



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **January 3, 2012** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Chair's Election Deadlocked. Leadership Decision Delayed for Two Weeks

Despite nine ballots, members of the Tompkins County Legislature have failed to yet elect a Chair of the Legislature for the 2012 term. The position of Chair is filled each year by a majority vote of the 15 members of the Legislature. Nominated were incumbent Martha Robertson (D – District 13/ Western Dryden) to continue for a third year as Chair, and Michael Lane (D – District 14/Eastern Dryden), who has nine years of experience as Legislature Vice Chair. The chair is responsible for overseeing all Legislative functions.

Legislators repeatedly deadlocked by 7-7 votes—Legislators Pat Pryor, Jim Dennis, Will Burbank, Peter Stein, Dooley Kiefer, Nathan Shinagawa, and Robertson voting for Robertson, and Legislators Pam Mackesey, Frank Proto, Kathy Luz Herrera, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Brian Robison, Dave McKenna, and Lane voting for Lane in each of the nine ballots. (Legislator Carol Chock was excused from the meeting and did not participate in the votes.)

After failing to reach a decision on the first two ballots, Legislators tabled the item to complete other business, then resumed consideration at the end of the meeting, where seven additional votes produced the same result. After three unsuccessful attempts, the Legislature on the fourth time voted to adjourn the meeting, and delay the leadership decision, until the Legislature's next regular meeting January 17th. Until a new Chair is elected, Legislator Frank Proto (R – District 7), who was elected Temporary Chair to preside over the chairmanship vote, will continue to serve in that interim position. The Legislature has not yet addressed the election of the Legislature's Vice Chair.

In nominating Robertson for another term, Legislator Pryor said that while she has a great deal of respect for all her colleagues, and particularly Legislator Lane, she believes that, continuity in the leadership position is important, considering the challenges the County will face this year. And she praised Robertson as for her time commitment, tireless effort, and hard work in the Chair's position.

Nominating Lane, Legislator Mackesey praised his extensive past experience in nearly 15 years as a legislator, chairing almost every committee and as Legislature vice chair. She said Lane brings the perspective of rural residents, appreciates the role of county government, and understands that the Chair is a first among equals.

The election of the Chair and Vice Chair will be the first items considered when the Legislature reconvenes in two weeks.

Contact: Frank Proto, interim Temporary Chair, 607-277-4875.

Labor Agreement with Corrections Union Ratified

The Legislature, by unanimous vote (with Legislator Carol Chock excused), ratified a three-year bargaining agreement with the County's Corrections Union, retroactive to 2010 and continuing through the end of this year. The prior agreement expired at the end of 2009. The new agreement keeps wages and benefits stable for 2010 and 2011, with higher employee medical copayments beginning in 2012, along with structural changes in the

2012 salary schedule that couples lower starting salaries with higher salaries for longer-serving employees. Members of the Corrections Union have already ratified the agreement.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 607-387-4058

Among other business, the Legislature

- Asked County Administrator Joe Mareane to comment about the potential impact of the bankruptcy of the AES Cayuga power plant and its payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreement. Mareane said that negotiations with AES have kept pace with the value of the plant, and that he does not anticipate that the bankruptcy will change valuation in the amendment agreement about to be presented, which has reduced value of the plant, in phases, according to a formula used since 2007.
- Established the Legislature's 2012 meeting schedule—first and third Tuesdays of each month, with the exception of Wednesday, November 7, avoiding a conflict with Election Day.

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