



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **November 1, 2016** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Housing Trust Exemption Law Approved

Following a public hearing, the Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved a new Local Law opting in on a new provision of state law to provide a restricted sale price exemption on houses subject to a housing trust; the exemption covering the difference between the restricted resale price of the housing and the property's fair market value. The New York State Legislature, at the Legislature's request, passed the new section of the Real Property Tax Law to allow for the exemption. The Legislature had requested the exemption option as a way for the County to encourage affordable housing.

At the public hearing preceding the vote, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services director Paul Mazzarella spoke in support, and thanked County Administrator, Assessment Director Jay Franklin, and the Legislature for pushing for the new State law, which he said was unanimously approved by the State Assembly and Senate. Before the vote, Legislator Martha Robertson thanked Mazzarella for bringing the matter to the Legislature's attention, and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton and State Senator Tom O'Mara for pushing the measure through their houses, saying, "This is a really important step and I appreciate everybody for working toward a solution." *Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582; Director of Assessment Jay Franklin, 274-5517.*

Legislature Considers Pushing for Full Environmental Impact Process for Cargill Mine Shaft Project

Responding to a measure advanced by Legislator Carol Chock, the Legislature, in 40 minutes of thoughtful discussion, considered whether the Legislature should urge the New York State of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to require Cargill to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed construction of a new mine shaft, as has been recommended by the County's Environmental Management Council. A half-dozen residents addressed the Legislature, some members of the EMC, saying the higher level of review is needed to fully explore environmental concerns. Former Legislator Mike Koplinka-Loehr, who lives near the project site, spoke in support of Cargill's evaluation and efforts to date. The DEC has issued a negative declaration of environmental impact, and Legislator Chock said she sought through the resolution to bring transparency and have the DEC engage in a full public process should there be questions about potential impact. It was reported that the DEC has now increased the public comment period on the project by 30 days.

Mine Manager Shawn Wilczynski told Legislators, "We all have the same goals in mind: safety of the workers and sustainability of the mine," and many who spoke, as well as Legislators, stressed they did not want an adversarial relationship. Legislator Dan Klein said the Legislature would be asking the DEC to apply the strictest level of environmental scrutiny to the project. In the end, the measure failed by a vote of 6-8, Legislators Dave McKenna, Glenn Morey, Martha Robertson, Mike Sigler, Peter Stein, Jim Dennis, Rich John, and Chair Michael Lane voting no. *Contact: Legislator Carol Chock, 273-9007.*

No Comment at Hearing on 2017 Proposed Budget

There were no speakers tonight, as the Legislature held its annual public budget hearing on the County's 2017 Tentative Budget and Capital Plan for the next five years, the formal part of the County's budget process

devoted to inviting public comment. Legislature Chair Michael Lane kept the hearing open after the allotted time while the Legislature resumed other business, in case any latecomers wished to speak.

Before the formal hearing, however, during the time at which members of the public may address the Legislature, two people expressed thanks to the Legislature concerning the 2017 budget. Deborah Dietrich, director of Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources (OAR) thanked the Legislature for its support of OAR, and especially for \$70,000 included in the Tentative Budget to support its College Initiative program, as well as for multi-year contingent funding for development of transitional housing. Deborah Cipolla-Dennis, a member of the Dryden Town Board, thanked Legislators for their work on the budget, including funds recommended for OAR and transitional housing. And she also expressed thanks for the County's work to support LGBTQ training for law enforcement and other staff.

The 2017 Recommended Budget and the amendments adopted by the Legislature may be found online at the budget page of the County website at www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2017budget. Paper copies of the budget are available at the County Legislature office and at County Administration, 125 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The Legislature's budget adoption vote is scheduled for November 15.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 844-8440; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206.

Funds Appropriated to Help Protect Danby Parcel

The Legislature approved the appropriation of \$6,500 from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection to support the acquisition of a 144-acre parcel on Heisey Road in Danby by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. The property, located in the Forest Lands Natural Features Focus Area and is identified as a Priority Protection Area in the Tompkins County Conservation Strategy. The acquisition by the Land Trust will allow the parcel to connect with other public lands, and will secure a section of the Finger Lakes Trail. The approval vote was 13-1, Legislator Dooley Kiefer dissenting, saying that while she supports the initiative, paperwork was deficient since it did not bear signatures.

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

Among other business:

The Legislature approved a settlement agreement with the Office of the New York State Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) to resolve an audit of the County Mental Health Clinic for the years 2004-2007. The OMIG audit report had identified alleged overpayments in the amount of \$510,372, but in settlement discussions following an administrative hearing, the parties agreed to settle the matter for \$305,754.

The Legislature, by a 13-2 vote, authorized the County to enter into a contract with Black Creek Integrated Systems, of Irondale, AL, as a sole source contractor, to provide and install upgrade of the jail access and control system, as part of the Jail Control System capital project—the Black Creek system needed to integrate with the jail's Management System. Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Carol Chock dissented, due to concern over the sole-source approach.

The Legislature awarded nearly 55,000 in Fall 2016 Tourism Grants and Community Celebrations Grants, and \$57,000 in payments under the Tourism Capital Grants program, as recommended by the County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board and funded entirely through County Room Occupancy Tax.

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported that sales tax receipts for the third-quarter of 2016 are up 1.34% from a year ago, noting that quarterly receipts represent the County's second best quarter ever. Receipts for the year-to-date are 0.29% below this time in 2015.

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