



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **August 15, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Adopts New Wireless Surcharge Law

Following a public hearing, the Legislature, by unanimous vote, adopted a new County Wireless Surcharge Law. The new Local Law repeals the County's former Local Law, passed in 2002, that established a 30-cent public safety surcharge on postpaid wireless communications devices. It authorizes continuation of that surcharge and its extension to pre-paid devices, which had not previously been subject to the surcharge, as authorized as part of the 2017-18 State Budget. The State legislation required the County to repeal the previous law and adopt a new law, collecting both pre-paid and post-paid wireless surcharges. Continuing the former law and continuing to charge post-paid service only was not an option.

With current annual Tompkins wireless revenues of approximately \$240,000, and pre-paid devices estimated at 20-30% of the wireless market, County Director of Emergency Response Lee Shurtleff has noted that the additional estimated pre-paid revenue of \$40-60,000 will offset some losses from the rapidly diminishing landline public safety surcharge.

Contact: Lee Shurtleff, Director of Emergency Response, 257-3888; Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794

Legislators Appropriate Funding for Mass Notification System

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved appropriation of \$20,500 from the Contingent Fund to support acquisition of a Mass Notification System for Tompkins County, and authorized the County to enter into a three-year contract with SwiftReach Company, of Mahwah, New Jersey for the Swift911 system. The Emergency Communications (911) Center within the Department of Emergency Response will manage the system, and the department's target budget will be increased by \$20,000 to allow the mass notification system to be sustained in the future.

The system can send an immediate message via phone, text, email, fax, and social media, targeted in a comprehensive fashion, as in a major emergency situation, or more narrowly, either geographically or to subscribers who have a particular need or interest. As a shared service (and as cited in the County's recommended Shared Services Plan), the system will be made available without charge to all municipalities in the County.

Administrator Joe Mareane told legislators the new system will enable the County to alert people immediately to potential threats, and will provide the opportunity to quickly get information to people who want it.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794; Lee Shurtleff, Director of Emergency Response, 257-3888; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Endorses Shared Services Plan

In the latest required step to comply with New York State's County-wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan Law, the Legislature, without dissent, endorsed the recommended Tompkins County Shared Services Plan and sent it back to the County's Shared Services Panel for further public comment and action. A third public

hearing on the plan will be held before the Panel takes a final vote prior to the State's submission deadline of September 15.

The proposed plan's six key elements include the following:

- Creation of a Tompkins County Council of Governments Training Academy as a vehicle to provide affordable, high quality training to all local governments within the County.
- Creation and maintenance of a Service Modernization Plan by the County for use by all municipalities, to facilitate through software automation of a number of routine paper-intensive tasks currently done by hand.
- Creation and management of a purchasing pool to facilitate lowest-cost acquisition of contemporary financial software for municipalities that desire it.
- Acquisition and operation by Tompkins County of a countywide mass notification system available to all municipalities in the County.
- Creation and management of a purchasing pool to facilitate conversion of street lights to high-efficiency LED fixtures for municipalities interested.
- Expansion of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium by two additional members in 2018, sustaining substantial recurring savings to all members.

The report also anticipates the Panel's exploration of several other potential shared service initiatives that may result in future savings. Legislator Martha Robertson suggested that the current exploration of Law Enforcement Shared Services, which has been under study for many months, also be mentioned in the report, and Administrator Mareane agreed that it could be, even though the initiative is not among those that can be implemented in 2018.

View the full Recommended County Shared Services Plan at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/sharedserviceinitiative>.

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582

Legislature Approves Revised Sign-In Form for Public Speaking at Legislative Meetings

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-3 (Legislators Peter Stein, Jim Dennis, and Will Burbank voted no), approved a matter of legislative procedure, amending the so-called "blue card" that must be completed and submitted by those wishing to speak during public privilege of the floor at Legislature meetings. Changes to the form make stating one's last name and municipality of residence optional. The Legislature in recent weeks has been urged to revise the form, by individuals who have said they do not feel safe publicly stating their name and place of residence when addressing the Legislature.

