



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **November 8, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Tompkins County 2019 Budget Adopted

Concluding a process that started at the beginning of September, the Tompkins County Legislature tonight adopted the County's 2019 budget and the 2019-2023 Tompkins County Capital Program. The budget was approved by unanimous vote.

The \$187.5 million budget, which includes \$90.6 million in net local spending, increases the County tax levy by 1.54% and represents an increase in local spending of 3.55%. The tax rate of \$6.41 per thousand is down by 17 cents (-2.58%) from 2018, representing an increase of \$14.63 in the tax bill for the median-valued \$185,000 county home. The levy increase falls below the County's tax cap of approximately 9.59%, as calculated by New York State.

Before the adoption vote, Legislators, after considerable discussion, approved one amendment to the budget, advanced by Legislator Henry Granison, which holds in the Contingent Fund \$25,000 in one-time funding to increase the County's \$20,000 share of support for the Community Outreach Worker Program, administered by Family and Children's Service. The increase matches a similar increase recently approved by the City of Ithaca. Agency representatives in recent weeks advocated for the increase, maintaining it's needed to hire a second outreach worker and support related costs to meet vastly increased demand for the program serving vulnerable individuals in the downtown core. While the consensus was that the program has been valuable, some legislators, as well as County Administrator Jason Molino, in discussion had suggested that there needs to be discussion, planning and consensus reached among program partners—County, City, the Ithaca Downtown Partnership, and Cayuga Medical Center—about their shared vision for the program, desired outcomes, and the way in which the program should expand. The amendment was ultimately approved by a 12-2 vote, Legislators Glenn Morey and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no.

Following adoption, Budget chair Michael Lane thanked his colleagues for their efforts throughout the budget process, and said that he hoped the budget demonstrates that the Legislature is trying to both keep taxes down and preserve county services that people need.

2019 Solid Waste Annual Fee:

In an action separate from, but related to, the 2019 Tompkins County Budget, Legislators also acted to formally establish the \$58.00 unit charge included in the budget as the County's 2019 Solid Waste Annual Fee, a \$3.00 increase from the 2018 fee. The action also codifies unit charges for types of properties other than single-family residences (considered one unit)—such as two-family and multi-unit residences, colleges and schools, and other types of properties.

An overview of the 2019 budget and other budget documents may be found on the budget page of the County website at www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2019budget. The full 2019 Adopted Budget will be posted there soon.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119; Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551; Barbara Eckstrom, Director, Recycling and Materials Management, 273-6632.

Lisa Monroe Appointed Director, Office for the Aging

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, confirmed County Administrator Jason Molino's appointment of Lisa Monroe as Director of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. Monroe, who has served as *NY Connects* Coordinator for the Office for the Aging since 2013, and as the Office's Interim Director since September of this year, was selected as the recommended candidate, following a national search.

Administrator Molino told Legislators Monroe comes to the position with over 20 years experience working with the aging population and recognized her as "a steadfast leader in the department," noting that agency partners voiced nothing but praise for Lisa during the search process.

Prior to joining County government five years ago, Director Monroe served from 1997 to 2013 as Director of Therapeutic Recreation at Willow Point Nursing Home, in Vestal, NY; and before that as Recreation Leader at Ithaca's Lakeside Nursing Home (now Cayuga Ridge), from 1994-1997. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from SUNY College at Cortland, with a major in Recreation and Leisure Studies, with a Therapeutic Recreation concentration.

"I am honored to have this opportunity and excited to continue to serve the community in this new role, especially during a time when our population is aging at historic rates and life expectancy rates continue to rise," Director Monroe said. It will be more critical than ever to advocate for services and supports to meet the increasing needs."

Contact: County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551; Lisa Monroe, Director, Tompkins County Office for the Aging, 274-5482.

Purchase Option Agreement Authorized Related to Real Estate

Following an executive session, the Legislature by unanimous vote authorized County Administrator Jason Molino to enter into an Option Agreement for Purchase of Real Property for four adjoining parcels, located at 408 and 412-414 N. Tioga Street, and 117 and 119 Sears Street in the City of Ithaca, owned by Dental Properties Company, LLC. The Option to Purchase is not to exceed \$1.8 million, of which \$25,000 of the purchase price will be given as a non-refundable payment for the exclusive Option Agreement. The resolution also appropriates \$62,000 from the Contingent Fund to support professional services and land acquisition costs, as needed.

The measure notes that the County has been reviewing office space needs for many years, including the Center of Government Business Case Analysis completed in 2011, that there are many County offices in scattered rented spaces from private landlords, with other County offices are in older buildings nearing the end of their period of probable usefulness, and that the potential site offers the opportunity to co-locate County departments in the downtown business core adjacent to other County departments. It notes that a purchase option will provide the County with the necessary time to review feasibility of the site to determine if purchase would be in the County's best interest.

The resolution indicates that County Administration shall take all necessary steps to ensure the property suitable for County space needs by performing the necessary space, environmental, and geotechnical studies within the four-month exclusive option period and that, should the County Administrator conclude that the property is suitable, a resolution will be brought forth to the Legislature to purchase the property.

Contact: County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

Community Development Block Grant Funding Application Authorized

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized Tompkins County to apply for up to \$1 million under the New York State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, as part of the 2018 funding round, administered by the New York State Homes and Community Renewal Housing Trust Fund Corporation. The requested award would support the rehabilitation of 24 homes owned by low-to-moderate-income Tompkins County residents in what would be the third iteration of the County's Healthy Homes Rehabilitation Program.

Contact: David West, Senior Planner, Department of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560; Anna Kelles, Chair, Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, 342-2036.

Legislature Affirms County's Commitment to Fair Housing

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved a resolution reaffirming the County's commitment to affirmatively further fair housing in Tompkins County—a formal action needed as part of the Community Development Block Grant application and award process. The resolution commits that, within the resources available through County, state, federal, and community sources, the Tompkins County Office of Human Rights will assist all persons who believe their fair housing rights have been violated; that the County shall promote awareness of rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 and other applicable state and local laws; and that the County will continue notifying community members of their rights and responsibilities concerning Fair Housing laws and complaint procedures.

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

Among other business,

Chair Martha Robertson, on behalf of the Legislature, issued a proclamation of recognition and remembrance in honor of Veterans Day, as well as this year's 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1. The proclamation notes that "Veterans Day provides an opportunity to remember, honor, and recognize the courage, valor, and dedication of those who have served our country, as well as those who continue to serve, and to thank them for defending our rights, and protecting the freedom of our country;" and that the County especially recognizes and expresses its sincere appreciation to the many veterans, and active and reserve military service members in Tompkins County government's vast workforce. The proclamation also "remember[s] and recognize[s] the service and sacrifice of Tompkins County residents 100 years ago to support the United States in 1917-18, when this country entered the conflict in Europe known then as "The Great War." The proclamation calls upon all residents "to recognize the valor and sacrifice of our veterans, and to join in honoring and thanking all veterans and military service members through the observance of Veterans Day on November 11, 2018.

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing December 4, 5:30 p.m., at Legislature Chambers, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca, regarding a proposed Local Law that would amend the County Charter to remove the requirement that Local Advisory Boards of Assessment Review meet each year. The number of property owners who have utilized these local boards (which not mentioned in State Real Property Tax Law) has decreased significantly during the past decade.

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