



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **December 18, 2018** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Bonding Authorized for Airport Improvements

Following a public hearing, the Legislature authorized bonding, as needed, to support the capital improvement project at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. Legislators, without dissent, approved the County's issuance of up to \$7.5 million in Airport Bond Anticipation Notes, funded through Airport passenger facility charges. The more than \$24 million project, recipient of a \$14.4 million New York State upstate Airport Revitalization Grant, will expand the terminal facility and support such associated improvements as installation of a geothermal heating and cooling system and solar panels on Airport property, as well as construction of a federal customs facility.

At the public hearing, six residents spoke, raising their concerns about the project and especially the customs facility, expressing fear that it might actually be a local customs and border protection facility. County Administrator Jason Molino, however, relaying information from Airport Director Mike Hall, stressed that there is no relationship between Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the new facility, and that the new Inspection Station, located on the secure side of the Airport, will simply allow international guests and visitors to arrive directly in Tompkins County, and offers the prospect of pre-cleared commercial air service, where the agent would be checking the manifest, not inspecting the passengers and cargo. As a "user fee" operation, the Airport has to pay for the agent, but can recoup expenses by charging a fee for service, and the agent, while working for Customs Border Patrol (CBP), will be responsive to the airport, and the airport will be able to track CBP activity.

Contact: Michael Lane, Chair, Transportation Committee, 844-8440; Airport Director Mike Hall, 279-2662.

Legislature Increases Contracts with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services to Continue Program Income Fund-Supported Housing Programs

The Legislature, by unanimous vote, took steps necessary to continue the County's long-standing homeownership and housing rehabilitation programs through use of Program Income funds, and to increase contracts with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services to continue those programs. The County has Program Income funds available from past Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awards from New York State for homeownership assistance loans which must be re-spent for like purposes as the original grants; however, a policy change by New York State now requires that any such funds that communities are not able to commit for eligible purposes by March 31, 2019 must be returned to New York State.

The action authorizes the granting of any remaining New York State CDBG Program Income funds up to \$500,000 to Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services to continue the Homeownership and Housing Rehabilitation Programs, as the agency has successfully administered in the past, and also authorizes County Administration to amend existing contracts with INHS, as may be needed.

In a separate, related action, the Legislature, also by unanimous vote, authorized the County to contract with the Bonadio Group to provide loan valuation services related to the County's CDBG loan portfolio, approving a \$6,000 budget transfer to support cost of those services. The measure notes that there is potential to sell the CDBG loan portfolio and to use the proceeds of the sale for CDBG-eligible projects, provided that the projects

are approved by the State and funds committed by March 31, 2019. The objective third-party valuation will establish a fair market value related to the portfolio's sale, establishing the amount of funding available to commit to eligible projects.

Contact: Megan McDonald, Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 274-5560; Legislature Chair Martha Robertson, Chair of the Housing Committee, 274-5434 or 592-3119.

Among other business,

County Administrator Jason Molino briefed Legislators about a new Public Works Apprenticeship program, jointly sponsored by Tompkins County, the Town of Ithaca, and the City of Ithaca which will provide three individuals to have hands-on training as seasonal employees over a nine-month period within three public works environments. Each employee will rotate among the three municipalities, serving a three-month period in each to obtain a well-rounded public works experience, and would have the opportunity to get training and earn certifications to benefit them in future employment.

The Legislature approved a resolution formally affirming that the Legislature will not take action at this time to opt out of the New York State law that allows ride-hailing services, such as Uber and Lyft, to operate within Tompkins County. Beginning last year, the Legislature's Transportation Committee took comment and examined the question of whether or not to permit ride-hailing services to operate within the county, and this year once again took a look at how the services were operating in the county. The measure notes that taxi operators continue to provide necessary services within the county for all kinds of passengers, while the ride-hailing services seem to primarily service student riders on weekends.

The Legislature urged the New York State Legislature to adopt a late application procedure for the Agricultural Land Exemption for good cause, to add a provision to State Agriculture and Markets Law which would authorize the assessor to extend the filing deadline of a renewal application for an agricultural assessment after the taxable status date when good cause is shown.

The Legislature affirmed the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council's decision to increase Director Fernando de Aragon's salary by two percent, to \$91,375, effective January 1, 2019, the increase consistent with that provided County Management personnel.

Finance Director Rick Snyder reported on October County sales tax receipts. Preliminary, non-reconciled figures show returns for October up 6.31% compared to year-ago figures and year-to-date numbers running 6.91% ahead of 2017.

Legislators heard a history on the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium, presented by Executive Director Don Barber. The Consortium, initiated through the Tompkins County Council of Governments, through study begun more than a decade ago, and in force since 2010, has now grown to 39 municipal members from four counties, three times the number that formed the Consortium in 2010.

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