



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **February 7, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Opposes Repeal of Affordable Care Act

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, registered its opposition to repeal of the Affordable Care Act without an acceptable commensurate healthcare alternative. The Legislature calls about its representatives in Washington—Congressman Reed, and Senators Schumer and Gillibrand—“to vote against any repeal of the...Act unless and until it is replaced by another nationwide alternative with protections for the public commensurate with the goals of the ACA or a single-payer health insurance program that is adopted only following an extensive public review and comment period.”

The measure notes, in part, that the ACA has provided expanded access to and improved health care for many of the county’s residents, and that its repeal, according to the Governor’s estimates, would put health insurance and health care of nearly 8,000 of our citizens at risk, would cut Federal reimbursement for the County’s Medicaid expenditures by over a million dollars, adversely affect Medicare recipients, and significantly increase the property tax burden for residents of Tompkins County. It cites the finding of the Congressional Budget Office that the ACA has helped reduce the country’s deficit and extended the future solvency of Medicare, and repeal of the ACA would reverse those positive fiscal trends.

Before considering the resolution, Legislators listened to an hour of impassioned comment from members of the public. Eighteen people addressed the Legislature, urging passage of the resolution and the importance of preserving the healthcare it has provided for many. Many indicated that what is really needed is a single-payer system or “Medicare for all,” such as would be provided under the proposed “New York Health Act’ that has twice passed the State Assembly. One of those urging passage was former County Legislator Pam Mackesey, who remarked, “This body has historically made right decisions.... This is a travesty, what’s happening in this country...I strongly urge you to pass this and join the fight to push back ...We are in big trouble if we allow this to happen.”

Among Legislators speaking in support before the vote was were several who acknowledged that there may be some aspects of the ACA that need repair, but that it needs to be fixed, not repealed. Legislator Jim Dennis said, “I think all of us recognize that there are downsides to it...but there are many upsides,” and that it “would be a sin” to have it repealed. Legislator Rich John said, “The idea of repealing the ACA without knowing what’s next is reckless” and it’s time for all to get together to fix it. Republican Mike Sigler said he has serious reservations about the ACA as it now stands, that it is simply not solvent, and poses hardship for many in small business and those who are faced with high deductibles. But he said that the program has helped a lot of people and cannot support outright repeal and have people, such as those with preexisting conditions, go without health insurance, that something will first be needed to replace it.

Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 342-2036

Legislators Briefed on Consideration of Potential Alternative to the West Dryden Pipeline

Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability Ed Marx and Deputy Commissioner Katie Borgella briefed the Legislature on the results of discussions over the past several months with NYSEG and the State Public Service Commission, initiated by the Tompkins County Energy and Economic Development Task Force, which have led NYSEG to consider a potential alternative approach to the \$17.8 million West Dryden Road natural gas

pipeline. A NYSEG draft analysis, now before the PSC for review, proposes a “compressor-based solution” to meet immediate gas reliability needs in the Lansing area. To accommodate future growth, a second part of NYSEG’s proposal would also solicit, through a Request for Proposals, creative solutions to reduce the current demand for gas—an approach similar to that envisioned for electricity under Governor Cuomo’s *Reforming the Energy Vision (REV)* program. Further details on this matter, announced February 6th, are posted on the County website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/news/nyseg-agrees-consider-alternative-approach-west-dryden-road-pipeline-draft-analysis-presented> .

Commissioner Marx said this is a very exciting and potentially groundbreaking development, and represents an attempt to look at the alternatives very seriously, but he also cautioned that it is not absolute. “If all the needs can be addressed through these alternatives, then that is the solution,” he noted. “...If that doesn’t happen, it does not mean the pipeline is forever off the table.”

Contact: Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560; Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 592-3119.

Among other business

Deputy County Administrator and County Compliance Officer Paula Younger delivered to Legislators their annual year-end report on the County’s Compliance Program. Among highlights and key accomplishments during 2017, approval by the Legislature of a new Compliance Program Coordinator position (now held by Sarah Cantatore) to support ongoing research and implementation of the Program, including revising aspects of the Program based on regulatory changes or emerging trends. In particular, the position has been leading implementation of the County’s comprehensive Title VI Program, which ensures nondiscrimination in all County programs, activities, and interactions with the public.

The Legislature authorized acceptance by the Sheriff’s Office of a more than \$36,000 Police Protective Equipment Grant from the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services—the grant part of nearly \$75,000 awarded to local police agencies in the county, as the result of a grant application filed by Tompkins County Administration. The grant funds are authorized to purchase ballistic vests and DCJS-approved patrol rifles, to provide protection and effectiveness in combating active shooter incidents, terrorist attacks and other events—in part, it will assist the Sheriff’s Office in carry out the County’s initiative to provide active shooter training for all County departments.

The Legislature approved Chair Michael Lane’s appointments to the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency—Legislators Rich John, James Dennis (chair), Will Burbank, and Martha Robertson; Chamber of Commerce president Jennifer Tavares as the Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) representative; Grace Chiang as Member-at-Large for another two-year term; and continued the appointment of City of Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick Member-at-Large (whose term expires at the end of 2017).

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported on the results of recent sales of bonds and notes. On February 1, the County sold two one-year Bond Anticipation notes, both to JPMorgan Chase--\$1 million for the Airport Jet Bridge at an interest rate of 1.47%, and \$544,000 for Ludlowville Road and South George Road Bridge projects and Coddington Road reconstruction at a net interest rate of 1.56%. More than \$5.4 million in eleven-year Public Improvement (Serial) Bonds supporting various capital projects were sold at a net interest rate of 2.011% to Roosevelt & Cross, Inc. and Associates.

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