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Lisa Holmes and Amie Hendrix

*Inclusion Through  
Diversity*

*"Promoting excellence in County operations while respecting the needs of the people we serve."*

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Highlights of the **December 15th, 2020** meeting of the  
Tompkins County Legislature

### **Member-Filed Resolution Changes Composition of Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency to Include a Local Labor Representative.**

A resolution to change the composition of Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) member-filed by Legislator Anna Kelles (D-Ithaca) passed unanimously (14-0). Kelles referenced the outpouring of interest from the public in this action, stating "This is to uphold and expand the intention of the IDA to create local jobs." Kelles acknowledged the collaboration. Legislator Anne Koreman stated, "A silver lining to this pandemic is it has put everything back on the table. Think, 'what if we were starting the IDA now,' it would make perfect sense for labor to have a seat at the table." Union leaders and public advocates for local labor joined privilege of the floor to express their support for the resolution.

This resolution removes one legislature seat from the IDA, replacing it with a seat designated for a representative from local labor. The resolution as it was passed does not require New York State approval.

Legislators debated a substitute resolution raised by Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden) to expand the IDA to 9 members. Legislator Deborah Dawson (D-Lansing) challenged the motion suggesting that it would need State-enabling legislation. County Attorney Jonathan Wood clarified his position that State statutes need to conform with law stating that IDAs need to have between 3-7 members and that it would take State-enabling legislation to expand the IDA. The substitute failed 3- 11, with Legislators Rich John, Mike Lane, and Martha Robertson voting in favor.

Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca), who serves as the current Chair of the IDA, clarified that he has seen the IDA respect the input of local labor, expelling the notion shared by community members that the IDA does not listen to or represent the perspectives of Labor.

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

### **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Provides Legislature Update on COVID-19 Response**

Members of the EOC presented an update on the local COVID-19 response. County Administrator Jason Molino opened the presentation with details on the spike in COVID-19 cases over the past two weeks in Tompkins County. Since the last presentation to the Legislature there have been 439 new positive cases, including a single day high of 61 on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix outlined the current operational priorities of the EOC, breaking down the work of County officials managing the COVID-19 response. The priorities include managing the current caseload, public communications, coordination with community partners, and planning for vaccine distribution in Tompkins County. Officials and Legislators gave special recognition to the Tompkins County Health Department nurses for their work managing contact investigations and tracing since the beginning of the pandemic.

Tompkins County Public Health Director Frank Kruppa highlighted the effectiveness of local contact tracing efforts, explaining that 56% of local positive cases have been able to identify where they contracted the virus, compared to an estimated 20% at the State level. "A large component of that is the work that our staff does. The nurses work closely with individuals to find where the exposures are coming from." Kruppa also clarified that the Health Department is shifting how it reports COVID-19 related data, as the department has streamlined internal data tracking within State systems. Demographic data shared during the presentation is inclusive of the last 1,406 cases since July 1, 2020.

Regarding COVID-19 vaccine distribution, Kruppa stated, “We expect that once the Moderna vaccine is approved (which can be shipped in batches of 100) that we will start to see that coming directly into our community. New York State will be using pharmacies to contract with long-term care facilities for distribution.”

Legislator Dan Klein made a plea for Tompkins County residents to consider applying for nursing and contact tracing roles at the Tompkins County Health Department. The County is bringing on short-term employees for these positions acknowledging the ebbs-and-flows in the need for contact tracing capacity. Members of the public interested in assisting in the effort can visit the County’s Human Resources website, <https://www.tompkinscivilservice.org/civilservice/vacancies>.

A comprehensive document outlining the Tompkins County’s COVID-19 response can be found [here](#). *Contacts: Jason Molino, Tompkins County Administrator, 607-274-5551; Frank Kruppa, Tompkins County Public Health Director, 607-274-6674*

### **Legislator Kelles Celebrated as she Embarks on Term as New York State Assemblywoman**

A proclamation was read celebrating Legislator Anna Kelles (D-Ithaca) for her achievement being recently elected to the New York State Assembly and for her work on the Legislature. Kelles reflected on her time on the Legislature and thanked her colleagues for the past five years, sharing “It has been such an honor to serve with every one of you – I can say to each one of you that you do this work with tremendous earnestness. You are truly public servants.” Kelles continued, “I can’t emphasize enough how important it is that State Legislators have County experience. Counties do the administrative work of the State without all of the funding from the State.”

An additional proclamation was read acknowledging the service of retiring New York State Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton. Legislators thanked Lifton for her commitment to the district and policies she helped pass at the State level.

### **Among Other Business**

An increase in Legislator salaries was passed unanimously (14-0) and will go into effect in 2024. Legislators salaries are currently set at \$21,400 and will increase to \$22,050 in 2024 and \$22,700 in 2025, reflecting a 3% (rounded) increase in both 2024 and 2025. *Contact Amanda Champion, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 607-351-2828*