



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
May 7, 2019
THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **May 7, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Adopts 2020 Financial Goal, Fiscal Guidelines for Departments and Agencies

In two resolutions approved tonight, the Tompkins County Legislature approved a 2020 tax levy goal and spending targets for 2020. The tax levy resolution directs County Administrator Jason Molino to prepare a recommended operating and capital budget that can be supported with a tax levy increase of 2.76%, an increase that is beneath the County's 2020 tax cap, currently estimated at 3.51%. Both the tax levy guideline and the spending targets for departments and County agencies to use in preparing their budgets were approved by unanimous votes. (Legislator Shawna Black was excused.)

County Administrator Jason Molino expects that the 2.76% increase in the County's property tax levy, which by policy includes a 0.75% increase dedicated to capital improvements identified in the County's Capital program, will support a maintenance-of-effort budget for County departments, and address certain other critical needs and priorities. As in the past, departments and agencies will have the ability to request funding in excess of their 2020 spending targets, allowing the Legislature to consider exceeding the Administrator's Recommended Budget. Departments and agencies must submit their 2020 budget requests to the County Administrator by July 27.

The \$1.75 million increase in the levy would represent an estimated increase of \$10.00 for the owner of a median-valued \$190,000 county home. The approved fiscal targets hold targets steady for County departments and include a 2% increase in target for not-for-profit County agencies.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

Legislature Authorizes Consultant Agreements for Airport Project, Hears Economic Impact Report

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislator Shawna Black was excused), authorized two Supplemental Agreements with C&S Companies, of Syracuse, related to the Airport expansion project, both funded as part of the NYS DOT Upstate Airport Initiative grant: a total of \$2,280,000 for design and bidding services, and construction phase services for Phase 2 of the Airport project; and \$200,000 for design and bidding services for the General Aviation US Customs Facility that is part of the Airport project.

At the beginning of the meeting, seven people addressed the Legislature voicing serious concern about the Airport project, advocating termination of the project citing environmental grounds and protection of immigrant residents, and calling for a moratorium on the Customs facility. While some called for changes now in the Customs Facility Memorandum of Agreement, County Administrator Jason Molino said that a copy of the proposed document has not yet been received and the process would not begin until the facility is 80-85% complete. "The most important part is our ability to terminate it," he said.

At the Legislature's request, Airport Director Mike Hall made a presentation to the Legislature regarding economic impact of the Airport, prepared by Tompkins County Area Development. Regarding the direct economic impact of the Airport capital project, Director Hall cited a one-year impact of \$30 million in capital investment, creation of 190 union construction jobs, and a calculated \$22 million in additional economic activity and wages. For the longer term, the Director described the Airport as a tool for economic development. "We are critical to our important start-up businesses," he said. TCAD projects entrepreneurial business growth and

development supported by ITH as \$160 million in capital investment, creation of 475 short-term jobs and 2,400 new jobs, and \$190 million in wages over the next ten years.

Regarding the Customs facility, Director Hall noted that what the Airport will have stationed here is a customs inspector, not a border patrol agent. The impact of a customs inspector is minimal, he said, and will be controlled. With the County reimbursing the salary of the Customs inspector and providing an office, if dissatisfied the Legislature could decide to simply stop paying. “I believe there is an extreme degree of control in this body,” he said.

Contact: Airport Director Mike Hall, 279-2662; County Administrator Jason Molino, 274-5551.

Two New Special Committees Established

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson announced the appointment of two new Special Committees of the Legislature for 2019.

Legislator Michael Lane will chair the Legislature’s Complete Count Committee for the 2020 Census, which will lead the County’s community-wide effort to reach out and help ensure a full count of county residents during the once-a-decade federal Census next year. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne will serve as Vice Chair, and Dave McKenna, Amanda Champion, and Shawna Black are also appointed to serve on that committee.

Legislator Glenn Morey will chair the Legislature’s Downtown Facilities Committee. The committee will lead the study of downtown facilities options, now that the Legislature has approved acquisition of properties in the 400 block of North Tioga Street, as the potential site of a new County office building. Legislator Rich John has been appointed Vice Chair, and Anne Koreman, Michael Lane, and Chair Robertson will also serve on that committee.

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

Legislature Supports Bills to Prohibit Pet Shop Sales Targeting Puppy, Kitten Mills

The Legislature went on record in support of proposed New York State legislation, now before the Senate and Assembly, which would prohibit the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits by retail pet shops, and authorizing space for adoption. The vote was unanimous, with Legislator Shawna Black excused. The resolution notes that nearly all puppies and kittens for sale in pet shops come from puppy and kitten mills, defined by the Humane Society of New York as “large commercial breeders where animals are often warehoused in unsanitary conditions, in cramped cages, deprived of socialization, exercise, and necessary veterinary care.” The measure characterizes pet shops as essential for keeping puppy and kitten mills in business, and that the proposed law is aimed to hurt puppy mill operators by decreasing their options for selling their product.

Legislator Amanda Champion, who sponsored the resolution, said, “This is something that tells our State Senate and Assembly people we want them to pass it. This will stop the pipeline of puppies, kittens and rabbits from these mills to pet stores.” The only animals pet stores would be able to sell are rescue animals, Champion stated; this would not impact any pet stores in Tompkins County, but it is her understanding is that a lot of downstate pet stores sell these animals. It was noted that, were the legislation passed, people would still be able to buy animals from reputable breeders.

Contact: Legislator Amanda Champion, 351-2828; Dan Klein, Vice Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 272-7582.

Among other business,

The Legislature awarded Tourism Capital Grants for 2019—a total of \$200,000 in award funds to nine local organizations—resulting from a review process administered by Tompkins County Area Development, and as recommended by the County’s Strategic Tourism Planning Board. The Tompkins County Tourism Program is funded through county Room Occupancy Tax.

Finance Director Rick Snyder briefed the Legislature on the County Sales Tax Reports for the first quarter of 2019. Quarterly reports for the first quarter show the County's portion of sales tax distributions up 2.84% compared to last year, which he said was the highest first quarter on record.

The Legislature scheduled two upcoming public hearings, both for its next meeting, May 21st. One will take comment on an amendment to the Tompkins County Code, which would add two inadvertently omitted subsections to Chapter 32 of the Code; the other regarding the recommended addition of 525 acres of land in Lansing to County Agricultural District 1. Both hearings are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. at County Legislature Chambers, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The Legislature authorized the County to execute a New York State Power Authority Master Agreement on behalf of the County and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit. The Power Authority requested approval of the standard agreement as a prerequisite to future project awards of funding to benefit TCAT and the County.

Chair Martha Robertson presented three proclamations: Proclaiming May 2019 as both Mental Health Awareness Month and also as Older Americans Month in Tompkins County, and also the 200th anniversary of Methodism in Ithaca on May 10, the 200th anniversary on deeding of the land by Simeon DeWitt of the land at Aurora and what is now Court Street, on which St. Paul's United Methodist Church now stands.

- END -