



Inclusion Through Diversity

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

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **January 3, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Lane Reelected Legislature Chair; Klein Reelected Vice Chair**

The Tompkins County Legislature will operate under the same leadership during the year ahead. At its 2017 organizational meeting, Legislators reelected Legislator Michael Lane (D) to a fourth year as Chair of the Legislature, and Legislator Daniel Klein (D) to a second year as Vice Chair. The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are filled each year by majority vote of members of the Legislature. Chair Lane's and Vice Chair Klein's were the only nominations advanced, with each elected by unanimous votes. (Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was excused.)

Mr. Lane, first elected to the Legislature in 1993, is serving his fifth term on the Legislature, representing District 14 (Eastern part of the Town of Dryden, including the Villages of Dryden and Freeville). He served three consecutive terms, then after a one-term hiatus, was returned to the Legislature for two more.

Mr. Klein, who represents District 7 (Towns of Caroline and Danby, and a portion of the Town of Ithaca), has served on the Legislature since 2014, elected to his first term after serving on the Danby Town Board from 2007 to 2013. Vice Chair Klein has chaired the Legislature's Government Operations Committee during the past two years and is one of the County's representatives on the Board of Directors of Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT).

Nominating Mr. Lane as chair, Legislator Dooley Kiefer said Lane has done an excellent job leading and representing our county and called it particularly appropriate that he gets to serve as Chair in 2017, the County's Bicentennial Year. Entering the nomination for Vice Chair, Legislator Anna Kelles expressed her strong support for Mr. Klein as someone who is "very even-keeled, very thoughtful," with the strength that is needed to help hold the Legislature together.

Mr. Lane thanked his colleagues for supporting him again as Chair. "It's humbling," he said. "We're all equals here. As Chair, I am only the first to get to talk...We do all we can to hold our team together. I am pleased at all the teamwork this body has shown...I think we all have the best interests of all our constituents at heart, as we move forward in these first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Chair Lane will deliver his annual Chair's message and announce the 2017 committee structure and appointments at the Legislature's next meeting January 17<sup>th</sup>.  
*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 844-8440; Daniel Klein, Vice Chair, 272-7582.*

#### **2017 Proclaimed "The Year of the Woman in Tompkins County"**

Noting, in part, that 2017 is the one-hundredth anniversary of the passage in New York State of the Suffrage Act, granting women in New York the right to vote in local and state elections, and that New York was the first eastern State to pass women's suffrage, an act that led to the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, recognizing the right for women to vote across the nation, the Tompkins County Legislature proclaimed 2017 as "The Year of the Woman in Tompkins County."

Presenting the Proclamation was Legislator Martha Robertson, joined by County Historian Carol Kammen, along with female Legislators and County staff. Legislature Chambers were packed with women who turned out to show support for the event. Legislator Robertson said that, to answer charges by opponents that most

women did not want to vote, suffragists spent more than a year going door-to-door in nearly every community throughout the state, collecting the signatures of over one million women who said that they wanted to vote, the largest individually-signed petition ever assembled, a majority of women in the state. She noted that Native Americans did not have citizenship until 1924, and that full voting rights for all did not come until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Having the so-called “right” to vote, she also cautioned, does not mean equal opportunity to vote.

Even today, the proclamation states, women still must struggle for full and equal participation in the labor force, and in political and economic life; that women have the right to make decisions about their lives, yet often suffer in a climate of sexual innuendo and/or physical harm; and that the contributions of women to the progress of our nation often go unacknowledged. To protect the rights of women in our democratic society, the proclamation continues, it is important to recognize, declare and uphold those rights—“As the dignity of all persons must be protected, women have the right to live without fear for their physical or emotional safety and the right to pursue their own dreams in a society that recognizes their value.”

The Legislature, through its proclamation “urges our residents to recognize and celebrate the crucial role that women of all races and ethnic and political backgrounds have played in our county’s history, as well as their important place throughout our county today.”

Historian Kammen said, “I thank the Legislature of Tompkins County for this Proclamation: for making a bold statement of respect and appreciation for its female citizens and commemorating the centennial of Women Suffrage in the state, and marking Tompkins County as a place of greater safety in an uncertain world.”

*Contact: Legislator Martha Robertson, 772-00584; County Historian Carol Kammen, [ckk6@cornell.edu](mailto:ckk6@cornell.edu).*

### **Advisory Energy Task Force Established**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, established the Tompkins County Energy Task Force, to be charged with providing input and guidance to the County Planning Department and the Legislature on the topics of energy, climate change, and energy-related economic development, and will be available to provide advice to other community groups on these topics, as requested.

Speaking to the Legislature, County Planning Commissioner Ed Marx said that to achieve the County’s energy-related goals, it is very important to have community engagement, as the County responds to recommendations from the Tompkins County Energy Roadmap and the County Environmental and Economic Development Task Force, and updates the County’s Energy Strategy this year. Having people with expertise and interest to guide the work on these issues will be important, he said.

The broad-based task force, established for a three-year term, will be made up of 15-20 members appointed by the Legislature, with expertise in fields such as energy, renewables, climate science, economic development, transportation, business operation, as well as from other sectors.

*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 772-0584*

Among other business,

Legislature Chair Michael Lane noted the start of the County’s Bicentennial Year, with a year of events and activities beginning with art shows entitled “Art in Tompkins County: Then and Now” during January and February, sponsored by Ithaca’s State of the Art Gallery. To mark the beginning of the Bicentennial, he read an excerpt from a “Historical Sketch of Tompkins County,” published in August 1866.

The Legislature presented a Certificate of Appreciation to outgoing Tompkins County Poet Laureate Jack Hopper, who has served as the County’s Poet Laureate during 2015 and 2016, praising the valuable contributions as he has made as poet laureate to the Legislature and the people of Tompkins. Mr. Hopper said it has been a privilege and a joy to be able to serve.

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