



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 20, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Supports Adoption of TC3 Operating Budget, Approves Additional One-Time Funding

The Tompkins County Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was excused), recommended adoption of the Tompkins Cortland Community College operating budget for the coming academic year. The \$40.8 million budget contains no increase in sponsor support, instead of the 1% increase first recommended by the Legislature's budget committee—that recommendation revised in light of Cortland County's unwillingness to support an increase. Both sponsoring counties must agree on the level of sponsor support. The budget contains total sponsor support of \$4,650,364, split between the two counties based on proportional student enrollment—64% (\$2,976,233) from Tompkins County and 36% (\$1,674,131) from Cortland.

In a separate action, the Legislature, also without dissent, authorized a one-time supplemental discretionary Contingent Fund appropriation of an equivalent amount—\$46,504—outside the budget process, to assist the College in implementing a Service Management Modernization Plan. The Legislature, at its June 6th meeting, already approved \$83,200 in one-time funding toward that program, in line with an enrollment-based share of the cost. Cortland County has declined to recommend funding toward that program. Tompkins' one-time contributions, with the supplement approved tonight, support the full cost of the Service Management Modernization Plan, and provide the College a level of support, outside the budget process, equivalent to what would have received through a 1% budget increase from both counties.

Also by unanimous vote, Legislators approved a \$46,503 Contingent Fund appropriation for sponsor support in the current year's budget, reflecting the increase in Tompkins' proportional student enrollment, from 63 to 64%.

At the public hearing that preceded the votes, Enfield resident and College alum Robert Lynch, spoke in strong support of the College, the budget, the Legislature's supplemental appropriation. But he deeply questioned Cortland County's priorities and refusal to approve any increase in support. He urged that discussions begin toward possible severance if conditions don't change after this year.

Before the budget vote, Legislator Rich John said that he wished he could have supported the budget at the prior level. Calling TC3 "a jewel," Mr. John said, "It's such a valuable asset. It pains me to vote for a budget with no increase."

Many Legislators expressed their high regard for retiring President Haynes and his many contributions over many years, and gave him a standing ovation. President Haynes expressed his "heartfelt thanks" to the Legislature, "not only for tonight but for many years of support...Coming before this body and getting such warmth and support is one of the things I will really miss," he said.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206

Legislature Extends Electricity Procurement Agreement

Legislators, after some discussion, approved a new two-year agreement to procure electricity as part of the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA), a collaborative created by Tompkins and Tioga Counties nearly two decades ago, which has since spread to more than 30 county governments in the state. The Legislature

authorized an agreement with Constellation Energy, of Buffalo, NY, recommended by MEGA through its most recent procurement conducted by resolution of Genesee County. The new agreement, approved now to take advantage of favorable pricing, spans the period of September 4, 2018 through September 30, 2020 (succeeding the current agreement that expires as of September 30, 2018), including the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to offset 100% of the County's electricity use through renewable sources.

The measure ultimately was approved by a vote of 11-1 (Legislator Dooley Kiefer voting no, with Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Peter Stein excused. Legislator Carol Chock voiced some concern, including whether locking in such an agreement now would limit the County's future options in the rapidly changing renewable energy environment. She advanced an amendment, approved by an 8-4 vote, which eliminated a provision that would have authorized the County Administrator to extend the agreement for two additional years, if conditions are favorable, without coming back to the Legislature. Legislator Kiefer said she does not support RECs, so could not support the resolution. Legislator Chock said she decided to support, since "this is the way renewable energy is handled today in the United States."

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Legislator Carol Chock, 273-9007; Legislator Dooley Kiefer, 257-7453.

Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne Recognized as "Ally of the Year"

Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was honored by the organization *Finger Lakes PULSE*, which presented her with its first Ally of the Year Award.

"This evening, we express our appreciation to a person who has invited people from the LGBTQ+ community to the table," organization representative Deborah Cipolla-Dennis said in a special presentation before the Legislature. "She has shown interest in our opinions, thoughts, and perspectives. This simple invitation to participate has allowed us to highlight our needs as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary individuals in new ways. It has given us a voice to express our similar struggles while recognizing that we are affected in different ways by policies and laws." As an immigrant from Guyana herself, Legislator McBean-Clairborne was recognized as one who possesses a "unique understanding" of others' struggles, and for "us(ing) her power in Ithaca and Tompkins County to make it safer for (the LGBTQ+) community."

Video excerpts from past Legislature meetings were shown as highlights of McBean-Clairborne's advocacy, caring, and commitment to all. Acknowledging the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, Cipolla-Dennis said, "*Finger Lakes PULSE* is dedicated to working with allies such as Leslyn, to create a thriving, inclusive community that recognizes the diversity and individuality of all residents."

Legislator Mc-Bean-Clairborne expressed deep appreciation, but said she has never acted for recognition; "I just do what's right." And she added a clarification. "Allies usually can pack up and go to their safe space. I'm a partner."

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434; For Finger Lakes PULSE, Joanne Cipolla-Dennis, cipollaj@yahoo.com; Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, 277-5104.

Legislature Approves Community Housing Development Fund Award to Amici House

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Peter Stein were excused; Legislator Carol Chock was permitted to abstain), authorized the expenditure of \$125,000 of its allocation in the Community Housing Development Fund to support Tompkins Community Action's Amici House project, as recommended by the Community Housing Development Fund Program Oversight Committee. (The Program Oversight Committee has also recommended an additional \$100,000 in fund support for the project from the City of Ithaca's allocation.)

The Amici House and Childcare Center project includes two buildings, one to provide housing for young homeless people and their children, and the other to provide childcare. The grant award specifically supports construction of the 23 efficiency apartments within one of the buildings, which will adjoin TCA's existing office building. A previously awarded \$75,000 pre-development loan, provided by the County, will also be forgiven.

The Legislature also concurred with the City of Ithaca Planning and Development Board determination, under the State Environmental Quality Review process, that the project adequately protects and preserves the environment, and will not have any potentially adverse environmental effects.

Contact: Megan McDonald, Tompkins County Planning Department, 274-5560; Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 592-3119

Among other business,

County Administrator Joe Mareane warned that the County, along with virtually all other counties across New York State, will experience serious consequences if the State Legislature fails to approve its 1% sales tax extender in the next few days before the current Legislative session ends, which Mareane characterized as “being held hostage” by an issue in no way related to counties. Losing the ability to levy the additional 1% tax, he said, would cost the County about \$1 million during the last month of this year, and about \$11 million in 2018, which would create the need to raise taxes or cut discretionary spending by about 23%. He said, “We have to be thinking about ‘what if’s’” and how this would affect preparation of the 2018 County Budget.

The Legislature set Thursday, July 6 (the Legislature’s next meeting), 5:30 p.m., for a public hearing regarding a proposed Local Law that would allow the Legislature to override the tax levy limit for 2018 if that becomes necessary during the 2018 County budget process.

The Legislature awarded Economy Paving Company, of Cortland, the contract to reconstruct the Game Farm Road Bridge, over Cascadilla Creek, for its submitted bid in the amount of \$977,090.77, and authorized executive of an agreement with Cornell University to fund \$250,000 toward the bridge replacement project.

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