



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
September 20, 2018
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **September 20, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves Contract and Funding for Homeless Housing Services

The Legislature has authorized Tompkins County to contract with St. John's Community Services to provide homeless housing services in Tompkins County, authorizing the Department of Social Services to execute contracts with the agency for operation of the county's day drop-in center (the Friendship Center) and the emergency homeless shelter program. The vote was 12-1, with Legislator Henry Granison voting no (Chair Martha Robertson was excused.) The Legislature authorized allocation of \$117,753 in Contingency funding to cover the additional net local cost associated with the first two months of the agreement, including \$89,250 for start-up expenses. The new homeless housing services contract will also require an amendment to the 2019 Recommended Budget, to accommodate a \$300,000 increase in local funding for homeless housing services.

St. John's, one of three respondents to the County's Request for Proposals seeking a new provider for homeless services in anticipation of change in the County's current contractor, The Rescue Mission of Syracuse, will begin service as of November 1. The resolution notes that the Department selected St. John's "on the basis of its compatible philosophy, flexibility, and the knowledge and experience of key staff." Long-time Ithaca Rescue Mission Director Richard Bennett is a member of St. John's executive team and will provide support and direct supervision of the local agency's director.

An alternate resolution that came out of committee would have allocated an amount \$27,000 less, which included only start-up expenses described as "critical," primarily related to health and safety issues. Legislators, however, by a 10-3 vote (Legislators Granison, Michael Lane and Deborah Dawson dissenting) substituted the version with the higher amounts that was ultimately approved. All payments are subject to the approval of County Administrator Jason Molino. Commissioner of Social Services Kit Kephart said that the Department recently learned that grant funding from the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) may be available to the provider for shelter repairs. The contract with the provider will stipulate that the County will be reimbursed for whatever costs are provided through any grant received.

Contact: Kit Kephart, Commissioner of Social Services, 274-5251; Shawna Black, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 351-7855

Legislature Supports County-City Law Enforcement Co-Location Study

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-2 (Legislators Mike Sigler and Glenn Morey voted no; Chair Martha Robertson was excused) supported a proposed consultant study examining the potential for co-location of the City of Ithaca Police Department and Tompkins County Sheriff's Road Patrol and Civil Division, and pending similar approval by the City, agreed to fund half of the cost of the proposed study, for an amount not to exceed \$10,000.

The architectural consulting firm Kingsbury Architecture, LLC has submitted a proposal to conduct the study at a quoted cost of \$19,650, cost to be divided between the County and the City. Examining the possibility of public safety offices in the county was one of the recommendations of the Tompkins County Law Enforcement Shared Services Study, conducted last year by the Center for Governmental Research.

There has been no decision to co-locate the two facilities, but Public Safety Committee chair Rich John said it would be beneficial to assess land and space needs issues, especially since both agencies currently are eyeing potential facilities changes. “If we don’t study it now, those two issues will probably not run together in time in our lifetimes,” he said. “It’s not that we’re pre-judging this, but we should look at it.” Legislator Mike Sigler claimed the proposal shows a lack of transparency regarding a desire to move the Sheriff’s Office to the City, which Mr. John said is not the case.

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

Health Department Receives Leadership Grant

The Legislature authorized acceptance of a \$125,000 Learning Resource Grant (spread over two years) from the Kresge Foundation to the Health Department, under its Emerging Leaders in Public Health program. The program provides funding to local health departments throughout the country to make transformational change in their organizations and improve health outcomes in their communities. The TCHD team (Public Health Director Frank Kruppa and Director of Health Promotion Samantha Hillson) were one of 20 local health departments across the country selected to participate.

Director Kruppa told Legislators the program challenges local public health leaders, looking a decade ahead, to define and explore a defined and sustainable role for local health departments in the future. He said the initiative supported by the grant will involve internal stakeholders and the wider community, in achieving the concept of achieving the Health Department’s role as the population health strategist for addressing social determinants of health.

The measure was approved by a 12-1 vote, with Legislator Dan Klein dissenting (Chair Martha Robertson was excused.) Mr. Klein expressed some skepticism about the program, maintaining that if the Health Department was moving to a new role, the Legislature, advisory boards and employees would have been involved. Director Kruppa said that is what is actually going to happen as this initiative moves forward.

Contact: Public Health Director Frank Kruppa, 274-6600; Shawna Black, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 351-7855

Legislature Backs State Legislation Regarding Housing of Transgender and Intersex Inmates

The Legislature, without dissent (Chair Martha Robertson was excused), urged the New York State Senate to immediately pass legislation, already approved by the Assembly, regarding the housing of transgender and intersex inmates. The legislation would authorize the sheriff to assign a transgender or intersex inmate to any facility housing unit, to ensure the inmate’s health and safety and is consistent with facility management and security.

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

Among other business,

The Legislature set Tuesday, October 30 as the date for the public hearing on the 2019 Tompkins County Budget and the County’s 2019-2023 Capital Program. The hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m., at County Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The Legislature scheduled an October 2 public hearing, at 5:30 p.m., at Legislature Chambers, regarding the 2018 New York State Homes and Community Renewal Housing Trust Fund Corporation Community Development Block Grant Program application. Although such a public hearing is required, the CDBG program application announcement has not yet been issued. Since the State is ending municipalities’ ability to recycle Program Income, it was noted that a new round of CDBG funding will be necessary to enable the County’s Homeownership Program to continue providing assistance to qualified low-income buyers.

The Legislature authorized acceptance of a \$25,000 grant, to be paid over two years, from the Park Foundation to support the Drug Treatment Courts of Tompkins County.

- END -