

## Highlights of the December 21, 2021 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Wednesday, December 22, 2021

### Legislators Comment on Five Members Finishing Term, Inaugural *Strength in Diversity* Award Given and Named in Honor of Outgoing Chairwoman McBean-Clairborne

Legislature Chairwoman Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D-Ithaca) and Legislators Martha Robertson (D-Dryden), Leslie Schill (D-Ithaca), Dave McKenna (R-Newfield), and Glenn Morey (R-Groton) participated in their final Legislature meeting as their terms come to an end. Legislators praised the efforts and achievements of the five members, sharing reflections and personal anecdotes of the work that they have accomplished and their personal experiences as colleagues. Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden) shared remarks on the five members and their hard work “fulfilling your public trust as a public servant.” Chairwoman McBean Clairborne presented outgoing Legislators with certificates honoring their service.

Legislator Schill thanked her colleagues and the public in District Two, sharing that being a representative has been a great learning opportunity and experience. Legislator Robertson stated, “A lot happens in 20 years, it has really been an honor and a privilege to serve the Town of Dryden” and continued by thanking her colleagues on the Legislature and the County staff. Interim County Administrator Lisa Holmes added that “It’s not an easy thing to run for office, and its even harder to serve – you have had to make myriad difficult decisions in your time in office... thank you for your hard work and dedication serving Tompkins County.”

Legislator Henry Granison (D-Ithaca), who chairs the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee presented a new award to be given annually from the committee following a nomination process for those who support diversity and inclusion in exemplary and integrated ways. The award will be named in honor of outgoing Legislator McBean-Clairborne as the ***Leslyn McBean-Clairborne Strength in Diversity Award***. Legislators Granison and Anne Koreman (D-Ulysses) remarked on McBean-Clairborne’s myriad achievements in the community and over her 21 years on the Legislature.

McBean-Clairborne shared reflections on her time in service, stating, “I am proud to have served Tompkins County residents, my constituents, and to have had the support of so many of the people here. I couldn’t have done it without so many of these folks and my family as a support system.” She continued by thanking the community and County staff, “they’re the people with the expertise and the vision and the resources that we need to make the decisions we make to benefit the entire County.” Remarking on her Legislature colleagues, McBean-Clairborne stated, “Although we have two parties represented here, the work we do and decisions we make are bi-partisan,” and added that a landmark achievement was making COVID-19 testing free and affordable for Tompkins County residents. She reminded Legislators to ground their reasons for serving as “justice and equity for all,” adding that “diversity, equity, and inclusion have to be the cornerstone of this organization.”

### COVID-19 Pandemic Response Update Presented by Tompkins County Staff

Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix and Public Health Director Frank Kruppa presented an update on the local pandemic response amidst the most significant increase in positive cases to-date. The update detailed recent efforts and communications from Tompkins County and New York State to encourage vaccination and mask-wearing, as well as operations from community partners including school districts and colleges.

Hendrix and Kruppa thanked the County's staff who have stepped up to continue to respond to the pandemic, with Kruppa stating "It's hard to believe we'll be going into a third year of this response in a few weeks, it has taken monumental effort from County employees and Health Department staff."

Kruppa detailed data on COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, stating that "right now it looks like we're an outlier in cases, but I would argue we're an outlier in infrastructure to know what the disease looks like in our community, which is a testament to our testing efforts." Regarding hospitalizations and deaths, Kruppa detailed that severe disease and death are occurring more frequently in the unvaccinated and senior populations, "As we age we become more susceptible to all respiratory illnesses. There are still members of our community at risk and we all need to take precautions and stay vigilant."

Regarding the data, Kruppa stated "When we're looking at our hospitalization and death numbers, we're still seeing the Delta Variant's influence on the severity of disease. We are still awaiting more information on Omicron's spread locally."

Legislator Granison inquired about testing availability in the community with the appointments at the mall site filling up and at-home tests hard to find before State and Federal resources are marshaled to increase the supply. Kruppa responded, "Cayuga Health added 100 more appointments each day this week, including many people who are getting tested so they can have a holiday gathering – which is not what the mall testing is intended for. The testing is primarily for those who are contacts or symptomatic. The last thing we want is someone who may be sick unable to get a PCR test through our site." More information from TCHD is forthcoming on at-home tests which are anticipated to more readily available over the coming months.

For more information on the information released Tuesday by TCHD please visit: <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/covid19-2021-12-21-update-detailing-recent-increase-hospitalizations-and-deaths-prevention>

### **Among Other Business**

The Tompkins County Legislature passed a new Diversity Statement unanimously (14-0). The new statement is as follows:

*"Tompkins County Government centers diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to the empowerment of employees and residents to dismantle systemic barriers that inhibit inclusive governance and the provision of government services to all."*

Members of the County's Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee contributed to the drafting of the new statement. Legislators thanked County Chief Equity and Diversity Officer Deanna Carrithers for her leadership in drafting the statement.

The Tompkins County White Collar Employee Union contract was approved unanimously (14-0). The contract will result in salary increases for 2021 (retroactively) through 2023 as well as changes to health insurance. The Legislature unanimously approved (14-0) the same terms for Management-level County employees and also passed a resolution clarifying that County Elected Officials shall receive the same

health insurance options as those offered in the White Collar Contract. These actions follow the recent ratification of a nine-year agreement with Tompkins County Sheriff's Road Patrol division for 2017-2025.