



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Tompkins County 2020 Budget Adopted

Concluding a process that began more than two months ago, the Tompkins County Legislature tonight adopted the County's 2020 Budget and the 2020-2024 Tompkins County Capital Program. The budget was approved by unanimous vote. There were no amendments to the Tentative Budget before adoption.

The \$193.5 million budget, which includes \$93.0 million in net local spending, increases the County tax levy by 2.75%. The tax rate of \$6.31 per thousand is down by 10 cents (-1.70%) from 2019, representing an increase of \$11.41 in the tax bill for the median-valued \$190,000 county home. The levy increase falls below the County's tax cap of approximately 5.41%, as calculated by New York State.

Before the budget passage, Budget chair Michael Lane, Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, and several Legislators reflected positively on this year's budget process and the many people who played a key role in its success. Chair Lane, in part, praised his fellow Legislators for their strong participation throughout the process, "a great proposal" from County Administrator Jason Molino, tremendous work and guidance from Budget Coordinator Kevin McGuire, and he recognized Department Heads for their work. Chair Robertson said that the County's process "has evolved to be a very comprehensive, positive process," and Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne also lauded the Human Services Coalition for all it does in facilitating the budget review process for county agencies. Legislators also recognized Budget chair Lane for his leadership throughout the process.

2020 Solid Waste Annual Fee:

In an action separate from, but related to, the 2020 Tompkins County Budget, Legislators also acted to formally establish the \$60.00 unit charge included in the budget as the County's 2020 Solid Waste Annual Fee, a \$2.00 increase from the 2019 fee. The action also codifies unit charges for types of properties other than single-family residences (considered one unit)—such as two-family and multi-unit residences, colleges and schools, and other types of properties. Recycling and Materials Management Director Barbara Eckstrom said there will be work toward analyzing and updating formulas for types of properties such as the colleges in the year ahead.

An overview of the 2020 budget and other budget documents may be found at the County budget page at

www.TompkinsCountyNY.gov/ctyadmin/2020budget. The full 2020 Adopted Budget will be posted soon.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 607-274-5434 or 607-592-3119; Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 607-844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551; Barbara Eckstrom, Director, Recycling and Materials Management, 607-273-6632.

County Expands Contribution to Community Housing Development Fund; Establishes New Contingent Fund to Endorse Additional Projects

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved two measures to increase Tompkins County's support to the successful Community Housing Development Fund, a decade-old community collaboration addressing the community's affordable housing crisis. To date, the partnership, involving the County, the City of Ithaca, and Cornell University has awarded \$4.7 million to projects creating 654 units of affordable housing and leveraging approximately \$177 million in additional program development funds. Tonight's actions augment the County's

current \$100,000 annual commitment with an additional \$100,000 for each of the next two years, using the County's HUD Program Income Funds (the source through which the County has provided its share of CHDF support.) The Legislature also allocated \$300,000 in Program Income Funds to create a new Contingent Fund for the CHDF to permit the Fund to endorse more viable local proposals for potential "9%" Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, enabling more proposals to obtain extra points in New York State review to qualify in this highly competitive funding process. The tax credits are the largest source of leveraging for the Community Housing Development Fund, Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability Megan McDonald said.

Cornell University recently also committed an added \$100,000 to the Fund for each of the next two years, and the City has committed \$100,000 for 2020, as part of its just-approved 2020 budget.

Contact: Megan McDonald, Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 607-274-5560; Anna Kelles, Chair, Housing and Economic Development Committee, 607-342-2036

Capital Improvement Exemption Approved for Residential Properties

After a public hearing (no comments received), the Legislature adopted a new Local Law that enacts a new real property tax exemption for capital improvements to residential properties, under Section 421-F of New York State Real Property Law. The vote was 12-2, with Committee Chair Michael Lane and Legislator Henry Granison voting no. The law provides for an eight-year exemption that phases in the increased value for capital improvements made to one- to two-family residential properties. Such an exemption is already in place within the City of Ithaca and the Town of Dryden. As he has previously, Mr. Lane said that, while the concept is very good in theory, he does not think many will apply for it, and he expects it will add a lot of work for the Assessment Department.

Contact: Amanda Champion, Vice-Chair, Government Operations Committee, 607-351-2828; Director of Assessment Jay Franklin, 607-274-5517.

Tax Exemption and PILOT agreement approved for INHS Immaculate Conception Redevelopment

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved a real property tax exemption and payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreement for the provision of affordable rental housing related to Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services' Immaculate Conception School redevelopment project, as authorized by Section 577 of New York State Private Housing Finance Law. Affected are properties at 320-324 W. Buffalo Street, 330 W. Buffalo, and 309 S. Plain Street in the City of Ithaca. The properties are granted a 30-year tax exemption from real property taxes levied by Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca, and other local taxing authorities; the owner shall make annual in-lieu-of-tax payments equaling 12% of net operating income (but in no event to be less than \$41,514), increasing to 15% in year 16 of the agreement.

The resolution notes that "the continued provision of affordable rental housing to qualified persons or families of low income by INHS is beneficial to and in the long-term best interests of the public."

Contact: Anna Kelles, Chair, Housing and Economic Development Committee, 607-342-2036

Comprehensive Plan Update Approved

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, approved an update to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, based on its five-year review. The update incorporates 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; Deborah Dawson, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 607-351-8689

Three Public Hearings Scheduled

The Legislature, without dissent, authorized public hearings on three issues; all hearings to be held at County Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca, beginning at 5:30 p.m.:

- For its November 19 meeting, a hearing on a proposed Local Law that would establish a \$.05 paper carryout bag reduction fee in Tompkins County, as authorized by the NYS Bag Waste Reduction Act and implemented through Title 28 of NYS Environmental Conservation Law.
- Also scheduled November 19, a hearing on a proposed Local Law amending Article 26 of the County Charter regarding the Office of Human Rights and Human Rights Commission. There was considerable discussion related to wording of the draft prior before scheduling the hearing.
- On December 3, a hearing regarding the 2020 issuance of \$10 million in Airport Bond Anticipation Notes (the hearing to be held in accordance with Section 147(f) of the Internal Revenue Code to ensure that the bond issue is exempt from Alternative Minimum Tax.) The issue will refund and supplement \$7.5 million in Airport BANs issued in 2019, supporting the Airport improvement project.

Contact: Legislature Office, 607-274-5434.

Among other business,

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported on third-quarter sales tax receipts, in which the County's portion of receipts was up 3% compared to the third quarter of last year; Despite a slight dip in September, this was the strongest third quarter on record, he said. Year-to-date distribution is up just over 4% compared to 2018.

Chair Martha Robertson issued a proclamation in honor of Veterans Day on November 11th, calling upon all who live in and frequent Tompkins County to join in honoring America's veterans, and especially those who are also Tompkins County employees, "for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good."

Chair Robertson also proclaimed the second week of November as Home Care Aide Appreciation Week in Tompkins County, in celebration of the service of home-health aides as vital members of the health care team who provide high quality and compassionate health care services to those in need, especially at times of crisis.

Legislators approved a resolution in support of federal legislation that requires the Office of Management and Budget to reclassify public safety telecommunicators as a "Protective Service Occupation," and one calling upon the Governor and New York State Legislature to provide counties permanent local authority over their existing sales tax rates.

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