

Highlights of the November 4, 2021 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Resolution to Reimburse Local Share of BridgeNY Grant up to 20% Passes

A resolution committing Tompkins County to reimburse up to 20% of the funds of local share for municipal bridge infrastructure projects under the State's BridgeNY Grant Program was discussed and passed. Moved by Legislator Anne Koreman (D-Ulysses), the resolution passed 12-2 with Legislators Mike Lane (D-Dryden) and Dan Klein (D-Danby) in opposition.

Legislator Dan Klein (D-Danby) proposed an amendment to include a requirement that design standards approved by the County are met. Klein shared a plea that the County have oversight in grants that it is involved in. The amendment failed, 3-11 with Legislators Klein, Lane (D-Dryden), John (D-Ithaca), in favor.

Resolution Passes Approving Centralized Arraignment Plan, Request for Approval by OCA

Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca) shared that in passing this resolution, "this is a big deal," adding that this plan allows for virtual arraignment and other, different ways for the process to be accomplished. John spoke to his experience as a private attorney with arraignments previously happening in a highly inefficient way that would call lawyers, judges, and officers to a location at any given hour. If this plan is approved by the Office of Court Administration, arraignments will be centralized in time and location with shared responsibility between the judges, so schedules and logistics are easier to manage and anticipate. An arraignment is a hearing where an individual is formally charged of a crime by a court and occurs after an arrest and the filing of a criminal complaint by the District Attorney.

Among Other Business

A resolution honoring Veteran's Week (a local extension of Veteran's Day, November 6-13, 2021) was read by Legislature Chairwoman Leslyn McBean-Clairborne. The resolution remembers and honors the courage and honor of service veterans. The resolution highlighted that a large portion of veterans experience stress in transitioning to civilian life, and are at high risk of suicide upon return. The County is participating in "[Operation Green Light](#)" to publicly acknowledge and shine a light on the service and experience of veterans and offer support to veterans in need. The Legislature encourages residents to display a green light during this week in a public facing window or place of businesses to "green light veterans forward as valuable members of our community." Tompkins County Veterans Services Department Director J.R. Clairborne was present to accept the proclamation on behalf of the veterans community.

A resolution recognizing Indigenous People's Month was read by Legislature Chairwoman Leslyn McBean-Clairborne. The resolution acknowledged the area's Indigenous heritage and "periods of pain, tragedy, inequities, and bigotry" while remarking on the County's commitment to make changes for the better, including its diversity and non-discrimination policies. Tompkins County celebrates the second Monday of each October as Indigenous People's Day. The resolution calls on Tompkins County residents and organizations to recognize the month with appropriate celebrations and events. The Community Arts Partnership (Located in the Tompkins Center for History and Culture) is hosting a [November exhibit](#) honoring Native American Heritage Month, featuring "The Art of Wampum," a traditional regional Native American storytelling, treaty, ceremonial, and art form.

A resolution was read celebrating the nearly 300 home health care aides providing high quality and compassionate healthcare services to those in need in Tompkins County. November 7-13 is National Home Care week, and the Tompkins County Health Planning Council is celebrating with a series of events. This second week of November is Home Health Care Aide week in Tompkins County. McBean Clairborne commented on the home health aides' role in the COVID-19 pandemic response for individuals in need.

A presentation was given by the County Attorney and Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) on the County's participation in a hydroelectric facility in Waterloo, N.Y., the County receives credit on its energy bill by supporting this renewable energy source and also gets Renewable Energy Certificates acknowledging its renewable energy use (from July 2020-June 2021 the estimated total value of the certificates to Tompkins County has been \$29,394). CSO Terry Carroll explained the role that the facility plays for the watershed, and its community impact in the Waterloo and Northern Cayuga Lake area.

Sheriff Derek Osborne and Undersheriff Jennifer Olin were commended by Legislator Rich John (D-Ithaca, Chair of Public Safety Committee) for their participation in a conference titled: Race and Justice; Finding Fair and Impartial Policing held by the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers. Osborne shared that he gained perspective and met great instructors at the training and are looking to expand local training options in this area.

Tompkins County Chief Equity and Diversity Officer Deanna Carrithers presented an update on the Reimagining Public Safety Collaborative. The Collaborative is preparing to kick off plans for community input and implementation including the plan to support officer wellness and the plan to release data from the District Attorney & Office of the Assigned Counsel. There will be print updates about the Reimagining process weekly in the free Tompkins Weekly newspaper for those who cannot access the website. Carrithers outlined that the Community Justice Center Project Director search is underway and that the Collaborative has identified space at the Mental Health building on Green Street in Ithaca to house the Center.

Tompkins County Public Health Director Frank Kruppa and Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix presented a COVID-19 response update. The update included the plans to run vaccine clinics for youth occurring this upcoming weekend and throughout November. Kruppa detailed that the Health Department plans to vaccinate just under 4,000 of the ~5,700 total 5-11-year old's in Tompkins County through the mass site at the Shops at Ithaca Mall (with other doses being available through pharmacies and primary care providers).

A resolution approving the Ithaca Journal as the paper of record for public notices passed 8-6, with Legislators Sigler (R-Lansing), Black (D-Ithaca), Lane (D-Dryden), Schill (D-Ithaca), Dawson (D-Lansing), Granison (D-Ithaca) opposed following intensive discussion on the need for New York State to consider changes to the law. Legislator Sigler remarked that "The Ithaca Journal is not a local paper anymore, I get more news from the weeklies and online newspapers. The state should allow them to publish these notices... If you're going to be a newspaper, you have to "be" a newspaper. It's better to have a strong weekly than a terribly weak daily." Legislator Mike Lane added that the Legislature had also previously agreed to post some legal notices in the weekly papers as well and Legislator Martha Robertson added that "it is really tragic, we used to have reporters at our committee meetings." The Ithaca Journal is the community's only daily print newspaper, though there are several weekly and online news outlets in the community.