



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **April 2, 2013** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Reaches Position on SAFE Act

The Tompkins County Legislature, after listening to over two more than hours of concerned public comment and discussing the issue for another hour-and-a-half, reached its position on the New York SAFE Act. That position, however, differs from the recommendation advanced by its Public Safety Committee last week, indicating the Legislature's support of sensible gun control, while addressing State and Federal-level actions concerning gun control. The measure passed by a 10-5 vote, with Legislators Dave McKenna, Mike Lane, and Frank Proto, Public Safety Chair Brian Robison, and Legislature Chair Martha Robertson voting no.

The resolution, cosponsored by Legislators Dooley Kiefer, Carol Chock, Pat Pryor, Pam Mackesey, and Will Burbank, supports the intent and enactment of the New York SAFE Act, demands the State Legislature and Governor provide funding for the increased costs of state agency and local record-keeping and enforcement (including for the Sheriff, the County Clerk, and county mental health departments). It urges the Legislature and the Governor to continue to re-examine details addressed by the legislation in an open and public process, affording residents of the State the opportunity to be heard on the legislation, and then to confirm, modify, and/or correct the statute in a careful and deliberate manner. The action also urges the United States Congress and President to remove the existing restriction on the creation of a federal gun database and undertake timely consideration of suggestion of suggestions by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Legislator Chock stated, "As a community, it is time to respond to the 30,000 deaths a year that involve guns."

More than 100 citizens turned out for the meeting, and about half of them spoke—23 speaking in support of the law and 28 against. In their deliberations, Legislators began with the recommendation advanced by the Public Safety Committee, urging re-examination of the Act, then by a split vote of 8-7 substituted the alternate ultimately approved. As part of their action, Legislators declined to take up the call for repeal of the Act, first filed by Legislator Dave McKenna, as well as the middle-ground version initially proposed by Legislator Lane.

Robison said he could not favor the measure since it reflects "support" that he does not share. Legislator Peter Stein voiced called the measure "better than nothing but not very good," saying that he's not convinced that big changes are needed, and that the Legislature is not asking for any of those major changes to be made. Legislator Jim Dennis said he will stand by his support, saying that while the SAFE Act is flawed, support as communicated in the resolution is "the right thing to do." Legislators again thanked all who turned out to communicate their concerns in a positive, respectful process.

Contact: Brian Robison, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 351-3601.

County Will Explore Suit Against the FAA as Part of Aggressive Effort to Keep Airport Tower Open

County Administrator Joe Mareane briefed Legislators on efforts to seek funding to keep open the control tower open at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, in the wake of the loss of federal funding for control tower operations, as a result of federal sequestration. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has eliminated funding for contract tower operations across the nation, such as those at the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport, and has reduced support for operations at larger airports staffed by FAA controllers.

Mareane said that business, education, and government in recent days have come together in a coordinated approach about how funding for the tower and related equipment can be restored, communicating the importance of air service to this economy and how important this economy is to our region. As part of this effort, he said the area's federal delegation is being contacted, and the Governor's Office will be engaged, both to assist in lobbying support with Washington and to see if the State can assist with finances. While it is stressed that safety is not affected, the administrator said there is increased concern that our airport may be marginalized by this event, since it is currently the only airport with commercial service in New York State affected by this decision.

As part of this effort, Mareane and County Attorney Jonathan Wood said the County will consider filing suit against the FAA in federal court, as some other affected airports have done, which could seek a stay of the FAA's action, which would close the airport tower as of May 5. Mareane also said cost to staff the tower is estimated at about \$500,000, with perhaps \$200,000 more to maintain federal equipment. While the airport remains safe and flying on schedule, he told legislators the county must respond aggressively and effectively, and essentially "leave no stone unturned."

Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551.

Richard C. Snyder Appointed County Director of Finance

Richard C. Snyder has been appointed as Tompkins County's Director of Finance. The Legislature, by unanimous vote, confirmed the appointment, as recommended by the Director of Finance search committee as the result of a six-month-long search process.

Mr. Snyder enters the position as an accomplished Finance Director with 27 years of responsible experience in business administration, finance, accounting, budgeting, planning, and personnel management in the government finance sector. He currently serves as Finance Director for the City of Fenton, MO, and prior to that served for nearly 18 years as Finance Director for the City of New Port Richey, FL. Past experience also includes service as Finance Director for an independent fire/rescue district, administrative director for a statewide rehabilitation organization, and in positions including accountant and Assistant Finance Director for the City of New Port Richey.

Mr. Snyder holds a Master of Accountancy degree from the University of South Florida and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration/Accounting from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. He is a Certified Government Financial Manager. Awards include annual Certificates of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the City of New Port Richey, awarded by the Government Finance Officers Association, as well as a Certificate of Recognition from the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) for early administration of GASB 34.

Mr. Snyder will begin service by June 1. He succeeds Finance Director David Squires (the County's Finance Director for more than two decades), who announced his retirement a year ago. Mr. Squires will remain onboard to assist in the transition process as long as is needed.

James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee (Chair of Finance Director search), 387-4058.

Design Approval Authorized for Pine Tree Road Project

The Legislature, by a vote of 11-2 (Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Pam Mackesey voted no) authorized execution of documents granting conceptual design approval for the Pine Tree Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths project, in the Town of Ithaca, and to proceed toward final design. The action also approves acquisition of right-of-way from Cornell. Through the project, about 1,425 feet of an eight foot-wide, paved path will be built on the west side of Pine Tree Road, including a 400-foot portion, supported by a retaining wall at an ADA-compliant slope, with the trail bridge over the road replaced to improve road user safety. Construction is planned to begin this fall and extend through the summer of 2014. More than \$1.4 million to support the project is included in the County's Capital Budget, with federal and state funding expected to support nearly \$1.2 million (more than 80%) of the cost. Local share, split between the County and Town of Ithaca, is projected at \$70,000 (4.8%), with Cornell University contributing \$200,000 (13.6%). County Administrator Joe Mareane praised the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for effectively incorporating input from area residents and

for providing clear policy guidance in an effective process. Legislator Dooley Kiefer said she could not vote in favor since she said the bulk of the expenditure will go to change the overpass, which she does not believe necessary, and since she would have preferred a design that would run the trail along the road's east side. *Contact: Peter Stein, Chair, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee, 266-7579; Legislator Carol Chock, 273-9007; County Highway Director Jeffrey Smith, 274-0300.*

Among other business, the Legislature

Endorsed State legislation in the Senate and Assembly extending existing sales tax authority for Tompkins County—the additional 1% tax first enacted in 1992 and extended every two years thereafter—once the current authorization expires as of November 30, 2013.

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