

# Highlights of the March 1, 2022 meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

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## **Tompkins County Legislature Passes Resolution Calling on Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to Pass the Birds and Bees Protection Act**

A resolution was passed 12-2 (Legislators Shurtleff (R-Groton), Sigler (R-Lansing) opposed) calling on the New York State Governor and the State Legislature to pass the Birds and Bees Protection Act. The act concerns use of neonicotinoids, or “neonics”, which is a class of neurotoxic pesticide that includes imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, clothianidin, dinotefuran, and acetamiprid. The resolution states that research show that widespread use of neonics is a leading cause of declines in honeybees as well as pollinators and a threat to birds, fish, and the entire ecosystem.

Legislator Deborah Dawson (D-Lansing) stated, “To me this is a no-brainer, no bees no food we starve.”

## **Among Other Business**

A proclamation was read celebrating Women’s History Month, a yearly celebration of the achievements and contributions that women have made on our society. This year’s theme is: “Women providing healing, promoting hope.” Legislature Chairwoman Shawna Black (D-Ithaca) encouraged Legislators and the community to think about the work of caregivers and frontline workers who’ve led us navigating through this pandemic and the countless ways that women from all backgrounds have provided both hope and healing to us all.

In her Chair’s Report, Shawna Black (D-Ithaca) shared comments on the suspension of the local mask advisory, stating “Just because the advisory was lifted it doesn’t mean that you can’t continue to wear a mask, and in no way should this stigmatize or degrade people who do choose to continue to wear a mask. We don’t know a stranger’s story. The gentleman behind you at Ithaca Bakery could be wearing a mask because his wife is getting chemo(therapy), the woman at Wegmans could be wearing a mask because her baby is in the NicU fighting for his life and she has to protect him. We need to be courteous to one another and respect the precautions each other takes to keep ourselves and our families healthy.” Black continued, “We’ve lost 59 of our neighbors in Tompkins County, and grieve for every life lost – we can still do things together to prevent further loss of life and other devastating impacts from this pandemic. Ongoing thanks is due to our staff for their tireless efforts managing the COVID-19 pandemic response.”

Deputy County Administrator Amie Hendrix shared an update on the County’s COVID-19 pandemic response. Hendrix detailed the changes in the local mask advisory and state mask mandate and the continued distribution of KN95 masks and self-tests through local community partners. Legislator Anne Koreman (D-Ulysses) thanked Hendrix for clarifying that businesses can still require patrons to wear a mask when entering the business regardless of the mandate being lifted at the state-level.

Legislature Chairwoman Shawna Black (D-Ithaca) read the Legislature’s statement on Ukraine into the record. The statement can be found in its entirety [here](#). Legislator Mike Lane (D-Dryden) shared, “...we need to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine... We have many Ukrainian Americans here in Tompkins County, in New York, and across the nation. We’re proud of them, and their sharing in our

democracy with us.” Chairwoman Black shared that a Ukrainian flag will be flown in front of the Legislature building.

Legislator Dan Klein (D-Danby) shared that a survey was recently published on the County website to gather information on cell phone service coverage in the County, which he referenced as being spotty “particularly in the hilly and southern half of the County.” Klein added, “With this information we hope to generate a map where service is lacking in this County, whereas official federal maps say the entire County is covered – which we know is not true.”

The survey can be accessed

at: <https://tompkinscounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=95b4beefb9e84ce1b97b89138a44aca6> and a press release will be shared later this week.

Rosemary Avila (who was previously serving as interim director) was unanimously approved by the Legislature as the Director of the Workforce Development Board. The Workforce Development Board develops and coordinates resources that meet employer workforce needs and facilitates employment and development opportunities for individuals. Interim County Administrator Lisa Holmes shared a review of Rosemary’s background and work in the interim role thus far, leading to the recommendation for the position by both Holmes and the Workforce Development Board (a group made up of local officials and representatives from private employers).

Monalita Smiley, the Project Director of the Community Justice Center shared an update to the Legislature on Reimagining Public Safety plans and progress. The update included details on the efforts of the Community Justice Center recruiting for the Data Analyst role ([apply here](#)), and Smiley’s efforts connecting with community partners and programs. Smiley shared that while the City is receiving its report on its department redesign from its working group, the County continues to work on other plans including additional joint plans in motion with the City.