



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer  
607-274-5555, Office  
607-227-2152, Cell  
June 18, 2019  
THREE PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **June 18, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **J.R. Clairborne Appointed Director of Veterans Services**

William Clairborne, Jr., known as J.R., has been appointed to assume the position of Tompkins County Director of Veterans Services. The Legislature confirmed County Administrator Jason Molino's appointment of Mr. Clairborne tonight. J.R. will lead the County's new Office of Veterans Services (an agency required under NYS Executive Law), which will connect local military veterans to Federal and State services, including services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Since 2012, Mr. Clairborne has served as Advocacy Coordinator for Loaves and Fishes of Tompkins County, where he has provided advocacy services (counseling, referral, and connection to basic services) to the agency's dining guests in need, including military veterans. Before that, J.R. worked in marketing and communications for both Cornell and Ithaca College and spent six years as a Reporter and Assistant Editor for the Ithaca Journal. The new Director served eight years in the United States Navy and U.S. Naval Air Reserve, achieving the rank of Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class; Aviation Boatswain's Mate – Handler. He holds Bachelor's Degrees (in African-American Studies and Journalism) from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

Mr. Clairborne's past civic experience includes ten years (2006-2015) as an elected member of Ithaca's Common Council representing the City's Second Ward and serving on the Tompkins County Council of Governments. Current affiliations include the Community Housing Development Fund, United Way of Tompkins County, and the Tompkins County Public Information Advisory Board.

Administrator Molino told Legislators that J.R. Clairborne was selected as the top candidate for the position from among 37 applicants, eight of whom were interviewed by phone, and four finalists. Before the vote Legislature Chair Martha Robertson said, "I am delighted that we are considering J.R. as the first Veterans Services Director for Tompkins County. It's a real pleasure to welcome J.R. to the Tompkins County family." Legislator Michael Lane said he has had an opportunity to work with Clairborne many times over the years and praised him as an effective voice on the Council of Governments. "He has great leadership qualities and will be a positive force in this position," Mr. Lane said.

J.R. Clairborne is the husband of Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne. The Legislature's motion to confirm Clairborne's appointment included approval of a Nepotism Compliance Plan and Agreement, in accordance with County policy and its Ethics Code. Legislator McBean-Clairborne excused herself from all discussion, including the confirmation vote. Mr. Clairborne's appointment was approved by a vote of 11-0, with Legislators Mike Sigler, Amanda Champion, and McBean-Clairborne excused.

"To say I am excited to serve our veterans' community in this way is an understatement," Mr. Clairborne said. "It is a humbling honor to be selected by our county's leaders to step up for the benefit of the men and women who have donned a uniform in service to our nation, as well as their families."

Director Clairborne is expected to begin service as Director of Veterans Services in late July.  
*Contact: County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551.*

### **Contract Awarded for Airport Customs Facility**

The Legislature awarded the bid for the new General Aviation Customs Facility at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, the third phase of the Airport expansion project, funded in part through New York State's Upstate Airport Initiative grant program. The contract was awarded to Streeter Associates, of Elmira, NY, for its bid of \$5,234,000, submitted June 13<sup>th</sup>. The award was approved without dissent, with Legislators Amanda Champion and Mike Sigler excused. The project will be funded through the Governor's Upstate Airport Initiative Grant and a portion of the Airport Fund Balance.

Other airport bids awarded, with anticipated receipt and acceptance of associated Federal Aviation Administration grants:

- An award to Tracey Road Equipment, Inc., of East Syracuse, NY, for its bid of \$815,526.00 for Multi-Tasking Equipment snow removal equipment (anticipated local Airport share \$41,272); and
- Award to Suit-Kote Corporation, Cortland, NY, for its lowest responsible bid of \$740,987.50 for rehabilitation of Taxiways A&C (anticipated Airport local share \$44,919.50.)

*Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 607-564-7243; Airport Director Mike Hall, 607-279-2662.*

### **Legislature Affirms Support for Women's Reproductive Rights**

Noting the passage of what it terms the "extreme abortion bans" passed by Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, Louisiana, Ohio, and other states during 2019 as efforts to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Legislature passed a resolution supporting women's reproductive rights. The vote was unanimous, with Legislators Amanda Champion and Mike Sigler excused.

The measure states that "the Tompkins County Legislature strongly condemns any effort at the local, state, or federal levels to roll back or overturn the rights guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*, specifically the rights of people to make their own reproductive health decisions in consultation with their medical providers." The resolution notes that New York State recently enacted the Reproductive Health Act, which codifies the constitutional standard of *Roe v. Wade* in state law, removing abortion from the criminal code and establishing it as a matter of public health. While women in New York State are protected, it was noted that women in other states are not protected. Legislators Deborah Dawson, Anna Kelles, and Chair Martha Robertson all thanked their colleague Henry Granison for preparing and bringing forward the resolution.

*Contact: Shawna Black, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 607-351-7855; Legislator Henry Granison, 607-342-8643*

### **Contingent Funding Authorized for Route 13 Corridor Study**

The Legislature, without dissent (Legislators Mike Sigler and Amanda Champion were excused), approved use of \$171,270 in contingency funds to support the cost of the 2020 New York State Route 13 Corridor Study. As part of the 2019 Tompkins County budget process, \$200,000 was set aside in the Contingent Fund for the purpose of preparing a traffic study focused on Route 13 from the Dryden Village to the intersection with Warren Road.

Authorized by the Legislature's Facilities and Infrastructure Committee to issue a Request for Proposals and to award a contract for the corridor study, the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability, in conjunction with the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council and the Route 13 Advisory Working Group, is prepared to award the contract to Barton & Loguidice, of Liverpool, NY, as lead consultant for the study, for a cost of \$155,700.

The Legislature's action allocates \$171,270 from the Contingent Fund to the Department of Planning and Sustainability, the amount sufficient to implement the contract, including change orders not to exceed 10% of the cost.

*Contact: Deborah Dawson, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 607-351-8689; Katie Borgella, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 607-274-5560.*

Among other business,

The Legislature authorized the County Administrator to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Cornell University and the Town of Ithaca regarding planned realignment of Pleasant Grove Road and Credit Farm Drive in the Town of Ithaca, in conjunction with the planned North Campus residential project.

The Legislature scheduled a public hearing at its next meeting July 16<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 p.m., on a proposed Local Law that would amend Article 26 of the County Charter. The proposed amendment would clarify the duties of the Office of Human Rights and the County Human Rights Commission. The hearing will be held at Legislature Chambers, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca.

The Legislature approved updates to several County Administrative Policies, including a new policy on the Flying of Flags on County Buildings, which has prompted ongoing discussion and several revisions over the past several months. Legislator Rich John was the sole vote against the flag policy, saying he had an issue with the provision that calls for use of taxpayer funds to buy flags for various interest groups and that the County should be very careful about using taxpayer money to support such statements unless they have demonstrated community support.

The Legislature observed a moment of silence in honor and memory of former Caroline Town Supervisor and long-time community leader Robert Spaulding, who was killed in a recent motor vehicle accident.

**- END -**