



Inclusion Through Diversity

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Highlights of the **February 2, 2010** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Delays Vote on AES Cayuga Payment in Lieu of Taxes Agreement**

The Legislature has delayed consideration of support for revising the 20-year Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement between the County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and the AES Cayuga power generating facility to provide more time for citizens to obtain information on the proposal. Lansing Legislator Pat Pryor requested postponement of the vote until the Legislature's February 16 meeting, saying that she has received, and is continuing to receive, many questions about the proposed revision, and would like additional time to ensure that those who would be affected have their questions addressed.

The proposed renegotiation, focus of a more than hour-long presentation to the Legislature at its last meeting, is prompted by economic and market factors that have caused a rapid decline in the plant's financial condition, creating an extraordinary situation, as defined in the agreement. Terms of a value and phasing plan agreed to by IDA and utility negotiating teams, would decrease the plant's valuation over five years from the current \$160 million for 2009 to \$100 million in 2013, instead increasing the value over that period to \$255 million. The agreement governs a system of valuation and tax for the facility, and is not a tax abatement.

*Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature and Chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, 607-274-5434 or 607-272-0584; County Administrator Joe Mareane, 607-274-5551; Legislator Patricia Pryor, 607-319-0507.*

#### **Legislature Concludes Update of Legislative Rules and Procedures**

The Legislature completed the process begun a year ago to review and revise the rules and procedures of the Legislature. After more than an hour of thoughtful discussion, Legislators updated a dozen rules of the Legislature, not previously considered during the special review process undertaken in 2009. The final vote on the rules changes was 11-4, with Legislators Jim Dennis, Pat Pryor, Pam Mackesey, and Leslyn McBean-Clairborne voting no. Much of the discussion focused on new language recommended by the special Legislative Rules and Procedures Committee governing use of electronic devices during meetings. By a split 8-7 vote, language ultimately was added that supported some guidelines on use of electronic devices in meetings, incorporating the provision that legislators be expected to remain engaged with topics under discussion and avoid activities which divert their attention and are distracting to others. By a 9-6 vote, Legislators removed language that indicated that any electronic or handwritten communications sent during meetings are subject to the Freedom of Information Law. It was suggested that language should more properly take the form of a reminder sent legislators, not a rule of the Legislature. Before adoption of the changes, Legislators, by a vote of 10-5, also struck proposed language that would have specified as part of the rules that members are expected to remain in the room when a vote is to be taken.

*Contact: Legislator Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Legislative Rules and Procedures Special Committee (2009), 607-257-7453*

Among other business, the Legislature

- Heard a presentation from Finance Director David Squires regarding distribution of County sales tax, including the Municipal Sales Tax Agreement with the City of Ithaca, in place since 1992. That

agreement provides compensation on behalf of the City to agencies that provide a benefit to not only City residents, but also County residents who reside outside City limits.

- Approved appointments to the Industrial Development Agency, to serve at the pleasure of the Legislature. Appointed were Legislators Nathan Shinagawa, Will Burbank, James Dennis, and Chair Martha Robertson; with the appointments of at-large members Jeff Furman and Dan Cogan, and Larry Baum (representing the Tompkins County Area Development Board of Directors) reaffirmed. Appointments were approved by a vote of 14-1. Legislator Leslyn McBean-Clairborne dissenting.

**- END -**