



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **April 17, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Urges Congress to Enact Assault Weapons Ban

The Legislature, by a vote of 12-1 (Legislator Mike Sigler voted no; Legislator Glenn Morey was excused) urged the U.S. Congress to immediately enact a law that mirrors provisions of the Assault Weapons Ban of 2017, as introduced in the United States Senate, which prohibits the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. The prior federal assault weapons ban, enacted in 1994, expired ten years later and was not renewed by Congress. The resolution notes that assault weapons may now be legally sold and purchased in many states, and that the incidence of mass shootings in schools, churches, and other public places has increased, involving once-banned assault-style weapons and high-volume magazine, including February's mass-shooting at Parkland, Florida's Marjory Stoneham Douglas High School, which killed 17 innocent people, the deadliest school shooting since 2012. The measure maintains that "assault-style weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines are not suitable for civilian use of any type and constitute a demonstrated threat to the general public and law enforcement personnel."

Legislator Sigler said it's misdirected to seek a ban, that legislation was brought up after the shootings in Sandy Hook, and failed, and he sees that since then nothing has changed: "We want to reduce gun violence in this country; you need to bring people to the table."—reclassification of certain types of weapons would be better, he said. Public Safety Committee Chair Rich John said that he agrees that a national conversation that would speak across the divide would be helpful, but that this resolution is a place to start. Legislator Henry Granison, who drafted the resolution, remarked that the resolution is a way to make a statement about the Legislature's views on the issue and "to express what we stand for." Legislator Anna Kelles said, "The youth in our country have come out in droves and asked us to do something...I think that it's time," and added that the County's resolution may be used as a model for other interested counties to follow.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794; Legislator Henry Granison, 342-8643

Naloxone Program Approved for All County Facilities, to Enhance Community Safety

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Glenn Morey was excused), authorized the Department of Emergency Response to partner with other agencies, departments and community partners to establish and maintain a naloxone distribution and training program within County facilities. Naloxone has been identified as a substance that can immediately reverse the effects of opioid drugs in the case of overdose, and can be administered by a non-professional before first responders arrive, with such prompt action found to greatly increase the probability of survival.

As it experiences the effects of the nationwide opioid epidemic, the resolution notes that Tompkins County desires to enhance survival of opioid victims and promote services to those at risk for overdose, and that, with comprehensive placement and training, naloxone will in many cases ensure immediate response and intervention, dramatically improving the chance of survival should someone in County facilities suffer an opioid overdose. The ready availability of naloxone "will improve safety of our workforce and help make naloxone a life-saving fixture throughout the County," the measure states.

The program will extend established protocols of the Departments of Probation, Mental Health, and Social Services, and the Sheriff's Office, which have already acquired naloxone, expanding capabilities to other

County departments and facilities, and will be incorporated into the County's existing AED/CPR health and safety program throughout County facilities, with the program fully implemented in all facilities by the end of the year.

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

Legislature Supports State Legislation to Establish a Third County Court Judge

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Glenn Morey was excused), passed a resolution urgently supporting State legislation, introduced in the Senate by Senators Helming and O'Mara, to establish a third county court judgeship in Tompkins County. The third county judge position was one of the key recommendations of the county's Municipal Courts Task Force two years ago. The resolution notes that, because of steady and consistent population growth over the past 50 years, the population per county judge is the highest of any county in the Sixth Judicial District, and caseloads have grown proportionately with the population increase, leading to more crowded court dockets and the use of more bed-days in Tompkins County Jail. With elevation of the County's Supreme Court Judge to the Appellate Division of the Third Department, there is also no local Supreme Court Judge to hear Supreme Court cases, or to be available to provide assistance in presiding on local criminal court matters. A key element of the County's comprehensive approach aimed at controlling its Jail population through reducing recidivism is swift and intensive judicial interventions when needed, the resolution states.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794.

