

**Tompkins County Legislator  
Michael Sigler  
November 16, 2022**

Hello and thanks for having me. Again, I want to thank Dominick Recckio who's county reports I draw liberally from.

I'm happy to say we approved a budget for 2023. A few of the highlights, the tax rate will going down 45 cents per thousand. We were able to do that by cutting the rate, but also by drawing from what many of us consider an oversized fund balance. Keep in mind that even with that rate decrease, some will see an increase in taxes. If you are like me, you saw an increase in assessment. That looked like an about 10 percent average increase from \$205k to \$225k for the median home. We did keep the taxpayer in mind as we did last year and I want to thank Dan Klein for pushing for draw from fund balance to ameliorate any tax increase. As you may know, I pushed for a cut of the 4% county tax on heat. It failed, but I'll be putting forward a resolution to do that again for 2024, but more slowing so that it can be absorbed by the county.

We are discussing ways to help the homeless in Tompkins. It's a growing problem. When temperatures drop to 32 with windchill, the county is required to house the homeless. We had a presentation from DSS on his law. My question like always, what is an immediate actionable item we can do to help remedy the problem. DSS' answer is more Single Room Occupancy slots. That's where I push the county.

A public hearing was held at our November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting regarding the proposed County Charter changes needed to finalize the merger of the Tompkins County Public Health and Mental Health Departments. It is anticipated that the newly merged entity will be called "Tompkins County Whole Health." The resolution amending the Charter passed unanimously, 13-0.

A resolution was approved 8-4 (Legislators Sigler (R-Lansing), Mezey (D-Dryden), Shurtleff (R-Groton), and Brooks (D-Ithaca) in opposition) to establish a task force that will review the existing relationship between the County and Ithaca Area Economic Development (IAED). The need for a task force is called out in the memorandum of understanding between the parties. The task force would review the County's interest and provision of financial support, how best to fund the organization, and necessary operational changes. The results of the task force are expected no later than March 2023.

In opposition to the task force structure, I argued that there should have been a Republican Legislator on the group, even while Democrats are in the majority, detailing his sales experience with local businesses and the business leadership experience of other Republican Legislators Randy Brown (Newfield) and Lee Shurtleff (Groton). Sigler continued, "I don't know that it's great either to have everybody voting on this as a County employee. It's great that they're included on it, I don't know why we wouldn't extend voting positions (to other members who are not County employees,)" asking for an amendment that would extend voting positions to the non-employees – it failed 6-6 (Legislators Sigler, Brown, Shurtleff, Mezey (D-Dryden), Brooks (D-Ithaca), and John (D-Ithaca) in favor), with explanations from Legislators Dan Klein (D-Danby) and Deborah Dawson (D-Lansing) that this task force is to review the County's position and interests as it pertains to IAED and economic development, and therefore County personnel were listed as voting members.

Elections were last week as you know. I want to welcome Lea Webb as our new Senator. I'll personally miss Pam Helming who never forgot Lansing even though we were the only town in Tompkins in her district. She was a terrific representative. I also want to thank Rich David for running. He is beloved by his former constituents in Binghamton and carried Broome overwhelmingly, but Tompkins chose Lea Webb. I hope we'll see her soon. I also want to welcome Marc Molinaro our new Congressman, and congratulate Anna Kelles on her reelection.