



Inclusion Through Diversity

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December 5, 2017  
TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **December 5, 2017** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Katherine “Katie” Borgella Appointed Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability**

The Tompkins County Legislature, by unanimous vote, has approved the appointment of Katherine “Katie” Borgella as the County’s Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability. (Legislator Anna Kelles was excused.) Borgella, who has 24 years of leadership experience in the County Department of Planning and Sustainability, has served as Deputy Commissioner since 2014 and as Interim Commissioner since the retirement of Ed Marx in August.

In requesting the Legislature’s approval of the appointment following a three-month search process, Interim County Administrator Paula Younger said, “From over 30 applicants, to four solid candidates, to two finalists, Katie Borgella held an impressive lead throughout this process and has been recommended unanimously by the Search Committee...Katie brings to the Commissioner position great vision, genuine enthusiasm, and plenty of hands-on experience.” Administrator Younger praised Borgella’s “keen ability for building relationships, mentoring staff, and delivering high-quality projects to our community.”

A trained civil engineer, with 24 years of professional planner experience, Commissioner Borgella holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Vermont and a Master’s Degree in Natural Resources, with concentrations in City and Regional Planning, and Resource Policy and Management from Cornell University.

Before joining the County, Younger said, “Katie designed soil and water conservation projects for cranberry and dairy farmers in Massachusetts, and built latrines and schools as a community development engineer with the Peace Corps in Cameroon.”

Among the many projects Borgella has spearheaded during her time with the County Department of Planning and Sustainability are development of the complex Energy Roadmap, revamping the Environmental Management Council’s Unique Natural Areas Inventory, and working with three farm families in Lansing and Dryden to permanently protect over 1,800 acres of farmland. In 2015, Commissioner Borgella spearheaded efforts to bring the Energize NY Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy program to the community to help commercial properties in Tompkins County make energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrade to building by offering access to low-cost, long-term financing.

“Thank you so much for this opportunity,” Commissioner Borgella told the Legislature. “I really appreciate the opportunity to lead and support the outstanding staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability, and I look forward to continuing partnerships with others in the community, to benefit this community we all love so much.”

Commissioner Borgella’s appointment takes effect immediately.

*Contact: Interim County Administrator Paula Younger, 274-5551; Katie Borgella, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560.*

### **Insero & Co. CPAs Selected to Provide Continued Financial Auditing Services**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized a contract with Insero & Co. CPAs, of Ithaca, to provide continued financial auditing services to Tompkins County government. Insteero, which contracted with the County to conduct external audits of the County's financial records for 2015 and 2016, was recommended over five other proposal responses, to perform financial auditing services for the fiscal years of 2017, 2018, and 2019, at a cost of \$68,000 per year, with an option to extend the contract for two additional fiscal years. The Legislature's resolution states that the Insero firm has "a significant understanding of the County's financial reporting systems" and will "enhance the County's efforts to implement new accounting standards."

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

### **Legislature Urges Preservation of Net Neutrality**

In response to a resolution advanced by Legislator Dooley Kiefer, the Legislature, by a vote of 11-2, went on record in support of equality of Internet access (net neutrality) and regulation of the Internet as a public utility under Title II of the Federal Communications Act. (Legislators Mike Sigler and James Dennis voted no; Legislator Anna Kelles was excused.) In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved regulations that ensure such equal access to the Internet (providing that large Internet service providers cannot discriminate among different kinds of web traffic, websites, or applications, such as making some websites load faster, or charging more money to access certain sites) and classified broadband Internet access as a public utility under Title II of the Federal Communications Act, not as simply an "information service." The new Chair of the FCC, Ajit Pai, has announced that the FCC will vote to place the Internet under Title I, doing away with net neutrality.

The Legislature's resolution states that the Tompkins County Legislature has a duty to provide for the welfare of its residents, and that the Legislature, on behalf of all of its residents, "goes on record in strong support of net neutrality and in opposition to FCC Chair Pai's desire to deregulate the Internet" by placing it under Title I.

Before the vote, Legislator Sigler characterized the action as misdirected, calling it "a zombie concept," a dead issue. He maintained that firms such as Google and Facebook are throttling speeds down all the time, that the battle has already been fought and lost, with "three or four companies that simply own the Internet at this point."

*Contact: Legislator Dooley Kiefer, 257-7453; Legislator Mike Sigler, 339-7978.*

Among other business,

The Legislature, following a public hearing, approved a new Local Law that repeals the Local Law passed at the beginning of the 2018 budget process that had authorized override of the County's Tax Levy Limit for 2018. The approved 2018 Budget did not exceed the Tax Levy Limit, eliminating the need for the prior law.

The Legislature authorized the County to contract with Benetech, Inc. for employee benefits services, including employee Flexible Spending Account and Health Reimbursement account programs, among other forms of benefit services. The Legislature authorized a two-year contract, effective January 1, 2018, with an option to renew for three additional one-year terms.

Finance Director Rick Snyder presented the October 2017 monthly sales tax report, which shows the preliminary recording of receipts year-to-date running nearly 5% above year-ago levels. He reported that the monthly October receipts were the second highest on record for the month of October.

**- END -**