



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **January 2, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Martha Robertson Elected Legislature Chair for 2018; Anna Kelles Elected Vice Chair**

Beginning the new four-year legislative term, the Tompkins County Legislature, in its annual reorganization meeting, elected Martha Robertson Chair of the Legislature for 2018, and Anna Kelles Vice Chair. Robertson was the only member nominated for Chair, and was elected by unanimous vote.

Martha Robertson has served on the Legislature since 2002, representing District 13 (Western part of the Town of Dryden), and is returning for a fifth one-year term as Chair of the Legislature, having previously served as Legislature Chair and Chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency from 2010 to 2013. Having chaired numerous committees of the Legislature over the years, Martha most recently, in 2016 and 2017, chaired the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee and the Program Oversight Committee of the Community Housing Development Fund. In 2017, she also served on the Public Safety, Old Library, and special Jail Study Committee.

Nominated for Vice Chair were Legislators Kelles and Dan Klein, who has served as Vice Chair for the past two years. Seven voted for Kelles and seven for Klein. Mr. Klein then withdrew his name from nomination and the subsequent re-vote was unanimous.

Vice Chair Kelles was first elected to the Legislature in November 2015 and is beginning her first full term on the Legislature, representing District 2 (City of Ithaca). She chaired the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee during 2017, and has also served on the Facilities and Infrastructure; Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee; the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee; Public Safety Committee; and the special Jail Study Committee.

Chair Robertson and Vice Chair Kelles both thanked their predecessors, Chair Michael Lane and Vice Chair Klein for their dedicated past service in those leadership positions—Lane for the past four years and Mr. Klein for two.

At the beginning of this first meeting of the new legislative term, County Clerk Maureen Reynolds administered the oath of office to all Legislators—including four new Legislators: Henry Granison, representing District 3 (City of Ithaca); Anne Koreman, representing District 5 (Town of Ulysses and portions of the Towns of Enfield and Ithaca); Deborah Dawson, representing District 10 (Villages of Lansing and Cayuga Heights); and Amanda Champion, representing District 12 (Town of Ithaca)  
*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119; Martha Robertson, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 592-3119; Vice Chair Anna Kelles, 342-2036*

#### **Departing Interim Administrator Paula Younger Recognized for Tremendous Service to County Government and the People of Tompkins County**

The Legislature, in a surprise resolution, recognized Interim County Administrator Paula Younger, who has served as Deputy County Administrator for more than eleven years, for her many and varied important contributions to county government and the people of Tompkins County. Younger will leave county

government as of January 10<sup>th</sup>, and Legislators and staff wore blue to mark her new role as Ithaca College's first-ever Executive Director for Government and Community Relations.

The Legislature's resolution of recognition, approved by unanimous vote, lauds Younger for "tak(ing) on a wide variety of roles in disparate areas of county business, serving as needed and accepting whatever challenges for given to her." Among her many accomplishment cited: securing grant funding to help establish the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium; spearheading the comprehensive proposal to the federal government for ARRA shovel-ready projects; establishing a Grants Development and Management Center; providing essential support to the countywide Broadband initiative; initiating, leading, and facilitating a number of important diversity and inclusion initiative, including the County's first Diversity and Inclusion Policy; developing and managing the administrative policy process and the County's corporate compliance program; and securing technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice in response to the Hornbrook Road incident, and playing a key role in securing a New York State grant for the Law Enforcement Shared Services study.

The resolution states, "Paula's broad knowledge of the governmental structures and governmental and agency programming in Tompkins County, as well as the people in our community that work within these systems make her wonderfully suited to this new opportunity." The Legislature, "on behalf of a grateful staff and community", congratulates Younger on her new position and "thanks her for her dedication and service to our constituents and the cause of good government," adding that it looks forward to continued collaboration with her to build upon the positive community relationship between Ithaca College and Tompkins County in the years to come.

Expressing her appreciation, administrator Younger said, "You have challenged me, you have developed me, you have given me an opportunity to learn....I do not want to say good-bye, I just look forward to seeing you when I put on my 'blue suit'."

*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119.*

### **Legislature Urges Repeal of Regulations Requiring Homeless Shelter Payments Based on Income**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, urged its State legislative representatives to repeal regulations of the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) that require homeless individuals with modest income seeking support for Temporary Housing Assistance to contribute shelter payments.

Such payments can be up to \$70.54 per night for sheltering costs, which the resolution notes would be an equivalent cost or renting an apartment for approximately \$2,100 per month, including utilities. Repeal of the requirement, the resolution states, would allow homeless Tompkins County residents to accumulate sufficient income to better prepare for obtaining and maintaining more permanent housing.

*Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 342-2036*

### **Legislature Accepts Three-Quarter-Million-Dollar Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized Tompkins County to accept a New York State Interoperable Communications grant award of \$738,565—the funds to sustain, maintain, and enhance the County's interoperable communications system, and to be directed toward anticipated communications systems replacements and future enhancements. The County's adopted 2018 budget anticipated reimbursement of various recurring maintenance and replacement expenses and established appropriate budgetary mechanisms to execute the grant on a recurring annual basis.

Public Safety Committee Chair Rich John said, "This is an important change in how we are going to be funding our emergency communications system. This is pretty important because technology is changing so fast and this is really good news."

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

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