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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 **May 18th, 2021** meeting of the
Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Votes to Establish Community Justice Center to Marshal Reimagining Public Safety Plans, Passes Resolutions Calling for Civil Service Reforms

Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca) introduced the resolution sharing that this is the first big step following the Reimagining Public Safety plan's approval in March. Funds were committed from the County's contingent fund. Further discussion on the structure of the Center and the collaboration with the City of Ithaca will occur during the Thursday, May 20 meeting of the Public Safety Committee. Legislator Leslie Schill (D-Ithaca) shared that City residents find this important, and many constituents have been interested in and successfully advocated for the furthering of Reimagining plans. The resolution passed 12-2 with Legislators Mike Sigler (R-Lansing) and David McKenna (R-Newfield) voting against. Legislator John added that the work ahead is substantial and thanked County staff for their work on this to-date. Legislators specifically acknowledged the work of County Chief Equity and Diversity Officer, Deanna Carrithers to further this proposal and for her leadership in the Reimagining Public Safety Collaborative.

Separately, resolutions calling for civil service reforms to address misconduct by police officers and to better provide for the hiring of police officers that better represent the communities that they serve were passed unanimously. Advocating for civil service reforms in these areas were included in the Reimagining Public Safety plan passed earlier this year.

Resolution Passes Supporting a Single- Payer Approach to Health Care at the State Level

The Tompkins County Legislature passed a resolution (12-2, with Legislators Sigler (R-Lansing) and McKenna (R-Newfield) voting no) urging the New York State Senate and Assembly to Enact the New York Health Act. The Act would federalize how health-care providers are paid and would leave many more New Yorkers insured by the state while working to address rising healthcare costs. Legislator Shawna Black (D-Ithaca) shared that concerned citizens had approached her regarding this act and thanked those citizens for helping to craft the resolution. Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca) shared some concerns, "I support this with some reservations, I'm concerned for small businesses and particularly not-for-profit providers. I'd prefer if our national congress would make amendments to the Affordable Care Act." The resolution clarifies that the Legislature has been urging the Senate and Assembly to enact the act for nearly fifteen years.

Legislator Mike Sigler (R-Lansing) moved a substitute resolution suggesting that the State begin by covering Cancer treatments in the 2022 Budget. Legislators Black and Lane (D-Dryden) shared sentiments that there are many serious illnesses that should also be addressed by the system, not just cancer. Legislator Dawson (D-Lansing) shared, "The health insurance business model is the real problem here, leaving people paying for administrative overhead and advertising. This substitute resolution will not address the things that make health insurance unaffordable." Sigler further clarified his stance that trying something more practical might lead to better outcomes and more political buy-in, having seen the Health Act not pass even with a supermajority of Democrats at the State level. The substitute resolution failed 11-2 with Legislators Sigler and Morrey (R-Groton) voting in favor.

Legislature Hears Presentation from Emergency Operations Center on COVID-19 Response and Vaccine Administration

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) gave their bi-weekly update on the pandemic response and vaccine rollout. County Administrator Jason Molino and Public Health Director Frank Kruppa outlined how school-aged children are being vaccinated at clinics in partnership with local school districts and Cayuga Health System. Details were also shared on the reopening guidance recently issued by New York State and clarified by the Tompkins

County Health Department. Molino shared that activities seeking reimbursement for COVID-19-related expenses from FEMA and through the American Rescue Plan are ongoing and have been promising.

This was Administrator Molino's last presentation to the Legislature as he plans to depart in the next few weeks. He shared that he hopes that as the pandemic subsides, this is one of the last presentations on the local response. Kruppa added that the Emergency Operations Center plans to wind down on-site operations and shift to a more virtual work program from staff's dedicated offices as they further resume the normal functions of their roles. He added that this shift is related to the low disease prevalence and high vaccination rate in the County and across New York State.

Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix shared information on how the County organization plans to return to offices, including that departments will be using existing telework and flexible work policies to plan for 2021 operations. The County remains committed to creating a cohesive government culture and balancing the health of employees and the public while providing consistent high quality service to the public.

Legislator Anne Koreman thanked the EOC and commended the ongoing presentation format for keeping Legislators informed on how the response has been going and what is being planned by the EOC. Legislature Chairwoman McBean-Clairborne (D-Ithaca) inquired about variants and Kruppa shared that they are most of the new cases in Tompkins County are related to the variants though cases continue to steadily decline overall.

A published timeline of vaccine distribution in Tompkins County can be found on the Health Department website [here](#).

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

A resolution honoring Dooley Kiefer and appreciating her contributions to the County as a Legislator from 1994 through 2017 was moved by Amanda Champion (D-Ithaca) and unanimously seconded and passed. Kiefer was honored for not only her time as a Legislator, but for her championing of environmental causes, ethics, and social justice among other achievements.

Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne was given a certificate from the County celebrating her 20 years in service to the Legislature. Legislators shared reflections on her leadership and successes.

Legislators unanimously approved the addition of Budget Director and Budget Analyst positions to County Administration, the proposal followed discussion on the appropriate County staff needed to develop each year's budget more efficiently. The County will start recruiting for the positions in the coming days, job descriptions can be found on the Human Resources Department's [website](#).