



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **February 18th, 2020** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislators Elect a Chair and Vice Chair to Lead the Legislature in 2020**

The Tompkins County Legislature made history Tuesday night in electing Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D-Ithaca) to serve as its Chair for 2020. She is the first woman of color to fill the top elected leadership position in Tompkins County history.

The 9-5 vote in favor of McBean-Clairborne ended a stalemate that began at the January 7<sup>th</sup> organizational meeting, when neither Legislator Anna Kelles nor Mike Lane generated the necessary eight votes to become Chair. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, County Clerk Maureen Reynolds – as stipulated by the County Charter – appointed Legislator Shawna Black (D) as Interim Chair.

In presiding over the start of Tuesday's meeting, Black said she had appreciated the kindness and support she received during her 11 days as Chairperson, and then opened the floor to nominations. Legislator Kelles – who withdrew her interest in becoming Chair when she announced her candidacy for the 125<sup>th</sup> Assembly District seat – nominated McBean-Clairborne, calling her the 'soul of the Legislature,' noting she has served on every committee during her 20 years on the Legislature, including serving as Vice Chair.

Legislator Anne Koreman seconded McBean-Clairborne's nomination, urging her colleagues to 'make history tonight,' and move to elect the first person of color to serve as Chair of the County Legislature.

As was the case at previous meetings, Legislator Dan Klein nominated Mike Lane for Chair. The nomination was seconded by Legislator Henry Granison.

Voting in favor of Leslyn McBean-Clairborne were Legislators Shawna Black, Anne Koreman, Rich John, Martha Robertson, Anna Kelles, McBean-Clairborne and the three Republicans on the Legislature - Dave McKenna, Glenn Morey, and Mike Sigler.

Voting for Mike Lane were Legislators Amanda Champion, Deborah Dawson, Henry Granison, Dan Klein, and Lane.

An emotional McBean-Clairborne said she appreciated her colleagues' vote of confidence. "It tells me and others looking to serve that we are not colorblind and that we can embrace a career-minded, working-family person to serve on this body and even become its leader." She went on to quote the former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan – who was the first woman, let alone black woman, elected to

serve as a representative from Texas – “A spirit of harmony can only survive if each of us remembers, when bitterness and self-interest seem to prevail, that we share a common destiny.”

By a vote of 13-1 (Rich John voting no), Legislator Shawna Black was elected Vice Chair for 2020. Black also served as Vice Chair in 2019.

*Contact: Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Chair of the Legislature, 607-277-5104; Shawna Black, Vice Chair of the Legislature, 607-351-7855*

Among other business:

The Legislature, without dissent, approved a resolution calling on the Governor and New York State Legislature to preserve the zero percent Medicaid growth cap for counties and New York City as they address the estimated \$6.1 billion State budget shortfall.

The Legislature voted unanimously to support designating the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Seneca County as New York State’s first State Veterans Cemetery and encourages New York State to select it as such. The designation is contained in Governor Cuomo’s Executive Budget.

The Legislature, without dissent, confirmed the appointment of Brittini Griep to the position of Deputy Clerk of the Legislature. Ms. Griep joins the Legislature staff after working with the Greater Tompkins Municipal Health Insurance Consortium.

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