



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Highlights of the **April 7, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

#### **Legislature Supports Downtown Community Outreach Worker Program**

The Legislature confirmed the County's financial support for a joint program to provide a Community Outreach Worker for the Ithaca downtown area. By unanimous vote (Legislator Martha Robertson and Nate Shinagawa excused), the Legislature appropriated \$20,000 for that purpose from the Contingent Fund, set aside last fall as part of the County's 2015 budget process, as part of a partnership involving the City of Ithaca, the Downtown Ithaca Alliance (DIA), and Family and Children's Service.

The Community Outreach Worker Program, the result of months of thoughtful study by a joint working group, is recommended to address the needs, concerns, and wishes of the many stakeholders in the downtown area, to effectively provide and promote continually positive and inclusive experiences for those living, working, and visiting Ithaca's downtown area, and to promote a welcoming, inclusive, accessible, and tolerant downtown atmosphere enjoyable to everyone. The program target area is the State Street/MLK corridor extending to Meadow Street, and including the Ithaca Commons and Cayuga Street from the Library through DeWitt Park.

The City of Ithaca has allocated \$20,000 and the DIA \$10,000 toward the joint initiative. Family and Children's Service has committed to serve as the employer of the Community Outreach Worker. County funds released from the Contingent Fund are recommended to be allocated to County Administration, instead of to the Library budget, as initially had been proposed. Most of the discussion about the program concerned this change – Legislator Jim Dennis unsuccessfully proposed an amendment that would have released the funding to the Library budget, as first proposed, to pass through to Family and Children's Service, but that proposed change was supported only by Mr. Dennis and Chair Mike Lane.

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

#### **Bargaining Agreement with Blue Collar Employees Approved**

The Legislature, without dissent, approved a three-year Tentative Bargaining Agreement between the County and the Civil Service Employees Association Local 1000, Blue Collar Unit, which covers the County's Blue Collar employees. The new three-year contract, which runs from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2017, in part will provide annual salary increases of 2.25% for each of the three years. The contract, which was ratified by union membership March 30, represents the first contract agreement reached between the County and its employee unions.

Budget Chair Jim Dennis, who served on the County's negotiating team praised the union's team for their work at the bargaining table, and characterized the agreement as beneficial for both the union and the County.

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

#### **Public Hearings Scheduled on Two Proposed Laws**

The Legislature scheduled public hearings on two proposed Local Laws, to take place at its next meeting April 21. One proposed law under provisions of State law would permit the sale of sparkling devices in restricted periods during the year. That measure passed 11-1, Legislator Will Burbank voting no, saying that while the devices are safe enough, they are not harmless, and can cause the risk of fire and injury, especially to children.

The other proposed law would ban the sale, application, and disposal of waste associated with oil and natural gas exploration, extraction, and storage activities. That measure was approved without dissent among those present. (Legislators Martha Robertson and Nate Shinagawa were excused.)

The hearings will begin at 5:30 p.m. April 21 at County Legislature Chambers, located in the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street (second floor), Ithaca.

*Contact: Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582; Dooley Kiefer, Chair, Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee, 257-7453.*

### **Legislature Accepts 2015 Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy**

The Legislature voted to accept and pledge to participate in strategies that will lead to fulfillment of the 2015 Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy, prepared on behalf of the County in a two-year process by Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD). The strategy represents an update of Economic Development Strategies adopted by the Legislature in 1999 and 2006, and carries forward to guide local economic development over the next five years.

Martha Armstrong, Vice President and Director of Economic Development Planning for TCAD, provided a detailed overview, including the process by which the strategy was developed and its key points – including vision, values, goals, and strategies. The economic development strategy, she noted, represents a partnership among local governments, community institutions, and the private sector to increase quality job opportunities for local people; strengthen the tax base; and improve quality of life. Its high-level goals include strategic investment into community infrastructure and district development to attract private investment; developing a labor market where aspirations and qualifications of the workforce are aligned with employment opportunities; and strengthening, expanding, and diversifying key sectors to foster job creation.

View the full presentation at [www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/EDStrategyPresentations2015.pdf](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/EDStrategyPresentations2015.pdf).

The approval vote was 11-1, with Legislator Carol Chock voting no. (Legislators Martha Robertson and Nate Shinagawa were excused.) While she expressed appreciation for the work that produced the strategy, Chock suggested that the resulting strategy was too traditional, may not be fully consistent with County goals (as opposed to TCAD's) and something "bolder" may be needed. Others voiced praise for the County's economic development efforts through TCAD, Legislator Mike Sigler calling Tompkins County "one of the few bright spots of the state" and credited the County's economic development team for a lot of that.

*Contact: Will Burbank, Vice Chair, Economic Development Committee, 272-7555.*

Among other business

- To comply with changes in Federal law, the Legislature abolished the County Workforce Investment Board (established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998), and created the County Workforce Development Board (established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014). The Legislature also endorsed continued designation of Tompkins County as a single county Workforce Development Area by New York State under the new legislation.
- Marking the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 which sought to eliminate discrimination in housing opportunities and to affirmatively further housing choices for all Americans, Chair Mike Lane proclaimed April as "Fair Housing Month in Tompkins County," encouraging all agencies, institutions and individuals, public and private, to take action to end unlawful housing discrimination.
- Legislators heard from eight residents—many of them from Danby—expressing serious, ongoing concern about the activities of law enforcement in response to the two-and-a-half-day barricading incident on Hornbrook Road in Danby, in which David Cady took his own life, with many, including Mr. Cady's widow, calling for the Legislature to initiate an investigation.

- The Legislature endorsed and urged passage of proposed State legislation to extend authorization to enact an additional 1% sales tax, first enacted in 1992 and continuing that authority through November 2017. The 1% tax represents \$10 million in revenue for the County.

**- END -**