



Inclusion Through Diversity

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December 4, 2018
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **December 4, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Local Law Adopted Regarding Local Advisory Boards of Assessment Review

After a public hearing, the Tompkins County Legislature, without dissent, adopted a Local Law that amends the County Charter to remove the requirement that Local Advisory Boards of Assessment Review meet each year. In a follow-up action, Legislators, also by unanimous vote, approved a resolution suspending the Local Boards for a one-year trial period for the 2019 Assessment review. As revised, the Charter amendment indicates that Local Advisory Boards of Assessment Review *may* conduct local grievance hearings, not that they *shall* do so.

The Local Boards of Assessment Review, which are not mentioned in New York State Real Property Tax Law, were created when the County Charter was created and approved by the voters in 1968, then the County assessment function was subsequently consolidated at the County level. The resolutions note that need for the local boards has changed since they were created over 50 years ago, with the number of property owners utilizing them having decrease significantly over the past nine years. "Tompkins County wishes to continue these Boards of Assessment Review in a manner that will streamline their effectiveness," the resolutions state. *Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582; Director of Assessment Jay Franklin, 274-5517.*

Bonding Authorized for Ithaca College Bond Refinance

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved the issuance of up to \$22 million in tax-exempt revenue refunding bonds by the Tompkins County Development Corporation. The bonding refinances the outstanding principal amount of Civic Facility Revenue Bonds issued in 2004 by the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency that had been issued to underwrite campus and building improvements. The Legislature's approved the TCDC bond issue as the elected legislative body of Tompkins County. The Legislature's action qualifies the interest payable on the bonds as tax-exempt under the federal Internal Revenue Code and does not involve any financial obligation on the part of Tompkins County.

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

Legislature Reaffirms County Stands on Issues Before the State Legislature

The Legislature, without dissent, reaffirmed three calls for action on the part of New York State, which had been urged by the County Legislature earlier this year. Acting on member-filed resolutions advanced by Legislator Mike Sigler, the Legislature approved resolutions reiterating the stand of the Tompkins County Legislature on three pressing issues: Urging State legislation to establish a third County Court Judge in Tompkins County; opposing the proposed garbage incinerator in the Town of Romulus, Seneca County; and calling for State Insurance Law to be amended to allow public libraries, urban renewal agencies, and certain other quasi-governmental organizations to join a municipal cooperative health benefit plan.

"We have a whole new Senate now," Legislator Sigler noted, and said it's important to renew the County's positions before the new Legislature is seated at the beginning of the year. Chair Martha Robertson also observed that, based on advice that she had received from State officials earlier, it be seem beneficial to renew the County's call for a third County Judge while next fiscal year's Executive Budget is being developed.

Contact: Legislator Mike Sigler, 339-7978.

Among other business,

Legislators authorized 2019 payments for the County's proportionate share of the Tompkins Cortland Community College Operating Budget, as already appropriated by the Legislature for the College's 2018-2019 year. To accommodate the College's cash flow needs, the approved schedule issues the first two quarterly payments (nearly \$750,000 each) now (as prepayments for the 2019 Budget); the remaining two quarterly payments on May 1 and July 1, 2019.

The Legislature authorized funding for two projects through the 2018 Tompkins County Stream Corridor Restoration and Flood Hazard Mitigation Program – up to \$20,000 for the Ludlowville Stream Restoration Project in the Town of Lansing, and up to \$5,000 for the Enfield Creek at Kings Crossing Planting Project in the Town of Enfield.

Legislators heard a presentation from County Administrator Jason Molino regarding the capital project, approved as part of adoption of the 2019-2023 Capital Project, to renovate the County's Old Jail Office Building. The \$2.4 million project, to be undertaken beginning next year, will reconfigure and provide additional conference room space and office space for County departments occupying the building, representing the first upgrade of the building since its opening in 1993.

The Legislature recommended the appointment of Legislator Deborah Dawson as a Director on the Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) Board of Directors, to serve a three-year term through the end of 2021. Legislator Dawson, once approved, will become one of the County's three representatives on the TCAT Board, which is also made up of representatives of the City of Ithaca and Cornell University

The Legislature approved creation of two new County grant programs to county municipalities, administered by the Department of Planning and Sustainability and funded as part of the 2019 County Budget. The Towns and Villages Parks and Trails Grant Program provides awards of up to \$5,000 to support towns and villages for improvements to publicly owned, managed, or supported parks and trails. The Municipal Housing Affordability Grant Program offers grants of up to \$10,000 for municipal projects that support housing affordability.

Following a public hearing, the Legislature repealed the Local Law approved earlier this year to permit override of the Tax Levy Limit for 2019. The 2019 Tompkins County Budget, as adopted by the Legislature did not require override of the levy limit.

The Legislature authorized the County Administrator to enter into a purchase agreement for purchase of a small sliver of land (less than 3,000 square feet) from Cornell University, located adjacent to County-owned property in the Warren Road-Cherry Road area of the Town of Lansing, for a purchase price of \$3,700. The land, although believed to be owned by the County, was found to actually be owned by Cornell, as preparations were in process for transfer to the NYS Department of Transportation of a 15-acre parcel for its relocated highway maintenance facility.

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