



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

#### **Kit Kephart Appointed Commissioner of Social Services**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, confirmed County Administrator Joe Mareane's appointment of Kit Kephart for a five-year term as Tompkins County Commissioner of Social Services.

Commissioner Kephart has been employed by Tompkins County in the Department of Social Services for 17 years, first as the Department's Staff Development and Quality Coordinator, then as Deputy Commissioner since 2014. She has served as Acting Commissioner of Social Services since the retirement of former Commissioner Patricia Carey at the end of July.

Prior to joining Tompkins County government, her experience includes positions of Education Coordinator and Peer Education Coordinator at the Alcoholism Council of Tompkins County, Site Director for the Special Children's Center, and Day Treatment Director at Schuyler ARC. Ms. Kephart's appointment was recommended by a ten-member County search committee following a six-month-long national search.

Administrator Mareane said, Kit Kephart "brings a broad perspective, and plenty of hands-on experience to this position," and is highly regarded in county government both as a person and as a highly skilled administrator. "She is coming to the job with an enthusiasm and a mandate for strengthening DSS's engagement with the community, for making our commitment to inclusiveness, to providing services to our clients with empathy and respect, and for being a constructive partner in solving some of our community's most difficult problems," Mr. Mareane said.

Speaking in support of the appointment, Health and Human Services Committee Chair Anna Kelles said she is particularly impressed with the new commissioner's commitment to reaching out to the community. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, chair of the County's Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee, noted that helping employees to reach their fullest potential is one of the highest levels of inclusion, and this appointment is an example of that.

Commissioner Kephart said she is honored to accept the appointment and looks forward to strengthening ties with the community and to continuing her long-time work at the Department of Social Services.

Commissioner Kephart holds a B.A. degree from Mansfield University, with a dual major in Personnel Administration and Human Services Management. Her appointment as Commissioner takes effect upon confirmation of the appointment by New York State.

*Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206.*

#### **Legislature Supports New York State Aid, Urges Immediate Federal Assistance to Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands**

Acting on a member-filed resolution initiated by Legislator Carol Chock, the Legislature, without dissent, approved a resolution in support of aid to Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, and their United States citizens, following the damage and devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Introducing the

resolution, Legislator Chock said, “There have been many bad storms in recent memory with many bad consequences without us weighing in, but this one is different...Two weeks after the second of two devastating hurricanes, citizens of our country are lacking the basic elements of survival.”

The measure applauds Governor Cuomo for instituting the Empire State Relief and Recovery Effort to mobilize civic, business, and industry partners to assist the recovery and rebuilding effort, and “urges the provision of additional federal humanitarian and recovery support...in proportion to the need.” It also urges that federal regulations regarding shipped deliveries be suspended for the duration of the humanitarian crisis, as was recently done for deliveries to Texas and Florida.

The resolution notes that damage from Hurricanes Maria and Irma caused extremely widespread damage and devastation in which many resident lack adequate drinking water, food, healthcare, or passable roads to deliver supplies even weeks after the storms, and that “humanitarian assistance to citizens of the United States should be made available regardless or economic circumstance.”

*Contact: Legislator Carol Chock, 273-9007.*

Among other business:

Legislature Chair Michael Lane proclaimed October 14, 2017 as “Lifelong Day,” in recognition of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding—65 years of promoting opportunities for, and addressing the special needs of, local senior citizens.

Chair Lane also proclaimed the week of October 15-22 as “Youth Services and Caring Adults Recognition Week in Tompkins County,” on the occasion of the Youth Services Department’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary—extending the Legislature’s “appreciation and congratulations to the many volunteers serving on the Tompkins County Youth Services Board and local youth services commissions, to the staff of the Youth Services Department and its contract agencies, and to the many Caring Adults across Tompkins County for their invaluable contributions to the well-being of our youth.”

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in honor and condolence for the people of Las Vegas, Nevada, including those killed and injured, and those who lost loved ones, in this week’s tragic mass shootings there.

**- END -**