



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
March 19, 2019  
TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **March 19, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Bridge Financing Approved for Tompkins Center for History and Culture Interior Renovations**

The Legislature, by a vote of 12-1 (Legislator Shawna Black voted no; Legislator Deborah Dawson was excused), authorized a loan of up to \$500,000 to the History Center, to enable completion of interior renovations to the Tompkins Center for History and Culture, pending receipt of approved grant and funds pledged through the Center's capital campaign. The interest-free bridge loan, to be repaid within three years, is provided to the History Center, as representative of the Center partners, and supplements similar bridge financing provided by The Park Foundation and to be provided by Tompkins Trust Company. The loan amount will equal that provided by the Trust Company, not to exceed \$500,000.

Tompkins County, traditional underwriter of the History Center, in 2017 purchased the historic Tompkins Trust building, located at 106-112 N. Tioga Street in Ithaca, in anticipation of the bank's relocation to its new headquarters, to house the History Center, along with other co-located non-profits, having financed the acquisition through casino revenue received by the County, including \$1.9 million in licensing fees. Center partners are responsible for all non-code related and structural costs for interior renovations, tenant improvements, and exhibits, with a total cost of just under \$3,750,000—\$2 million in grant funding committed and a capital campaign of \$1,750,000 in progress, including support pledged over a three-year period.

"This is a loan to help with the interim financing while grants are in process," said Legislator Rich John who has taken a lead role on behalf of the County to help bring the Tompkins Center for History and Culture to fruition. "The Center has been very successful in raising grant funds and in its capital campaign." The capital campaign is currently at 73% of goal, he reported, with the interim financing allowing completion of the capital campaign. He reported that, beyond the money coming in from grants and already pledged, the remaining balance of the capital campaign is \$255,000-300,000.

Legislator Black said that she is uncomfortable to committing more money to the project, and noted that the County would be the last to be repaid under the arrangement. Chair Martha Robertson said that, after examining grant and pledge data, she is quite confident that this is not a gift, "just fronting money because this is how this happens," including for grants from the state that are awarded on a reimbursement basis.

Legislator Anna Kelles noted that in this case money that is paid in rent will be paid into a County building. "This is a gorgeous building, very creative, and an adaptive reuse," she said.

This is not the first time the County has had to loan to non-profits to address similar capital cash flow concerns, said Legislator Michael Lane, who chairs both the Legislature's Government Operations and budget committees. "It's a lot of money, but it is our building, it is our Bicentennial project, it's a great thing for the people of Tompkins County," he said.

*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 844-8440; Legislator Rich John, 256-9794; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.*

### **Capital Funding Approved for Owego Headwaters Protection Project**

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Deborah Dawson was excused), appropriated \$15,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreation Resource Protection to provide partial support for the Owego Headwaters Protection Project, undertaken by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. The project will assist the Land Trust in purchasing 20 acres within Tompkins County of a larger parcel on Flat Iron Road in the Town of Caroline, buffering Owego Creek, adjacent to the Land Trust's Goetchius Wetland Preserve. The resolution notes that the project meets the project eligibility requirements of the Capital Reserve Fund, including priority criteria of protecting land adjacent to permanently protected open space; protects land within the 330-foot buffer of a perennial stream; and protects corridor of habitat that can provide for connectivity between protected areas. It calls support from the Capital Reserve Fund "an important but modest component" of the total funding needed for acquisition of the parcel.

*Contact: Scott Doyle, Associate Planner, Department of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560; Anna Kelles, Vice Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 342-2036.*

Among other business,

The Legislature held a public hearing to hear public comments on Tompkins County's community development needs, and to discuss possible submission of one or more Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for the coming year. Senior Planner David West said the County plans to apply for up to \$1 million available for housing rehabilitation in conjunction with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services.

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing for April 2, 5:30 p.m., on a new Local Law that would permit the County to enact Best Value Purchasing as part of its procurement process, as is authorized by New York State General Municipal Law, which would provide additional procurement options for the County that may expedite the procurement process and result in cost savings. The hearing will be held at County Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in honor and remembrance of the victims of the recent New Zealand mass shooting by an avowed white supremacist, in which 50 members of the Muslim faith were killed. Chair Martha Robertson asked that all think about the rights we all share and rededicate themselves to protecting those rights.

**- END -**