



Inclusion Through Diversity

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THREE PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **October 6, 2015** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Receives Recommendations for Jail Reentry Program

The Reentry Subcommittee charged with developing recommendations regarding a Reentry Program to most effectively transition jail inmates out of the Tompkins County Jail and back into the community tonight presented its Report and Recommendation to the Tompkins County Legislature. The Report is the product of eight months of work by a broad-based 14-member panel formed by the County's Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration Board (CJATI) in response to recommendations that arose from deliberations of the Jail Alternatives Task during 2013 and 2014. Presenting tonight were Suzi Cook, Chair of CJATI; and Probation Director Patricia Buechel and Deborah Dietrich, Director of OAR, Co-Chairs of the Reentry Subcommittee.

Director Buechel noted that a limited pilot reentry project established in 2008 has served 143 individuals (only about 14% of eligible inmates) but has achieved some success, with more than 64% having not returned to Tompkins County Jail, which she said holds promise for a fully developed, coordinated program. Among the barriers to successful reentry identified in the report are little coordination of existing community services, a lack of stable, safe housing arrangements, employment and education issues, limited transportation resources, and a shortage of in-jail programming space.

Stressing that the Report is only the first step in developing what it sees as a three-year process, the Subcommittee recommends the hiring of two full-time Reentry Coordinator/Discharge Planner positions, who would both conduct preliminary assessments and discharge plans for all inmates, and work outside the jail with community stakeholders to develop the other recommended support programs. It's recommended that all inmates receive some degree of reentry service, based on individual situation and need. Among other initiatives recommended: development of transitional, supportive housing; pursuing a possible increase in the Safety Net Housing allowance; improving transportation and employment resources; and forging mentorship and emotional support programs for those released.

The full Reentry Subcommittee Report is posted on the County website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/ctyadmin/RES%20FINAL%20Report%20copy.pdf>

Among those thanking the subcommittee its work was Legislator Martha Robertson who said the report is "our response to the community," with the need clearly documented. She indicated she will advance a proposal to set aside contingent funding which could support program development, as the effort moves forward.

Contact: Suzi Cook, Chair, Tompkins County Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration Board, scook@tompkins-co.org.

Legislature Allocates Contingent Funds for Sheriff's Personnel and Boardout Costs

The Legislature approved a request from the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office to appropriate more than \$360,000 from the Contingent Fund to cover anticipated shortfalls in the 2015 budget related to overtime expense in the Road Patrol and Corrections Divisions, and inmate boardout costs. The vote was 10-2, with Legislators Dooley Kiefer and Carol Chock voting no. The allocation addresses significant projected deficits in 2015 and what will be needed to balance those accounts over the rest of the year, expenses which in past years

had been balanced by Finance at year's end. As well as coverage for projected overtime expense in Road Patrol and Corrections Divisions, the appropriation allocates \$78,000 to support inmate boardout expense.

County Administrator Joe Mareane noted that the current year budget anticipated boardout savings from the seven additional beds created by the jail renovation project, extra capacity that had been expected at mid-year, but is not yet available. Legislator Kiefer indicated she would not vote in support, because of its effect on this year's Contingent Fund balance. Legislator Chock said she had thought of proposing that only part of the request be supported now. Administrator Mareane reported his analysis of spending to date shows the projections are very close to the mark. Undersheriff Brian Robison said the approach boils down to realistic budgeting and supports this approach going forward.

Contact: James Dennis, Acting Chair, Public Safety Committee, 592-3206

State Urged to Increase Local Share of DMV Revenue

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, urged the New York State Senate and Assembly to approve proposed State legislation that would increase the share of Department of Motor Vehicles revenue that can be retained to support county government. Currently, under law, the County can retain only 12.7% of revenue from Motor Vehicles transactions that comes through the County-operated DMV office, a share that has not been increased for more than 15 years. The proposed legislation would increase the percentage that could be retained from over-the-counter transactions to 25%. County Clerk Maureen Reynolds, who has characterized increasing the local share of DMV revenue as meaningful mandate relief, estimates that the change would generate an additional \$550-610,000 in general revenue to support the operations of Tompkins County government, with no increased costs or fees for local residents or taxpayers.

Contact: Tompkins County Clerk Maureen Reynolds, 274-5442; Dan Klein, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 272-7582

Public Hearing on the 2016 Budget Scheduled November 10

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, set Tuesday, November 10 as the date for the Public Hearing on the 2016 Tompkins County Budget and the 2016-2020 Capital Program. The hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m. at County Legislature Chambers, located on the second floor of the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The Legislature's Community Budget Forum, the annual public information meeting on the County Administrator's Recommended Budget, will be held Wednesday, October 7, 7:00 p.m., at Legislature Chambers.

Contact: James Dennis, Chair, Budget, Capital and Personnel Committee, 592-3206

Among other business:

The Legislature adopted the 2015 Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Several legislators praised those involved for the hard work and effort in putting the plan together. Legislature Chair Mike Lane said, "You have the thanks of all of Tompkins County for all the work that was done on this great project." Review the plan at, posted on the Planning Department website at http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/planning/Rural%20Resources/documents/Final_Tompkins_Ag_%26_Farmland_Protection_Plan%2009-15.pdf.

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported on results of the County's latest sale of Bond Anticipation Notes (BANs) September 30. The County sold \$3,240,000 in one-year Bond Anticipation Notes at a net interest rate of 0.5730% to TD Securities (USA) LLC, issued to continue the financing of the Ellis Hollow Phase II Road Reconstruction project. In the County's last BAN issue in July, the interest rate was 0.7619%.

The Legislature approved re-appropriation of \$153,531 in unspent funds from the 2014 and prior years (Certified Rollover) by County departments for expenditure in 2015.

The Legislature accepted a \$10,000 donation from the Triad Foundation to the Sheriff's Office to purchase uniforms for the voluntary Honor Guard Unit; and a nearly \$30,000 State grant to the Office for the Aging to support the Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, extending services to Chemung and Schuyler Counties. It also approved a resolution necessary to access more than \$41,000 in State funds for the Office for

the Aging to support the State's Direct Care Worker Program through the end of March, 2015, more than \$30,000 of that allocation to be used this year.

The Legislature reappointed Republican Election Commissioner Elizabeth Cree for a new two-year term, through the end of 2017.

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