



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the December 17, 2019 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Daniel Cornell Appointed Probation Director

The Tompkins County Legislature, by unanimous vote, confirmed County Administrator Jason Molino's appointment of Daniel Cornell as Tompkins County's Director of Probation and Community Justice.

Cornell has served in his current position of Deputy Director of Probation since 2018. He began his career as a probation officer with Delaware County in 1995 and came to the Tompkins County Department of Probation in 1999, where he has served in the positions of probation officer, senior probation officer, and probation supervisor, before assuming the position of Deputy Director. Mr. Cornell holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Ithaca College, with a focus in Juvenile Justice. While in college, career he also interned with the London Borough of Ealing Probation Services.

Administrator Molino told the Legislature Mr. Cornell was selected as the result of a productive interview process and discussion involving two excellent internal candidates. Cornell has had the fortunate opportunity to work with outgoing Director Pat Buechel over the past 20 years, and I feel he will serve us well as the new Director, Mr. Molino said.

"I am honored and humbled to be offered the position of Director of the Tompkins County Department of Probation and Community Justice," Mr. Cornell said. "I have been very fortunate to have had the opportunities and mentorship afforded to me by Director Buechel and former Deputy Director David Wolf. I am grateful to have such a phenomenal team of colleagues to work with in our department, and to have access to a wealth of resources provided by the County Legislature and our many community partners. I am confident that working together we will continue to provide high quality services to our courts, and keep Tompkins County a safe and desirable place to live by addressing the needs of crime victims and the people in our justice systems who need support and assistance to live healthier and more productive lives."

Dan Cornell's appointment as Director of Probation will take effect January 31.

Contact: County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551; Daniel Cornell, incoming Director of Probation and Community Justice, 607-274-5390. (NOTE: Photo of Mr. Cornell attached.)

Merger Plan for Public Health and Mental Health Departments Approved

Following six months on intensive Task Force study and a month of thoughtful review by legislators, the Legislature authorized the County to move ahead and implement a plan to merge the County's Departments of Public Health and Mental Health into one department, identifying the responsibilities of departmental leadership of the two departments to be provided in a merged model, with full merger of the Departments to take effect as of July 2021. The vote was 11-3, with Legislators Dan Klein, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, and Henry Granison voting no. The fully merged structure would replace the shared leadership model, which has been in effect for the past four years.

Mirroring findings of the Task Force, the resolution notes that "one department will best meet the needs of the clients, staff, and community as public health and mental health will function not just as opportunistic collaborating partners but will be working side-by-side to support progress toward achieving one single vision,

and that as a single department, staff members will operate under a shared vision to support clients in achieving better health-related outcomes, be it mental or physical, both at the individual and community level.”

As part of the discussion before the approval vote, Legislator Mike Sigler raised the question of how to balance what he sees as the largely individualized approach of the Mental Health Department with the frequent Public Health focus on larger wide-ranging issues. Frank Kruppa, who directs both departments remarked that there are strengths in both departments, and each can benefit the other. Looking ahead to the process ahead, Legislator Deborah Dawson said she hopes the County takes advantage of planning expertise within the departments; Legislator Amanda Champion said she'd encourage that the planning process set measurable goals to assess whether the plan is working and makes sense. Legislator Granison asked about financial aspects and why the study was pursued from a revenue-neutral perspective.

Following the approval vote, Chair Robertson thanked all who were involved in the process, and department head Frank Kruppa for his leadership of the Public Health and Mental Health Departments over the past four years.

The Task Force Report on the Public Health/Mental Health leadership structure is posted on the County website, at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/taskforcereport>.

Contact: Shawna Black, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee, 607-351-7855; County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551.

Legislature Modifies Public Officer Residency Requirement

The Legislature approved a new Local Law that amends Chapter 133 of the County Code to modify the residency requirement for public officers, as provided for under NYS Public Officers Law. After considerable discussion, the vote was 9-5, with Legislators Amanda Champion, Anne Koreman, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Henry Granison, and Dan Klein voting no. A public hearing on the proposed change was held earlier this month (no comments were received.) The amendment provides for waivers of the residency requirement in certain cases for non-elective public officer positions, such as department heads.

The waiver may be granted in instances where the County has difficulty in hiring or promoting the most qualified person due to the residency requirement or no qualified resident has applied, and also in the case of a current employee who moves outside the county for demonstrated good cause. The position of County Administrator remains subject to the public officer residency requirement. Public officer positions of Probation Officer are exempt under the law, and positions of Deputy Sheriff, Assistant District Attorney and Corrections Officer in Tompkins County are exempt from by prior Legislature action.

During discussion, several Legislators raised concerns—among them, Legislator Klein stated department heads are high-paying positions who have a big impact on decisions and should also be bound by them. Legislator McBean-Clairborne said she was troubled that, at a time when some people are being pushed out of the center of the county to outlying areas due to the cost of housing that we should not be requiring that department heads reside in the county. Administrator Jason Molino noted that around eight current department deputies live outside the County and lack of the provision for a potential waiver would prevent their opportunity to seek to advance to a department head position.

Chair Martha Robertson said, “For me it’s not so much that someone cannot afford to move into TC....it is that, for someone within reasonable commuting time, many would consider a position in TC, but do not want to uproot their family...For me this is a matter for looking for excellent people for our departments...I think this is worth a try.”

Saying that she supports local people doing local jobs, Legislator Shawna Black advanced an amendment, which was accepted, that a review of this change take place in two years, by December 2021, to examine how many waivers have been granted and how the program is working.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 607-844-8440; County Administrator Jason Molino, 607-274-5551.

Airport Bond Resolution Approved

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, authorized the 2020 issuance of \$10 million in one-year Airport Bond Anticipation Notes (the Legislature's action necessary to comply with Section 147(f) of the federal Internal Revenue Code to ensure that the bond issue is exempt from Alternative Minimum Tax). The one-year note issue will refund and supplement \$7.5 million in Airport BANs issued in 2019 to support the Airport improvement project. Finance Director Rick Snyder has noted that the one-year BAN will give the County some time to determine the project's ultimate financing options.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 607-844-8440; Andrew Braman, Deputy Director of Finance, 607-274-5544.

Elizabeth Cree Reappointed as Commissioner of Elections

Republican Elections Commissioner Elizabeth Cree was appointed to a new two-year term, commencing January 1, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2021. Chair Martha Robertson said that she understands that the certificate for the appointment was not filed by the December 1 deadline, and that in such a case State law defines that the Republican members of the Legislature may vote on the appointment of the Republican Commissioner for a two-year term. Robertson ruled the certificate not timely filed and put the matter to a vote. Cree's appointment was approved by a vote of 3-0, Legislators Mike Sigler, Dave McKenna, and Glenn Morey all voting in favor.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 607-274-5434 or 607-592-3119.

Among other business,

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Braman reported on October sales tax receipts. The County's portion of year-to-date receipts was \$31.8 million, based on non-reconciled figures from New York State, up 4.04% from its comparable level a year ago.

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