



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 **March 5, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **\$2.2 Million State Grant Awarded to Extend Local Broadband Service**

Legislator Pat Pryor, Chair of the County Legislature's Special Committee on Broadband, tonight announced that New York State has awarded a \$2.2 million State grant to extend high-speed Internet service to unserved and underserved areas of the County. The award comes in response to a coordinated application filed by provider Clarity Connect, Inc. to extend high-speed broadband service to unserved communities in Tompkins and Cayuga Counties. The award is among \$25 million awarded statewide under the Connect NY Broadband Grant program. The local award is the third highest amount awarded among 18 grants statewide.

"As Chair of the Special Committee on Broadband I'm very happy and excited to be part of the effort to bring enhanced Internet access to rural parts of Tompkins County," Legislator Pryor stated. "Many rural residents have stayed in touch with the committee as we've waited for an announcement on our application for funding and I know that the opportunity for adoption of robust broadband service will make a real difference in the lives of many residents of the County.

"The success of our work would not have been possible without the contributions of the outstanding community volunteers who freely shared their experience and expertise with the committee. They deserve a huge vote of thanks. I also greatly appreciate the support of the County Legislature, County Administration and various County staff members who have contributed to the effort. I'd like to especially note the invaluable assistance of Deputy County Administrator, Paula Younger. She really helped to move the work ahead, especially in the early months of research and exploration. And, of course, thanks also to our major private partner, Chuck Bartosch at Clarity Connect. Chuck's interest, persistence and creative problem solving have been instrumental in our success. We are also pleased that two other private partners, Haeefe TV and Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Inc. will be involved in bringing the broadband build-out to fruition.

"It will probably be some time before we can analyze the exact parameters of what is being funded. However, it has been and remains the goal of the committee to bring high-speed broadband Internet service to every part of the County. To the extent that we receive less than the full amount requested, the committee will begin looking at possible options to allow us to meet that goal."

In announcing the Connect NY awards, Governor Andrew Cuomo stated, "The projects receiving these grants represent the very best proposals with the most potential to benefit statewide economic and community development efforts. These funds will strengthen New York's broadband capacity and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service in unserved and underserved communities, counties, and regions across the state."

The Tompkins County Broadband Committee (now the Special Committee on Broadband) was established more than two years ago, charged to "advise the Tompkins County Legislature on how to best promote broadband technology countywide, to address the needs of unserved and underserved residents, foster public-private innovation, enhance existing capabilities, and support good governance."

Contact: Patricia Pryor, Chair, Special Committee on Broadband, 319-0507.

### **Legislature Opposes Governor's Proposal Regarding IDA Sales Tax Abatements**

The Legislature went on record in opposition to proposed changes in the Governor's Executive Budget that would constrain the authority of local Industrial Development Agencies, such as the Tompkins County IDA, to abate sales tax for qualifying projects. The vote was 14-1, with Legislator Dooley Kiefer voting no. IDAs currently are authorized to abate local property taxes, the State and local share of sales taxes on construction materials and equipment, and the mortgage recording tax to support new and expanding businesses as they invest to create new jobs in New York State.

Budget committee chair, and IDA member, Jim Dennis noted the proposed change would eliminate the ability of local IDAs to abate the state portion of sales tax for construction costs; that decision would have to be made by the Regional Economic Development Council, which would create delays and hamper local IDAs and their ability to get projects going. Legislator Nathan Shinagawa, also a member of the IDA, pointed out that such a policy would be especially limiting for small community projects, such as the Lansing Market and Neighborhood Pride store.

Legislator Kiefer said she views it as appropriate that the State want to control its own portion of the sales tax, and that was the reason behind her "no" vote.

*Contact: Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, chair of the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency, 274-5434 or 272-0584.*

### **Contract Awarded for Airport Terminal Cleaning Services**

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, awarded a three-year contract for terminal cleaning services at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport to Cindy's Cleaning Service of Ithaca, with an option to renew for another three years. Cost will be \$132,300 in the first year, with increases in year two and three, for a total cost over the three-year period of just under \$425,000.

*Contact: Airport Manager Bob Nicholas, 257-0456; Peter Stein, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 266-7579.*

Among other business

- Youth Services Director Amie Hendrix presented results of the 2012 Tompkins County Youth Needs Assessment. Among the findings, the Director reported that 88% of parents responding reported their use of community resources, including recreation areas; that there is concern about barriers to teen employment including lack of transportation; that about 20% of Tompkins County youth are living in poverty; and that one in four county high school and middle school students report feeling sad or depressed most days.
- The Legislature authorized a supplemental agreement with Fisher Associates, of Rochester, NY, for construction inspection and support services for the Hanshaw Road reconstruction project, at a cost not to exceed \$273,000. Fisher Associates is already under contract with the County to provide design services for the Hanshaw Road project.
- Legislature Chair Martha Robertson reported on her remarks today at the AFSME Lobby Day in Albany. In her comments, Robertson said that municipal governments and school districts are threatened by funding decisions and priorities set in Albany—including the ongoing drive to cut state income taxes without cutting services and pushing more and more down to local governments, along with what may be misguided responses to the recession and income inequality. Robertson urged, in part, that the tax structure be changed "so that people doing the best in this economy are paying their fair share."
- After discussion, the Legislature scheduled a public hearing on a proposed Local Law to amend the County Code of Ethics. The hearing will take place on March 19, beginning at 5:30 p.m., at Legislative Chambers of the County Courthouse, 320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca.

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