



Inclusion Through Diversity

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TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **January 7, 2020** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Does Not Reach Consensus on Chair or Vice Chair for 2020

The Tompkins County Legislature, in its annual reorganization meeting Tuesday night, attempted to elect its Chair and Vice Chair for 2020, but in the end, adjourned the meeting without reaching a decision. The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are filled each year by majority vote of members of the Legislature.

The first scheduled meeting of the year opened with the election of Legislator Mike Sigler (R) to serve as Temporary Chair. Legislators Mike Lane (D) of Dryden and Anna Kelles (D) of Ithaca were both nominated to serve as Chair of the Legislature for this year.

In moving the nomination of Mike Lane, Legislator Dan Klein (D) said as a past Chair, Lane had a direct hand in a number of County accomplishments, “while never letting politics get in the way.” Legislator Henry Granison (D) seconded the nomination, adding that Lane was found to say when he was Chair that he was “one among equals” on the Legislature.

Making the nomination for Anna Kelles was Legislator Martha Robertson (D), who praised Lane’s tenure as Chair, but said “that was a different time with a different Legislature.” Robertson took note of Kelles’ engagement at the State level with the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), her strong environmental background and her commitment to local issues of equity and diversity. Legislator Glenn Morey (R) seconded Kelles’ nomination.

Two rounds of voting ended in a 7-7 deadlock. Voting in support of Legislator Lane were Legislators Shawna Black, Amanda Champion, Deborah Dawson, Henry Granison, Dan Klein, Anne Koreman and Mike Lane. Legislator Kelles received votes from Legislators Rich John, Leslyn McBean-Claiborne, Dave McKenna, Glenn Morey, Martha Robertson, Mike Sigler and Anna Kelles.

Legislators deferred the vote on the Chair to the end of the meeting, leading to a discussion over whether the vote of the Vice Chair should also be deferred. County Attorney Jonathan Wood said when a similar situation occurred in 2013, the leadership of the Legislature wasn’t decided until the second meeting of the year, adding the vote of the Chair could impact the vote of the Vice Chair.

Returning to the matter at the end of the meeting, two more votes for Chair resulted in the same 7-7 deadlock as earlier. A motion to move ahead with the vote of the Vice Chair did not pass, and the meeting was adjourned with Legislator Sigler remaining Temporary Chair until the next meeting.

Contact: Mike Sigler, Temporary Chair of the Legislature, 339-7978; Jason Molino, County Administrator, 274-5551

Legislature Votes to Limit Purchases of Single-Use Plastic and Expanded Polystyrene Foam Items in County Government

Legislators approved unanimously a resolution to limit the purchase of Single-use Plastic and Expanded Polystyrene Foam items in Tompkins County Government. These items include dishes, utensils, straws, cups and water bottles, etc. Legislator Deborah Dawson says it's important for County government to reduce purchasing these items in the first place, and lead by example in its efforts toward becoming more sustainable. County Administration will develop an environmental procurement policy to implement the resolution no later than April 30th.

Barbara Eckstrom, the County Director of Recycling and Materials Management, told the Legislature product stewardship – or holding manufacturers responsible for their products' end of life - will continue to be a focus at the state level.

Contact: Deborah Dawson, Chair, Planning, Energy and Environmental Quality Committee, 351-8689.

Among other business:

County Finance Director Rick Snyder presented the November Sales Tax Report, which shows the County's portion of sales tax distributions for November was up 6.4% compared to a year earlier. As of the end of November, year-do-date sales tax distributions were up by more than 4% from 2018.

County Administrator Jason Molino briefed Legislators on recent discussions with the City of Ithaca and the Downtown Ithaca Alliance over a conference center project downtown. The project was awarded \$5 million in mid-December as part of the latest round of state economic development grants. Although describing it as a 'loose and broad' project right now without a lot of specifics, Molino says it's likely some decisions will be made as soon as February. One option to help fund a conference would be to have the County ask the state to increase the countywide room occupancy tax by 1%, to 6%. This would require County Legislature approval.

The Legislature voted 13 to 1 (Legislator Glenn Morey voting no) to ask the State legislature to extend the additional one percent sales tax rate in Tompkins County in addition to the three percent authorization all New York State Counties possess by law. The authorization expires November 30, 2020 and must be extended by the State legislature every two years.

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