



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 **March 21, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Funding Arrangement Approved for Pine Tree Road Intersection Improvements**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Peter Stein was excused) amended the County's Capital Program and allocated \$287,000 in up-front Highway Department funding to support Pine Tree Road intersection improvements at Ellis Hollow Road and the East Hill Plaza entrance in the Town of Ithaca. Federal reimbursement is expected for 90% of the total project cost, with an anticipated County funding contribution of \$28,700.

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Highway Director Jeff Smith, 274-0300.*

#### **Budget Adjustment Approved for Forest Home Bridge Project**

The Legislature, also by unanimous vote (Legislator Peter Stein was excused) amended the Capital Program and approved a transfer of just under \$364,000 in Highway Department fund balance to address higher than expected costs in the recently closed-out reconstruction project for the upstream Forest Home Bridge over Fall creek. Funds are transferred to the appropriate Capital Account to make up overruns due to construction and construction inspection of the federally aided nearly \$2.3 million project.

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Highway Director Jeff Smith, 274-0300.*

#### **Funding Approved for Town of Dryden Water and Sewer Infrastructure Study**

By unanimous vote (Legislator Peter Stein was excused), the Legislature allocated \$1,750 in Contingent funding to pay part of the cost of a water and sewer infrastructure study in the Town of Dryden, to match an identical contribution by the Town of Dryden. The study will help determine the potential for new housing development in the Town, consistent with the County's goal of beginning to address the critical community need for more housing, as it updates the Tompkins County Housing Strategy. \$30,000 in Contingent Funding was set aside in the 2017 Budget to support targeted Planning Department projects, such as this, to implement the Housing Strategy.

*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 272-0584; 592-3119; Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560.*

#### **State Proposal Endorsed to Increase Food Waste Recycling and Edible Leftover Food Recovery**

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Peter Stein was excused) voiced support of Governor Cuomo's proposal to require large-scale generators of food waste to donate and recycle excess food, in alignment with a federal "Good Samaritan Food Donation Act." The measure notes that keeping food waste out of landfills and instead using it for compost or energy recovery is a beneficial outcome environmentally and economically, and that the County's Recycling and Materials Management Department already implements programs to reduce and recycle food waste and is gearing up to recover even more, and that edible leftover food is also best to keep out of landfills and instead be used to feed people, with the local Friendship Donations Network rerouting nearly half-a-million pounds of food each year, distributing it to people in need.

Former County Legislator Mike Koplinka-Loehr, a member of the Friendship Donation Network, spoke to the Legislature in support of the measure, saying that the organization helps to save healthy food from landfills, and redistributes it to people in need. He thanked the Legislature for its support of these kinds of organizations.  
*Contact: Barbara Eckstrom, Director, Department of Recycling and Materials Management, 273-6632; David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243.*

### **Arts and Culture Organizational Development Grants Awarded**

The Legislature awarded \$197,000 in Arts and Culture Organizational Development Grants, funded through County Room Occupancy Tax, to ten arts organizations for 2017, as recommended by the County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board and the Community Arts Partnership. The vote was unanimous (with Legislator Peter Stein excused), but Legislator Dan Klein, who is the Legislature's liaison to the STPB, expressed some concern about the level of funding. He said he would support returning all organizations to the level of allocation in 2015, reversing \$5,000 in cuts affecting some organizations in 2016. This year's allocation, as approved, maintains the 2016 funding level. Budget Committee chair Jim Dennis said he is inviting County Tourism Planner Tom Knipe and members of the STPB to his committee's May meeting for a discussion and review of the Room Occupancy Tax grant process.

*Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206; Legislator Dan Klein, 272-7582.*

Among other actions,

County Historian Carol Kammen, co-chair of the Tompkins County Bicentennial Commission, provided a presentation to the Legislature regarding the first two projects of the County's Bicentennial Commission. She showed pictures of historic markers that will be presented to each of the County's nine towns, as well as the City of Ithaca, as well as the Towns of Covert (in Seneca County) and Hector (in Schuyler County) that were once a part of Tompkins County. The markers commemorate each municipality's role in the heritage of Tompkins County. Historian Kammen also presented and distributed to Legislators a collection of Town brochures (one for the City is also in development), which have been developed in collaboration with municipal historians. Electronic copies of the brochures will also be posted on the Bicentennial website at [www.tc200.org](http://www.tc200.org).

Legislature Chair Michael Lane, County Administrator Joe Mareane, and several Legislators praised and recognized County employees, such as those from the Highways and Facilities Departments, the Airport, and Sheriff's Office, for their service during the recent spring snowstorm. Administrator Mareane recognized all for doing "a tremendous job."

The Legislature authorized acceptance of a \$35,000 grant from the New York State Office of indigent Legal Services to implement a new case management software system for the Assigned Counsel Office;

The Legislature also authorized the Department of Social Services to accept, and pass through to the Youth Services Department, a \$50,000 "Safe Harbor" State grant, to continue that department's efforts to address the problem of sexually exploited children and youth.

**- END -**