



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **April 3, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Arts and Culture Organizational Development Grants Awarded**

The Legislature awarded 2018 grants under the County's Arts and Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) grant program, one of ten Tourism Program funded through County room occupancy tax dollars, as recommended by its Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee and the County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Ultimately, nearly \$218,000 was split among ten local arts and cultural organizations, as recommended by the Community Arts Partnership, which serves in an advisory role for the capacity-building program. What prompted considerable thoughtful discussion, however, was a proposed amendment advanced by Legislator Dan Klein (which failed to win support) that would also have directed an \$87,000 increase in the grant program's 2018 budget to \$300,000 (an amount equivalent to the total amount requested by the applicant organizations), with the ACOD grant review panel reconvened to consider allocating the additional funds.

Mr. Klein maintained that the public had spoken clearly and overwhelmingly in comments to legislators about its preferences in support of an increase in the ACOD funding, which he indicated was feasible to fund from increased room tax revenue. Many other Legislators thanked Klein for bringing up the issue, but a number of them noted that tourism funding, with its many grant programs, is complex, and that the careful decisions and priorities of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board should be respected at this time. As had happened when Mr. Klein first raised the ACOD funding issue late last year, a number of legislators called for a conversation involving the STPB, legislators, and staff, to talk about Tourism Program funding and the 2019 budget. Ultimately, it's our decision, but we want to do it with the STPB's support, Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne said.

Following discussion, Legislator Klein's amendment failed by a 2-10 vote, with Mr. Klein and Legislator Henry Granison voting in favor (Legislators Rich John and Glenn Morey were excused), with the award resolution passing by the same margin, Legislators Klein and Granison dissenting.

*Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 342-2036; Legislator Dan Klein, 272-7582.*

#### **Legislature Urges Statewide Ban on Single-Use Carryout Retail Bags**

Reviving an issue that had first been discussed five years ago, the Tompkins County Legislature voted in support of a ban on single-use retail bags—this time, calling for either a ban on both plastic and paper carryout bags, or as an alternative a ban on plastic bags and a fee on paper bags, to be approved at the State level. The measure urges adoption of such legislation by the Assembly and Senate, and approval by the Governor. The vote was 10-2, with Legislators Mike Sigler and Michael Lane voting no (Legislators Rich John and Glenn Morey were excused). The County's Environmental Management Council, which in 2013 had urged that a Local Law be passed to prohibit plastic bags, this time advocated the statewide ban, also recommended by the Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee.

Committee chair Anna Kelles spoke to clarify the issue of plastic vs. paper, saying the resolution indicates that a ban on both plastic and paper carryout bags would be preferred, but research has shown that a plastic bag ban, with a fee on paper bags, has also dramatically decreased single-use bag use.

Legislator Sigler, as he did at a past meeting where support of a proposed bag ban was discussed, displayed comparable amounts of plastic and paper bags as a visual aid, maintaining plastic takes up much less space, and with landfills not a finite resource, and the paper not recyclable, that this proposal is misdirected. While a long-time supporter of recycling and the County's successful recycling programs, Legislator Lane said that he regretfully could not support the bag ban. He said he can only remember one material that has been banned from the county's waste stream, microbeads, and he cannot support a ban on something that people use. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne said the economics of any ban should be addressed, that those who cannot afford a fee or to purchase reusable bags must be considered if any such legislation is enacted.

*Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 342-2036.*

### **Legislature Formally Voices Support for Regional Detox Center**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislators Rich John and Glenn Morey were excused), passed a resolution of support for development of a regional open access medically-supervised withdrawal (detox) stabilization center in Tompkins County, as advanced by the Alcohol and Drug Council of Tompkins County. The resolution notes, in part, that 12% of state residents over the age of 11 have suffered from a substance use disorder, that, from 2015 to 2016, opioid deaths in New York State were reported to have increased by 29% and the death rate from drug overdose in Tompkins County reported to have increased by 50%.

The Tompkins County Legislature "recognizes the urgency in addressing the substance use disorder crisis in the United States, New York State, and in Tompkins County," the resolution states, and "supports initiatives and opportunities to support Alcohol and Drug Council of Tompkins County in the [regional detox center's] development," the resolution states.

*Contact: Shawna Black, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 351-7855.*

Among other business,

The Legislature awarded TenEleven Group, LLC, of Amherst, New York, the contract to provide an electronic health records and practice management system for the Mental Health and Public Health Departments, at a cost not to exceed \$500,000 over a period of five years, funds for the project already budgeted in capital and operating accounts.

The Legislature awarded JB's Excavation Services, of Apalachin, New York, the construction contract for the grant-funded Ludlowville Streambank Stabilization Project, for the firm's bid of \$114,957, submitted in February. The action also reappropriates the nearly \$119,000 balance of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood mitigation grant funding to the 2018 budget.

The Legislature, on behalf of the organization Solar Tompkins, accepted a \$38,000 grant from the Park Foundation to continue the successful HeatSmart Program of Solar Tompkins for another six months, while Solar Tompkins awaits word of additional grant funding from other sources. The HeatSmart program promotes heat pump technology and building energy efficiency. The County acts as fiscal sponsor for the project and the Department of Planning and Sustainability will administer the grant.

County Administrator Jason Molino provided Legislators a brief summary regarding some of the impacts of the just-passed New York State Budget—among those impacts, that proposed Early Voting has not been funded; \$175 million for workforce development initiatives has been included in the budget; up to 500 new Medicaid Assisted Living Program beds have been approved statewide in counties with one or fewer existing such providers (counties such as Tompkins), with \$20 million in capital funding set aside. State base aid for community colleges is reduced by just over \$7.6 million, compared to the \$24 million reduction proposed in the Executive Budget.

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