



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **January 3, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Martha Robertson Reelected Legislature Chair for 2019; Shawna Black Elected Vice Chair**

The Tompkins County Legislature, in its annual reorganization meeting, elected Martha Robertson (D) for another year as Chair of the Legislature in 2019, and Shawna Black (D) as Vice Chair. The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are filled each year by majority vote of members of the Legislature.

Making the nomination for Chair, Legislator Deborah Dawson observed that over the past year she served with Martha in many capacities and has seen her in action in many different situations and venues. “In my experience, no one on this Legislature is better informed or more hard-working,” Dawson said. “When Tompkins County needs something, Martha looks to how to make it happen...She has proven herself to be tireless, relentless, and indomitable to serve Tompkins County. We all benefit from her hard work.”

There were no other nominations, and Robertson was elected in a 12-0 vote. (Legislator Henry Granison was excused from the meeting and Legislator Dan Klein was out of the room and did not vote.) “I deeply appreciate the honor. I deeply appreciate your support and look forward to working toward those very fine words,” Chair Robertson said.

Martha Robertson has served on the Legislature since 2002, representing District 13 (Western part of the Town of Dryden), and is returning for a sixth one-year term as Chair of the Legislature. In addition to serving as Chair during 2018, Robertson previous held the position from 2010 to 2013. Martha has chaired numerous committees of the Legislature over the years, and during 2018 also served as Chair of the Legislature’s new special Housing Committee.

Legislator Dawson also nominated Shawna Black for Vice Chair, who was elected by a 13-0 vote (with Legislator Granison excused.) Dawson praised Black’s good humor, people skills, and huge heart, as well as her impressive managerial and administrative skill and extensive hands- on experience in the county’s non-profit sector, and noted that, as chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, she was the only freshman legislator to have chaired a committee in 2018, and did an excellent job. “She’s earned the opportunity to expand her leadership role to the full Legislature, and to learn from that experience. We will all benefit from giving her that opportunity,” Dawson said.

Shawna Black joined the Legislature in 2017 and is beginning the second year of her first full term on the Legislature, representing District 11 (Northeast area of the Town of Ithaca.) As well as chairing the Health and Human Services Committee, Legislator Black during 2018 served on the Public Safety Committee and special Transportation Committee. “It’s a distinct pleasure to serve with this Legislature and my 13 dedicated and committed colleagues,” Vice Chair Black said.

In remarks following the election, Legislator Michael Lane also thanked outgoing Legislature Vice Chair Anna Kelles for her service during 2018. “No one works harder or has put in more time than Anna,” Mr. Lane said. *Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 592-3119; Shawna Black, Vice Chair of the Legislature, 351-7855*

### **Legislature Urges Expansion of State Bottle Bill**

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Henry Granison was excused) passed a resolution urging the New York State Legislature to increase recycling and reduce municipal waste management costs by expanding the New York State Returnable Container Act (also known as the Bottle Bill) to include wine, liquor, and other glass beverage containers.

Director of Recycling and Materials Management Barbara Eckstrom notes that the existing State Bottle Bill has proven to be the most effective way to recover and recycle various glass beverage containers, including beer and soda bottles, with glass beverage containers with a deposit having an economically viable market because they are source-separated and clean. As part of single-stream curbside collection programs, these glass bottles have no economically viable recycling markets, Eckstrom added, while they also break and contaminate paper and other materials at recycling facilities, resulting in diminished paper revenues and increased garbage. The resolution notes that several other states recognize the environmental and economic benefits of including wine, spirit and other glass beverage containers in their Bottle Bill systems.

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 564-7243; Director Barbara Eckstrom, Department of Recycling and Materials Management, 273-6632.*

### **Two New Tenants Approved for the Tompkins Center for History and Culture; Ithaca Festival Approved as Licensee**

The Legislature, by unanimous votes (Legislator Henry Granison was excused), accepted two new non-profit rental tenants for the Tompkins Center for History and Culture, approving the recommendation of the Center's Governing Council. Discover Cayuga Lake, Inc. (which operates the Floating Classroom) and the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra were accepted as tenants to fill available office spaces at the County-owned facility, located in the Historic Trust Company Building on the Ithaca Commons. The Center was established by the County as a home for community not-for-profit organizations that support and celebrate our local history and culture.

The Ithaca Festival was also approved, without dissent, as a Licensee, which provides access to the building, without rental of an office, for payment of a licensee fee—this action also recommended by the Governance Council. The measure directs County Administration to engage in negotiations with three organizations.

*Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582.*

Among other business:

Following up an action that had set aside funding during the 2019 County Budget process, the Legislature approved creation of a full-time position of Mental Health Court Resource Coordinator and appropriated \$50,000 in one-time funding set aside in the Contingent Fund. The funding is intended to demonstrate a need for a Mental Health Court in Tompkins County to leverage future ongoing funding from the State Office of Court Administration.

The Legislature authorized the County to enter into a contact with Paradigm Software L.L.C., of Cockeysville, MD, and other related support contracts, on behalf of the Department of Recycling and Materials Management, to purchase and implement a weigh scale software system, replacing outdated and inefficient software that is more than 20 years old. Contract amount is just over \$43,000, with a 10% contingency.

County Finance Director Rick Snyder presented the November Sales Tax Report, which shows preliminary, non-reconciled County sales tax receipts for November up by more than 9.5% compared to a year earlier, with year-to-date receipts as of November up by more than 7% from 2017.

**- END -**