



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **October 15, 2019** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislators Adopt Amendments to 2020 Recommended Budget**

The Tompkins County Legislature, by unanimous vote, formally adopted amendments to the County Administrator's 2020 Recommended Budget and the 2020-2024 Capital Program, as recommended by the Expanded Budget Committee.

The amended budget would increase the County tax levy by 2.75%, just under the initial 2.76% in the Administrator's budget. The recommended county-wide average tax rate of \$6.31 per thousand is 10 cents less than 2019 (a decrease of 1.59%). The amended budget would represent an increase of \$12.69 in the tax bill for the median-valued \$190,000 home. (Legislator Rich John proposed a wording change in the resolution, which was accepted, to clarify that the increased tax payment for a median-priced home increased, despite the tax rate decrease, since the median home price increased by \$5,000 since the 2019 budget was prepared.) The Tentative Budget also includes a \$2 increase in the County's annual Solid Waste Fee, to \$60.

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson expressed thanks to staff for their hard work during the budget process. "I really appreciate the work and I really appreciate the process," she said, calling it "a logical expression of our values and our goals."

The amended package, now known as the Tentative Budget, replaces Administrator Jason Molino's recommended budget as the basis of budget deliberations, and will be sent on to public hearing Tuesday, October 29, 7:00 p.m., at Legislature Chambers in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street (second floor), Ithaca. The Legislature's final budget adoption vote is scheduled November 7, and changes may still be made prior to final adoption.

The Recommended Budget, all amendments to the Recommended Budget, and other information regarding the 2020 budget process, are available for review online at the County website at

[www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2020budget](http://www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2020budget).

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 607-844-8440.

#### **Bonding Authorized for County Road and Bridge Projects.**

Legislators approved a series of bond resolutions authorizing the issuance of serial bonds and notes to support a portion of the cost of various highway and bridge capital projects. The authorizations include bonding for up to \$1.6 million for highway reconstruction and improvements; up to \$200,000 for bridge repair and replacement; and funding for three specific bridge reconstructions—up to \$1.7 million for the Etna Lane bridge; up to \$995,000 for the Central Chapel Road Bridge; and up to \$1.62 million for the Cortland Street bridge.

Legislator Mike Sigler inquired, why for this expense; why not just pay cash? County Administrator Jason Molino said that is a question that will be considered going into next year, indicating that informal discussion regarding that issue has already begun.

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

### **Legislators Hear Presentation on Recommended Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Legislature held a public hearing to invite comments on proposed amendments to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, as a result of its five-year review. While there were no comments at the public hearing, the Legislature heard presentations on the five-year review from the Department of Planning and Sustainability, prior to anticipated action at the Legislature's next meeting November 7.

The recommended Comprehensive Plan update would incorporate a new list of 18 action items between now and the next full update of the Plan, anticipated by 2025. The new action items relate to such elements as providing ongoing assistance to municipalities in implementing projects promoting policies of the Comprehensive Plan or other County strategies; the Route 13 Corridor Study; continued and expanded Housing Funding; establishing a countywide Harmful Algal Blooms strategy; conducting Greenhouse Gas Emissions inventories for the community and County government operations; and undertaking an inventory and analysis of County facilities and fleet to determine a financially sound path to net-zero emissions.

*Contact: Katie Borgella, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 607-274-5560*

### **Public Hearing Scheduled on Proposed Property Tax Exemption Law**

The Legislature, by a 12-2 vote, scheduled a public hearing for its next meeting November 7 on a proposed Local Law that, if approved, would enact a new real property tax exemption for capital improvements to residential properties. The hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m. on November 7, at Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The exemption, enacting New York State Real Property Tax Law Section 421-F, would provide for an eight-year exemption that would phase in the increased value for capital improvements made to residential properties.

Such an exemption is currently in place within the City of Ithaca and the Town of Dryden. Legislator Lane said he voted no in committee because the experience in those two municipalities has shown that very few people have taken advantage of it, and that he thinks it would require more work for the Assessment Department for an expected limited benefit.

*Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 607-844-8440; Director of Assessment Jay Franklin, 607-274-5517.*

Among other business,

The Legislature passed resolutions voicing the Legislature's position on proposed State legislation or regulation changes, all by unanimous vote.

- The Legislature supported legislation that would establish a temporary commission for the evaluation of New York State Office of Mental Health Housing Programs, to identify any existing gaps in the State's current mental health housing program model, as well as adequate reimbursement to New York State counties to support appropriate management of higher-level service.
- It urged delay in implementation of new State Department of Health lead poisoning regulations due to a too-short implementation deadline and lack of State financial support to implement the new mandate.
- Legislators also opposed State legislative proposals that would modify the tax foreclosure process in New York State, undermining what is termed "the careful balance" that currently exists in State law. The measure expresses particular concern regarding an unintended consequence from any legislation that would eliminate the current law's "reverse chronological order" provisions, which it notes would allow taxpayers to delay paying their property taxes for years, shifting the burden to other taxpayers and jeopardizing the delivery of State and local services.

The Legislature authorized acceptance by the Office for the Aging of an \$85,863 New York State grant to support services to meet individuals' unmet needs, and a budget transfer to cover the program cost through the end of 2019.

**- END -**