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*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 **June 1st, 2021** meeting of the  
Tompkins County Legislature

### **Environmentally Focused Advocacy Resolutions Passed**

A resolution calling for a moratorium on the operation of cryptocurrency mining centers until the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation can review environmental impacts passed unanimously (14-0). Cryptocurrency mining takes a large amount of energy and has become a popular industry before regulations could be put in place at the State level. Conversation was had on whether renewable energy should be considered to power these centers. Legislator Mike Sigler (R-Lansing) shared that he has been following bitcoin since 2014, and that Legislators have spent a great deal of time researching something "they're not voting on, this is a vote of support. I'm going to vote for this, but there are a lot of unanswered questions."

A resolution advocating for the New York State Public Research Commission to conduct and publish research on a transition from fossil fuel for heating was passed 13-1, with Legislator Sigler (R-Lansing) in opposition. The resolution advocates for gas-reduction and analysis of the electrical grid amongst other greenhouse gas emission analyses.

A resolution member-filed by Legislator Dan Klein (D-Danby) to adopt a policy managing an old-growth forest owned by the County with minimal human intervention and without commercial logging was passed 11-3, with Legislators Koreman (D-Ulysses), Schill (D-Ithaca), and Robertson (D-Dryden) voting against. Klein shared an impassioned speech about the importance of protecting old-growth forest land and provided historical examples of the impacts of commercial logging on the environment and local ecosystems. Legislator Koreman shared that she was not in favor of this bill because of inaccuracies in the text of the resolution. Two attempted amendments brought forth by Legislator Robertson, one to alter the text of the resolution pertaining to the Town of Caroline and another to call for the directional felling of trees allowing for hardwood saplings to thrive in areas with a cleared canopy, failed. Legislator Klein argued that as pine trees naturally fall, hardwoods then naturally rise to take their place, subsequently sharing photos of the process happening in the forest in question.

### **Emergency Operations Center Presents COVID-19 Response Update**

Public Health Director Frank Kruppa and Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix shared a COVID-19 response update, including the currently low disease prevalence and high rate of vaccinations. The Health Department continues to host pop-up vaccine clinics to reach different populations across the County. Kruppa stated, "The reopening guidance continues to evolve, we're seeing fully vaccinated people able to not wear masks in most settings, though some private businesses are still requiring masks. We continue to answer a lot of questions from the community and are encouraging patience from the community." He continued, "The data is all headed in the right direction, the number of cases is very low, and our vaccination numbers are rising steadily – most people who have received their first dose have also received their second dose."

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

### **Legislature Hears Presentation on HistoryForge Project**

Tompkins County History Center Director Ben Sandberg and project lead Eve Snyder joined the meeting to present on the HistoryForge project and its expansion both at a local and national level. The project is a digital web application that connects local communities to history using census records, maps, and photos. Hundreds of local

volunteers have contributed over the past several years to input data into the system. The program allows you to search via a person's name or an address to uncover a comprehensive building or resident record.

Snyder shared examples of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century history of local Black homeownership and employment records highlighting segregation in the City. The program will expand by offering current Ithaca residents to upload historical photos of their properties. Sandberg noted that this "is a powerful tool for local history." And continued, "We're working towards getting the entire County mapped, to offer a systemic way to look at demographics from the census across time."

Sandberg added that this product has been made possible through the Legislature's sustained investment in the History Center of Tompkins County. Elmira and Auburn, NY and a small city in Ohio are also using the tool, the History Center plans to allow for further expansion in the future. Legislator Leslie Schill (D-Ithaca) praised the work of volunteers analyzing local history and Legislators Anne Koreman (D-Ulysses) and Mike Sigler (R-Lansing) shared examples of properties they looked up and excitement for the expansion throughout the rest of the County.

More details can be found at: <https://www.historyforge.net/> *Contact Ben Sandberg, History Center Director, [bsandberg@thehistorycenter.net](mailto:bsandberg@thehistorycenter.net)*

### **Among Other Business**

A proclamation was read celebrating June 2021 as LGBTQ+ PRIDE Month, commemorating contributions by the LGBTQ+ community and the ongoing protection of human rights by local and national groups and advocates. Rainbow flags will be flown at County buildings throughout PRIDE Month. Legislator Anne Koreman offered that the proclamation be delivered to the Tompkins County Youth Services Department in celebration of LGBTQ+ youth in the community.

Legislature Chairwoman Leslyn McBean-Clairborne also read a proclamation commemorating Juneteenth, the annual celebration of Black liberation from slavery. The proclamation highlighted that the news of emancipation only made it to slaves in Texas two years after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and the celebration erupting from that delayed announcement became known as Juneteenth. The resolution acknowledged the continued injustices present in American society and celebrated the contributions and progress made to society by African Americans. Dr. Ken Clarke, the Director of the Office of Human Rights was on hand to accept the proclamation, acknowledging the ongoing struggle for liberation and the continued pursuit of justice, freedom, and equality. McBean-Clairborne shared that the County and City of Ithaca will be collaborating on a week of Juneteenth programming beginning June 14<sup>th</sup>, details will be announced in the coming days.

An additional proclamation was read acknowledging June as Dairy Month and offering a "salute to milk." McBean-Clairborne encouraged residents to enjoy the benefits of dairy consumption. Legislator Mike Sigler offered the resolution in support of the County's dairy farmers.

The Legislature voted to authorize overriding the tax levy by a vote of 11-3, with Legislators Sigler (R-Lansing), McKenna (R-Newfield), and Morey (R-Groton) all voting against. A public hearing was held before the meeting related to the override.