



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
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THREE PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **September 4, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Administrator Releases 2019 Recommended Budget**

Tompkins County Administrator Jason Molino has delivered to the County Legislature a 2019 Recommended County Budget and 2019-2023 Capital Program.

The budget proposes modest spending growth, stability in current programs, and the alignment of resources with priorities that include sustained investment in capital infrastructure, continued focus on reducing our jail population, addressing the shortage of affordable housing, and maintaining a diverse, well-trained, motivated workforce.

The Recommended Budget supports total expenditures of \$186.5 million (an increase of 2.57%) and local dollar spending of \$89.9 million (an increase of 2.05%). The budget is balanced with a 1.43% increase in the County property tax levy, which is less than the Legislature's 2.2% levy goal, and well below the County's tax cap. Due to a substantial 4.3% increase in the county's tax base, which spreads the cost of government across a larger base, the budget contains a property *tax rate* that will go *down* again in 2019, to \$6.39 per \$1,000—a reduction of 2.76%. This is the fifth consecutive year that the tax rate has decreased, and is the lowest County tax rate since 2011. A \$3 increase in the County's solid waste annual fee also is recommended, bringing the fee to \$58. Under the Recommended Budget, the County property tax bill for the owner of a median-valued \$185,000 home would increase by \$15.40.

“Our Budget continues to benefit from a strong local economy,” Administrator Molino notes in his annual Budget Message to the Legislature. “For the fourth straight year, the budgeted cost of mandated human services programs has declined, in part, because of an economy that is creating opportunities for employment.” A robust growth in tax base fueled by large-scale new construction (12.3% over the past three years), along with stable growth in local wages and consumer spending, has contributed to healthy growth in sales tax collections, he said.

Further detail regarding Administrator Molino's Recommended Budget can be found at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/news/administrator-releases-2019-recommended-budget>

Public copies of the Recommended Budget are available for review at the County Administration office, 125 East Court Street (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor), and at the Office of the County Legislature, 121 East Court Street.

The 2019 Recommended Budget is posted on the County website at [www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2019budget](http://www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2019budget).

*Contacts: County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551; Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital, and Personnel Committee, 844-8440; Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119.*

#### **Construction Contract Awarded for First Phase of Airport Terminal Expansion**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, awarded Streeter Associates, of Elmira, the construction contract for the first phase of the passenger terminal expansion at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. Streeter submitted a bid of \$7,638,000, determined to be the lowest acceptable bid of three submitted. The project will renovate and update airline offices, move screening equipment behind the counter area, improve the lobby area, and upgrade utilities.

While funding is available through the Governor's \$14.2 million airport revitalization grant, the Airport has applied for federal funding to cover this phase of the project.

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Michael Lane, Chair, Transportation Committee, 844-8440; Airport Director Mike Hall, 279-2662.*

### **In Split Votes, Legislature Authorizes Sale of Airport Parcel to NYSDOT**

Also related to the Airport project, Legislators, after considerable discussion, authorized the sale of 15 acres of Airport property, located on Warren Road, to the New York State Department of Transportation, as the first step toward relocating the NYSDOT regional highway maintenance, from its current location on Ithaca's Cayuga Inlet. Several Hillcrest Road residents expressed concern to the Legislature regarding how the facility could impact their properties, and maintained they had not been notified about the project. Legislators Amanda Champion and Shawna Black were among those who said they didn't yet know enough about the proposal, including environmental aspects, and Legislator Mike Sigler said he'd first like to see a plan from the DOT.

Kathleen Troy, of the Syracuse regional office of the DOT stressed that this action represents only the first step in the process, a contract to permit sale, and that there will be ample opportunity to conduct a full environmental assessment on the project, develop a site plan, and incorporate input from residents, the County, and the FAA. Legislature Chair Martha Robertson pointed out that the DOT needs to own the land before the next steps can take place, and County Attorney Jonathan Wood stated that the County would be an "involved party" in the State Environmental Quality Review that DOT will conduct.

The Legislature by a 12-2 vote (Legislators Black and Champion dissenting) first made a negative determination of environmental significance regarding the land transfer transaction, then authorized sale of the parcel by a vote of 9-4, with Legislators Champion, Black, Sigler, and Henry Granison voting no. (Legislator Rich John was excused.) The land will be sold for its fair market value of \$840,000, with funds going to the Airport for use by that enterprise unit.

#### *Other Airport-related actions:*

Legislators, by unanimous vote, also authorized acceptance of FAA grants for five other Airport projects—for rehabilitation of three taxiways and part of the General Aviation ramp (design); acquisition of another passenger boarding bridge; to acquire two pieces of snow removal equipment; and to support a feasibility study regarding construction of an aircraft rescue fire fighting building.

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Michael Lane, Chair, Transportation Committee, 844-8440; Airport Director Mike Hall, 279-2662.*

### **Community Housing Development Funding Approved for Lansing Project**

The Legislature, without dissent, authorized expenditure of \$23,125 from the Community Housing Development Fund to support the Milton Meadows project in the Town of Lansing. The County's contribution is combined with a \$233,750 Community Housing Fund allocation from Cornell University to support the project. Tompkins County's share comes from repaid federal housing funds, initially received through the Community Development Block Grant program.

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

### **Natural Infrastructure Project Approved in Danby**

The Legislature appropriated \$8,000 from the County's Natural Infrastructure Capital Program to support the Lindsay-Parsons Wetland Buffer Project—Waterman Tract, assisting the Finger Lakes Land Trust in acquiring 9 acres of property that buffers 900 feet of a wetland system on the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in the Town of Danby. The project will further enhance the buffer area by removing invasive species and planting native trees and shrubs. The Natural Infrastructure Capital Program protects and enhances natural systems that can help to mitigate impacts of intensive rainfall events, help decrease sediment loads in streams and Cayuga Lake; and protects overall water quality in streams, aquifers, and Cayuga Lake, with the goal of reducing risks of flooding and protecting public and private water supplies.

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

### **Legislators Approve Two Resolutions of Congratulation to TC3**

The Legislature, by unanimous votes, approved resolutions marking two milestones for Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3).

The Legislature recognized the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the College's founding, when it began its life in the former Groton high school building, then relocated to its current Dryden campus. The Legislature notes, in part, that TC3 became a leader in development of co-curricular courses in regional high schools and online course offerings, has become a model of inclusiveness and a leader in diversity, and has responded to the ever-evolving academic and social needs of students. The Legislature "extends its warmest congratulations to Tompkins Cortland Community College, its students, faculty, administration and staff, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, and expresses its sincere thanks and support for all that the college does for our community and for the world."

The Legislature also congratulated Orinthia T. Montague, PhD, on the occasion of her inauguration as the College's fourth president on September 7<sup>th</sup>. The resolution notes that President Montague comes to the College with impressive academic credentials, culminating with her Doctorate degree in higher education administration from the University of Missouri-St. Louis; that her past work experience has prepared her well for her new role; and that Dr. Montague has devoted her career to helping students, especially those from underrepresented populations, find success in their college experience. The Legislature, on behalf of the people of Tompkins County, "extends its hearty congratulations" to President Montague, and "extends to her our firm support and sincere best wishes as she leads this wonderful institution into the bright and happy future of service to our students and our community."

*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee and Liaison to the TC3 Board of Trustees, 844-8440; Legislator Henry Granison, 342-8643; Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119.*

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