



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **September 19, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

New Five-Year Contract Approved to Benefit Indigent Representation

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Henry Granison and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne were excused), approved a five-year performance-based contract awarded to the Tompkins County Assigned Counsel Department by the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services. Over the five-year period, the contract will provide more than \$2.5 million to support programming and representation through Assigned Counsel; its focus: to improve the ability of the office to ensure quality mandated representation to its clients. The contract is the first step in the State of New York's expansion of the Hurrell Haring Settlement (initially affecting only five New York target counties) to all counties in New York State; the goal is to seek to remedy a decades-old imbalance in support to mandated representation in the state and to address issues of lack of resources to ensure the quality of mandated representation in New York.

The first-year allocation is nearly \$170,000, with increases each year in the areas of quality improvement and caseload relief. "The focus in implementation of the contract will be on increased training for attorneys, increased supervision, monitoring and support to the attorneys, the use of support or expert services by the attorney in the case, and the buildup of supports for trial and client support," Supervising Attorney Lance Salisbury states in briefing materials submitted to the Legislature. "In addition, we are looking at potential collaborative efforts with surrounding counties that will strengthen our support services to attorneys and potentially allow us to build and strengthen our panel of attorneys."

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 607-256-9794; Supervising Attorney Lance Salisbury, Assigned Counsel, 607-272-7487.

Contract Awarded for Parking Lot Paving Project

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (Legislator Henry Granison and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne were excused), awarded Nelson & Streeter Construction Co., Inc. of Pine City, New York the contract for paving of parking lots at two County facilities at its northeast campus, the Health Department and the Emergency Response Center, for the firm's bid of \$574,100, submitted September 16th. The project will be completed in Spring 2020, timing that enabled the project to come in significantly under budget, Facilities and Infrastructure chair Dave McKenna noted.

Contact: David McKenna, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 607-564-7243

Resolution in Support of Allowing Deer and Bear Rifle Hunting Coming Before the Legislature

Meeting just before the full Legislature, the Public Safety Committee recommended for Legislature consideration the long-debated measure that would seek state legislation to amend State environmental conservation law to add Tompkins County to the list of those counties where use of rifles is authorized for deer and bear hunting. Although the vote was unanimous in committee (with Legislator Henry Granison excused), two committee members' "yes" votes were to advance the measure to the full Legislature for a decision. Both Legislators Anne Koreman and Shawna Black said they were personally opposed to anything that expands the use of guns. Chair Rich John said he anticipates the matter will be an extensively debated item before the Legislature. Legislature consideration is scheduled for October 1st.

Also from the Public Safety Committee meeting, Mr. John conveyed information from a report from District Attorney Matt Van Houten on the new Discovery requirements under New York State criminal justice reform, which will have significant impact on both District Attorney's offices and law enforcement procedures across the state, since it vastly expedites the timing of the prosecution's discovery obligations to the defense, in general imposing a time limit of 15 days from arraignment. Mr. John said he would support a budget adjustment and contingent fund resolution to enable the D.A. get a head start this year on filling a full-time paralegal and part-time confidential investigator position requested as part of the District Attorney's requested 2020 budget to help meet the demands of the new Discovery statute.

Contact: Richard John, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 607-256-9794

Among other business,

Legislators engaged in considerable discussion before approving an update in the County's Open Meetings policy, a measure previously reviewed multiple times by the Legislature's Government Operations Committee. The issue at hand was how provisions apply to advisory boards, committees, commissions and other groups appointed by the Legislature and which act in an advisory capacity to the Legislature, without decision-making authority. Ultimately, the updated policy was approved, as written, by an 8-4 vote (Legislators Dan Klein, Mike Sigler, Glenn Morey and Dave McKenna dissenting; and Legislators Leslyn McBean-Clairborne and Henry Granison excused.) The policy states that meetings for all such advisory groups shall be open to the public and minutes, when available, shall be made available to the public upon request.

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