



Inclusion Through Diversity

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June 19, 2018
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **June 19, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves Adoption of TC3 Operating Budget

The Tompkins County Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Henry Granison abstained; Legislator Dan Klein was excused), approved adoption of the Tompkins Cortland Community College operating budget for the coming academic year. Once again this year, the nearly \$40.8 million budget contains no increase in sponsor support. The budget contains total sponsor support of \$4,650,364, split between the two counties based on proportional student enrollment—64% (\$2,976,233) from Tompkins County and 36% (\$1,674,131) from Cortland.

Both sponsoring counties must agree on the level of sponsor support, and Legislators have noted that they would have liked the County to be able to contribute more, but that Cortland County has clearly indicated its unwillingness to increase support. Budget chair Michael Lane noted, “We have to adopt the same budget. TC3 has requested a budget with no increase.” Legislator Rich John thanked the college for its work on this budget. “It is a jewel of our community...and we need to protect that,” he said.

The resolution will take effect upon the adoption of a concurrent resolution by the Cortland County Legislature.
Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 844-8440.

New Five-Year Agreement Authorized with TCAD for Economic Development Services

The Legislature authorized County Administrator Jason Molino to execute a new Memorandum of Understanding with Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) for economic development services, for the years 2019-2023, succeeding the current agreement which expires at the end of this year. After considerable thoughtful discussion, the measure was approved by a 12-1 vote, with Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no. (Legislator Dan Klein was excused.)

The new MOU extends the County’s intent to provide support equivalent to one-third of TCAD’s annual budget, based on the agency’s annual work plan—an amount not to exceed \$250,410 in 2019 and rising by approximately two percent each year to a level not to exceed \$271,052 in 2023. The agreement continues past practice of funding a portion of the County’s contribution through County room occupancy tax revenue.

In a change that had been recommended by the Legislature’s Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee, and was ultimately approved by the Legislature, the agreement sets the proportion of room tax funding at a maximum of 75% for 2019 then decreases it over time—to 50% in 2020 and 2021, and 25% in 2022 and 2023. It was the proportion to come from room tax that prompted close to an hour of discussion and a series of proposed alternate amendments—returning to a 55/45% split as initially recommended by the County Administrator; upping the proportion to 35% in the final two years; or setting the funding split now for the first year only with a task force established to study the levels for later years—all of which failed by 7-6 votes, failing to muster the 8 votes required for passage.

The new MOU also involves the PDEQ Committee in review of the annual TCAD work plan; incorporates reference to the agency’s ongoing collaboration with the County on workforce development; and states that the PDEQ Committee will convene a task force no later than 18 months before expiration of the agreement to

review the County's relationship with TCAD and funding strategy to sustain the economic development program.

Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 342-2036; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

County Backs Proposal to Increase Assigned Counsel Rates in New York State

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Dan Klein was excused), expressed support for a resolution passed by the New York State Bar Association House of Delegates, which calls for an increase in the assigned counsel rates in New York State. The Legislature's resolution states that the increase in rates should be a State expense and not result in another unfunded mandate for local counties. The vote was a unanimous 12-0, with Legislator Dan Klein and Chair Martha Robertson excused.

The measure states that Assigned Counsel rates established by the State of New York have not increased since 2004 although mandated compensation for State judges and elected District Attorneys have increased, and that the lack of increase in rates and has restrained the ability of attorneys to participate and to provide quality legal representation under the Assigned Counsel program. *Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 256-9794*

Among other business,

Dozens of people packed Legislature Chambers, and 16 addressed the Legislature urging sustained and steadfast opposition to reported plans that coal-fired Cayuga Power Plant might seek to repower using trucked-in compressed natural gas. Among those speaking out were former County Legislators Carol Chock and Dooley Kiefer—Ms. Chock reminding Legislators of the County's proud history of striving to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and in leading the drive against fracking. "Why then would we want to allow that same fracked gas to be highly compressed and trucked through our County, exposing our residents to the same dangers and burned to release those same methane gas emissions now?" she asked. Ms. Kiefer told Legislators, "We have to count on you to not let this happen...What is important is that you stand up for us and our climate."

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in memory and honor of beloved civil rights pioneer Dorothy Cotton, who died June 10th.

The Legislature scheduled a July 3rd public hearing on a proposed Local Law that would permit the Legislature to override the County's State-mandated Tax Levy Limit for 2019, if deemed necessary in preparation of the County's 2019 Budget. The hearing is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. at Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The Legislature approved revisions to its Minutes policy, governing meetings of the Legislature, and its standing and special committees.

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