Legislature Honors the Late "Teddy" Zimrot, Long-Time Leader of the County Human Rights Commission

By proclamation from Chair Martha Robertson, the Legislature honored and recognized Theda ("Teddy") Zimrot, the County's third and longest serving Director of Human Rights, who died April 7. From 1983-1995, Zimrot served first as Investigator, then as Director, of the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission, where she expanded the services and staff of the office, engaged the Commission volunteer advisory board, and provided advocacy and education for the community. "Teddy's passion for human rights and social justice was manifested in her genuine love for people and her ability to organize communities to fight for what is right," the proclamation states, and "during her tenure as Director, Teddy elevated the Department and Tompkins County as a well-respected proponent of human rights, setting Tompkins County as a leader among its peers doing human rights work in New York State"—one of the many achievements, the drafting and adoption of what is commonly known as "Local Law C," which included LGBTQ and gender identity as a protective class under Tompkins County Human Rights Law, a protection that did not exist anywhere else in New York State.

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

Participation in Multi-County "Raise the Age" Compliance Coalition Approved

The Legislature, without dissent, authorized County Administrator Jason Molino to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to participate in an eleven-county "Raise the Age" Compliance Coalition. (Legislator Glenn Morey was excused.) Execution of the MOU, Administrator Molino notes, is merely a non-binding commitment on behalf of the County to participate in an investigatory process with partner counties on how best to solve challenges that arise from the "Raise the Age" legislation, including the housing for 15- and 17-year-old youth.

Under "Raise the Age" legislation, signed into law a year ago by Governor Cuomo and which takes effect as of October 1, no 16- or 17-year-old will be sentenced or detained in a facility with adults, and youth whose cases are heard in Family court will be detained or placed in State-licensed facilities, as are juvenile delinquents. Adolescent offenders detained pre-trial, or whose post-conviction sentencing is one year or less will be held in locally administered specialized secure detention (SSD) centers for older youth, regulated by the Office of Children and Family Services and the State Commission of Correction. While the County, through its Probation and Social Services Departments, is evaluating possible housing options that may exist in Tompkins and adjacent counties, Mr. Molino in a briefing memo said the MOU "represents a parallel and coordinated effort to evaluate additional housing options," with an initial focus on working toward defining a scope of work regarding potential expert consulting services to advise the counties on compliance with the detention mandates.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

Legislature Supports Gun Buyback Event

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Glenn Morey was excused), passed a resolution of support for s Gun Buyback Event, proposed by Sheriff Ken Lansing and District Attorney Matt Van Houten. The event, to receive and buy guns turned in by members of the public, will take place Saturday, June 9, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Airport Fire and Rescue Building, 72 Brown Road, Ithaca. This is similar to gun buyback events held in past years. The resolution notes that, without such an event, it may be difficult for many people to dispose of unwanted guns, leading to situations where the guns are lost or left unsecured, and that providing a safe and secure pathway for people to voluntarily dispose of guns that they no longer wish to possess or store will prevent those guns from being used unsafely, thereby providing a useful service to the community.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794.

Among other business,

Noting that April 18, 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of passage of the U.S. Fair Housing Law (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968), which enunciates a national policy of Fair Housing for all, Legislature Chair Martha Robertson proclaimed April 2018 Fair Housing Month in Tompkins County, as the beginning of a year-long commemoration of the U.S. Fair Housing Law in Tompkins County, urging all citizens to wholeheartedly recognize this celebration throughout the year. Dr. Kenneth Clarke, Special Advisor to the Office of Human Rights, also spoke about the history and importance of the Fair Housing Law, noting that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke during the last two years of his life urging fair housing as a basic human right.

The Legislature, without dissent, endorsed Tompkins Cortland Community College's amendment to its Child Care Center project, accommodating a \$732,000 increase of the project budget, to \$4,732,000—the funding coming from State grants, private donations, and SUNY capital project funds, with no additional funding from sponsors.

Director of Assessment Jay Franklin provided a briefing to the Legislature of his department's Annual Equity Maintenance program, which ensures all properties in the county are equitably assessed at a uniform percentage of value, and responded to legislators' question on his department's assessment process.

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