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*Inclusion Through
Diversity*

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **January 5th, 2020** meeting of the
Tompkins County Legislature

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne Unanimously Elected for Second Term as Chairwoman, Shawna Black Unanimously Re-Elected as Vice Chairwoman

Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D-Ithaca) was unanimously (13-0) elected as the 2021 Legislature Chairwoman following nomination by Legislator Shawna Black (D-Ithaca). This will be McBean-Clairborne's second year as Chairwoman. While nominating McBean-Clairborne, Black stated, "Leslyn started [last year] in a world that would be forever changed when COVID-19 entered our community. She assumed the role with confidence and a sense of calm." Black continued by praising McBean-Clairborne's charisma, intelligence, and connections to the community. The nomination was seconded by Glenn Morey (R-Groton).

McBean Clairborne stated "This past year has been quite a challenge ... I've been thankful for colleagues like all of you to help support my leadership. I can assure you that this year we are going to continue to do the business of County Government even while the pandemic continues ... We may not always agree with each other, but we do not need to be disagreeable. We will be the beacon of hope and an example to other elected bodies on how we can work together."

Legislator Shawna Black, nominated by Deborah Dawson (D-Lansing) and seconded by Anne Koreman (D-Ulysses), was elected unanimously for a third year as Vice Chair. Legislator Koreman lauded Black as being "excellent while navigating this stormy year, she's steady at the helm." Black stated, "It's been a very difficult year for many families in Tompkins County and mine is no different. I'm looking forward to a less eventful 2021."

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

Tompkins County Administrator Jason Molino and Public Health Director Frank Kruppa presented an update on the County's COVID-19 response. The update included details on ongoing management and surveillance of COVID-19 in the County, as well as the safety, efficacy, and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Kruppa shared information on the safety of both the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, stating "We're concentrating on sending people to the vaccines section of our website (<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/covid19vaccine>), we're updating it frequently and there's a lot of good information on there for the public." Kruppa outlined the review processes at the Federal and State levels that occurred for the currently available vaccine and details on why mRNA vaccines do not cause anyone to be infected with the disease.

Vaccine administration began in Tompkins County in late December, and over 1,500 doses of the vaccine (94% of what has been received) have been administered in Tompkins County, with 1,800 more planned this week through clinics announced by the Health Department on Tuesday. The department is partnering with Cayuga Health System to administer the vaccine. Over 1,300 individuals are currently registered to fill the 1,800 available slots this week, individuals who are eligible can register through the Health Department's website, a list of who is eligible can also be found on the website.

"It's important to remember that while we're excited to get folks vaccinated, we still need to manage the disease," stated Kruppa, "We have to continue the public health guidance, and that includes those who get vaccinated. It will take a while for us to get to herd immunity, we're still going to ask everyone to wear masks, avoid crowds, and keep distance from one another."

Kruppa clarified that the required second dose of each vaccine will be distributed subsequent to the first dose, and that the system is designed for a second dose to be shipped to where every first dose was administered.

When talking about the challenges ahead, Kruppa added, “The biggest challenge we have ahead of us is getting people to register to get vaccinated. There’s a couple of things that play into that, there is narrow criteria right now but there is reluctance by some folks. How you can help us is to get vaccinated when you are eligible and tell people when you do.”

Legislature Chairwoman McBean-Clairborne stated, “Our response to this disease has been great. We really want to encourage folks to take the vaccine – we need the community’s help in getting the word out.”

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*

Among Other Business

Legislators heard a presentation from County Planner Nick Helmholdt on a proposed change to the Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law. The proposed change would increase the room tax for small lodging establishments (including AirBNBs) from 3% to 5%, and follows a survey of small lodging establishments and deliberation by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. The current two-tiered structure, where small establishments are taxed at a lower rate (3%), was described as not being currently necessary, as it was originally designed to help increase demand for small establishments. The change will be proposed in the next legislature meeting and follows review and discussion by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. The change would go into effect March 1, 2021. *Contact, Deborah Dawson, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 607-351-8689*

A date was set for a special election to fill the District Two Legislature seat recently vacated by Anna Kelles, who was elected as a New York State Assemblywoman. The date of the special election will be March 23, 2021. *Contact Amanda Champion, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 607-351-2828*