legislature’s special Charter Review Committee.

Some Legislators expressed concern that Legislators needed to first hear a presentation from the committee on the recommended changes, and to have the opportunity to weigh in, before the hearing is scheduled, and the public needs to have the opportunity to review the revised draft. The vote to postpone passed by a vote of 10-3, with Legislators Jim Dennis, Glenn Morey, and Chair Mike Lane dissenting. (Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was excused.) The presentation is expected to take place at the Legislature’s next meeting October 18, and the impression was that the hearing, most likely, could still take place November 1st, presuming the Legislature at its next meeting agrees to proceed.

The Legislature reviews and amends the Charter every ten years. Among the committee’s recommended amendments are to change the County’s four public works divisions—Highway, Facilities, Airport, and Solid Waste—to County departments; to modify the designation of the Planning Department and its Commissioner to the Department/Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability; and to codify as part of the Charter an Independent Redistricting Committee, as was employed in redistricting following the 2010 Census. The recommended changes do *not* include any change in the position of Sheriff, which retains its elected status under the Charter.

Contact: Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Charter Review Committee, 257-7453; Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434, 844-8313, or 844-8440.

Proclamation of Indigenous People’s Day

Noting that the County recognizes that we currently stand on land that was home to the Indigenous Peoples of the Cayuga Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and that it values the many contributions that

Indigenous Peoples have made to our community, the Legislature proclaimed the second Monday in October, 2016 as Indigenous Peoples' Day in Tompkins County.

The Proclamation encourages other public institutions, businesses, and organizations to recognize the Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day, and affirms the County's commitment to promote the well-being and growth of Tompkins County's American Indian and Indigenous community. The Proclamation also notes that the Legislature "calls upon the citizens of Tompkins County to officially celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day "in a manner that promotes respect, understanding, and friendship, combats prejudice, and eliminates discrimination stemming from colonization." Read by Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, chair of the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Proclamation also notes that the County has committed through its diversity policy and other non-discrimination policies to oppose systematic racism towards all marginalized peoples, including the Indigenous People in our region.

The Legislature presented a copy of the Proclamation to representatives of a newly formed group of Indigenous Peoples living in Tompkins County, group member Audrey Cooper thanking the Legislature, Legislator McBean-Clairborne and the WDIC, calling the proclamation "an important step."

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee, 277-5104.

Among other businesses:

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in memory of former long-time Public Works William Mobbs, who has died after a brief illness. Legislature Chair Mike Lane noted that Bill served for many years and supervised many major projects, including the construction of the Airport and Solid Waste, was someone everyone liked, and had a great impact on Tompkins County government. County Attorney Jonathan Wood described Mobbs as "irreplaceable"—knowledgeable, smart, and kind. County Administrator Joe Mareane said, "I think immortality exists when your contribution lasts long beyond your life," and that many from throughout county government still refer to lessons learned from Bill Mobbs." He called Mobbs' death a loss to the community.

The Legislature supported the Town of Dryden's application for State Transportation funding, under the Transportation Alternatives Program, for the first phase of the Dryden Rail Trail, to develop the section running east from the Town of Ithaca East Hill Recreationway at Game Farm Road through the hamlet of Varna to Route 13. The trail has been identified as one of four priority multi-use trails in the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy.

The Legislature accepted an \$85,000 grant from the Park Foundation toward the second phase of the HeatSmart Tompkins Program of Solar Tompkins, to be administered by the Planning Department. The program carries forth the work of the HeatSmart program, promoting heat pump technology and building energy efficiency.

The Legislature accepted a \$25,000 grant from the Park Foundation, a \$1,500 grant from the Town of Ithaca, and a \$500 grant from the Tompkins County Council of Governments to support the 2016 Housing Summit. The purpose of the summit is to provide a venue to share information from recent housing studies and engage a broad cross-section of the public and housing experts in discussing challenges to meeting local housing needs and strategies to overcome them.

Several residents addressed the Legislature expressing concern about Cargill's request for a \$640,000 sales tax abatement from the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, related to its construction of a new mine shaft. Four County Legislators serve on the IDA. The IDA has scheduled a public hearing on the request this Friday, October 7th, at Lansing Town Hall.

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