The matter was the focus of considerable discussion, Government Operations Chair Dan Klein, whose committee forwarded the resolution, saying that he personally had not been eager about the proposed change, but decided to support it in light of what he termed the "outpouring" of people who urged it, and others to whom he had reached out, who supported the modifications.

Legislators also approved an amendment, advanced by Legislator Martha Robertson, requiring speakers to list their county of residence. They failed to approve another proposed amendment that would have required people to list their last name. Legislator Jim Dennis, who advanced that unsuccessful amendment, said it seemed unrealistic to assume anonymity in speaking in a meeting that is streamed and televised. Legislator Anna Kelles said that the purpose is to allow people an opportunity to address the Legislature in a way that they feel comfortable, while continuing to outline rules of engagement that all support. The committee will continue to review the form, including additional revised language proposed by Legislator Dooley Kiefer.

Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582

Legislature Voices Support for Cayuga Solar Project

Legislators, by a 13-1 vote (Legislator Dooley Kiefer dissenting), approved a resolution of support of development of the Cayuga Solar project in the Town of Lansing. The measure notes that Cayuga Solar, created

by the Cayuga Operating Company, proposes installation of 18 Megawatts of solar (the largest to date in Upstate New York) on currently unused land at the 434-acre power plant site, constituting a \$25 million investment in clean, renewable energy—a project that will create approximately 150 union construction jobs and increase tax revenue to taxing authorities in Lansing and Tompkins County. Legislators Carol Chock and Anna Kelles both expressed some reservation that some of the project would be located over coal ash, and hope that its presence would not deter contamination remediation efforts. Legislator Kiefer said she found she could not vote in favor of the support resolution in view of this issue.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 592-3119

Legislature Passes New Resolutions on Acquisition of Trust Company Building

The Legislature approved new resolutions regarding acquisition by the County of the Tompkins Trust building on the Ithaca Commons, to house the History Center, along with co-located non-profits, to be known as the Tompkins Center for History and Culture. The new resolutions, both approved by unanimous vote, repeal the initial resolutions passed June 6th, and replace them with versions that reflect completion of a full environmental quality assessment, rather than the short-form version approved earlier. Since passage of the initial resolutions, attorneys had advised that, since the property is located in a historic district, conducting a full environmental assessment was appropriate.

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Legislature Considers Recognizing Indigenous People’s Day Holiday, Returns Matter to Committee for Further Study

The Legislature, in more than an hour of thoughtful discussion, considered a resolution, recommended by the County’s Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee and its Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, to recognize the second Monday in October as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” in Tompkins County. The Columbus Day holiday also is observed on this date.

The proposed resolution notes that celebration of this day is encouraged “in a manner that promotes respect, understanding, and friendship; combats prejudice and bias; works to eliminate discrimination stemming from colonization; and acknowledges our history.” Legislator Anna Kelles emphasized the intent would be to acknowledge indigenous peoples and to “create healing that is long overdue,” not to dismiss or denigrate any other group. “This is a recognition and honor whose time has come,” said Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, who drafted the resolution with the assistance of indigenous leaders.

The Legislature, however, by a 10-4 vote (Legislators McBean-Clairborne, Kelles, Martha Robertson, and Carol Chock dissenting), ended up referring the matter back to committee for further study, over revised wording advanced by McBean-Clairborne, as advised by leaders of the Cayuga Nation—among those changes, a revision that would note the Legislature’s recognition that indigenous peoples have “owned” (instead of “occupied”) what became American lands. Legislator Jim Dennis, who proposed the return to committee, said the word changes made it a “very different resolution” from that recommended by the Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee.

Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee, 277-5104; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206

Among other business,

In the third and final step of a required three-step process, the Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved extension through November 30, 2020 of the additional one percent sales tax, which has been in effect since 1992. This latest extension is for three years, instead of the traditional two, since the State authorized the longer three-year extension period for counties, following passage of the 2017-18 State budget.

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