



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **January 5, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Martha Robertson Elected Legislature Chair

The Legislature has elected Martha Robertson (D) to lead the Legislature during 2010. The position of Chair is filled each year by a majority vote of the 15 members of the Legislature. The chair is responsible for overseeing all Legislative functions.

At the Legislature's 2010 organizational meeting, Robertson was nominated for chair by Legislator Nathan Shinagawa, who praised Robertson as someone who is "dependable, articulate, energetic, focused," and who always follows through. Legislator Carol Chock, who seconded the nomination, praised Robertson's "exemplary" leadership on committees and in pursuing other vital initiatives. Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera nominated for chair Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (D), who has served as vice chair of the Legislature for the past four years. Herrera called McBean-Clairborne "eminently qualified," having distinguished herself through supportive and inclusive leadership, consistently earning the respect and regard of colleagues and staff. Robertson received 13 votes for Chair, to McBean-Clairborne's two. Before the vote, both nominees said it is very important that the Legislature this year work very hard to overcome the divisions within the body that have occurred over the past year or two and to work together as a team for the common good.

Beginning her third term on the Legislature, Chair Robertson has represented District 13 (Western part of the Town of Dryden) since 2002. She served as chair of the Legislature's Public Safety Committee during 2009 and previously led the Health and Human Services Committee (2003-2005) and the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee (2006-2008). Robertson also chairs the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and represents the Legislature on the Tompkins County Council of Governments.

Legislator Dooley Kiefer (D) was elected Vice Chair, nominated by Pam Mackesey. David McKenna nominated fellow Republican Frank Proto, the body's longest serving legislator, as Vice Chair. Ten legislators voted for Kiefer; four for Proto (Legislator Luz Herrera did not vote.) Kiefer has represented District 10 (Village of Lansing and part of the Village of Cayuga Heights) on the Legislature since 1994. Kiefer's recent leadership responsibilities have included chairing the Legislative Rules and Procedures Special Committee during 2010.

Chair Robertson said she will announce 2010 committee assignments at the next meeting on January 19.
Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 272-0584; Dooley Kiefer, Vice Chair, 257-7453.

Five New Legislators Begin Service

The Legislature welcomed five new colleagues for the four-year term that runs through the end of 2014. The newly elected Legislators, as well as ten incumbents, were sworn in by Tompkins County Clerk Aurora Valenti just before the Legislature meeting. The five new members are: David McKenna (R, District 8: Towns of Newfield and Enfield south); Patricia Pryor (D, District 6: Town and part of Village of Lansing); Brian Robison (R, District 9: Town and Village of Groton); Peter Stein (D, District 11: Town of Ithaca); and Michael Lane (D, District 14: Town of Dryden, east, and Villages of Dryden and Freeville.) First elected to the Legislature in 1993, Mr. Lane previously served three terms and is returning to the Legislature after a four-year absence. Several of the new legislators thanked the voters for the confidence they showed in them by electing them to the

Legislature, characterized service on the Legislature as an honor and a privilege, and expressed confidence that legislators, working together, will meet the challenges ahead.

Contact: Legislators Patricia Pryor, 319-0507; David McKenna, 564-7243; Brian Robison, 351-3601; Peter Stein, 266-7579; Michael Lane, 844-8313.

County to Begin Formal Examination of Long-Term Budget Challenges

County Administrator Joe Mareane told the Legislature that it is time to begin a thoughtful and thorough examination of budgetary challenges the County is expected to face over the next three years and to discuss the policy decisions that will be necessary to address what will no doubt continue to be a challenging fiscal environment. The first step, he said, will be for those across county government—including Legislators, department and administrative leadership—to seek a common understanding about the County’s our near- and mid-term financial challenges and to develop a workable strategy to deal with those challenges—including exploring models for prioritization to help guide future budget decisions. The administrator said that within the next few days he will circulate a draft working document to begin to frame the discussion, to be followed up by a half-day strategic retreat next month.

Also regarding budget issues, Finance Director David Squires reported that the County has, as expected, experienced a dramatic decline in liquidity as of year’s end, reflecting the decline in sales tax revenue during 2009 coupled with delayed release of state aid. Squires told legislators that state aid did come through at the last minute for Tompkins Cortland Community College, along with \$300,000 in reimbursements of \$1.1 million owed to the Health Department, and that a payment of State transit operating aid for Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit was recently received. Squires advised that “the County’s financial position will be maintained, but will be weakened through the State’s inability to support us.”

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

In other actions, the Legislature

- By a party-line vote of 11-3 (Legislator Kathy Luz Herrera was excused) endorsed pending House and Senate legislation which would amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require a voter-verified permanent paper ballot. The measures would extend nationwide protective measures, most of which are already in place in New York State—such as supporting optical scan voting, requiring a random sample hand count in close federal elections, and prohibiting the use of wireless or internet applications as part of voting systems. Noting that New York State is already in compliance, Republican Frank Proto questioned the \$1 billion that would be set aside for localities in other states to bring their voting systems into compliance.
- Established meeting dates for 2010. The Legislature will continue to meet the first and third Tuesdays of the month, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The only exception is the first meeting of November, which will occur on Wednesday, November 3, since Tuesday, November 2 is Election Day.

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