

**Tompkins County Legislator
Michael Sigler
October 2025**

Hello and thank you for having me in again. I want to thank Monika Salvage, the County's Communications Director whose reports I draw liberally from.

We voted to move the County's proposed budget to public hearing. The public hearing will be October 28th at 5:30 at the Tompkins County Legislature Chambers. We will vote on the Tentative Budget on October 21st.

The 2026 Tentative Budget and 2026-2030 Capital Program has a total tax levy amount of \$56,713,511, resulting in an approximate tax-levy increase of 3.31 percent and a county-wide average tax-rate of \$4.86 per thousand, an increase of 1.4 percent, because the value of a median-priced home remained the same as 2024, \$300,000, the Tentative Budget as amended results in an increased tax payment of \$20.08 on a median-priced home, or a County tax payment of approximately \$1,458.07.

I'm waiting to hear from the public before deciding how to vote on this budget. The increase is not large, but it is an increase and to get to that number we're drawing more than two million dollars out of fund balance. That would be fine if we commit to addressing some of the structural funding problems we have in the 2027 budget and do it early like the airport. This budget adds 11 people to our payroll. While we need some of these additions like in the information technology department and in some security, although I think we are adding more than necessary, we didn't cut from the administrator's budget in the amount needed to offset those new expenses. Next year we will have the added expense of the Center of Government debt service and I believe we will have to take over the airport debt.

We had our first Code Blue shelter activation last week. When temperatures fall below 32 degrees F with wind chill for 2 or more consecutive hours Code Blue is activated. Sheltering was last week and will be provided and can be accessed until the new facility is open during business hours (M-F 8 am-4:30 pm) at DSS at 320 W MLK/State Street, or you can call DSS Emergency Housing Services at (607) 274-5030. Our Code Blue shelter on Cherry Street where our permanent shelter is on track to open in mid-November.

In the most debated topic at our last meeting, the County voted to accept the grant for FLOCK cameras by the sheriff's department. This is a joint effort between the Sheriff's Department and City of Ithaca Police. The FLOCK system collects license plates with cameras and feeds them into a system where if police are looking for a certain plate, it will alert police. This is how a recent senior driver was found in Lansing. Many worry about the surveillance aspect of the camera and I did ask the Sheriff about that two years ago when we first accepted the grant. The legislature is confident in our Sheriff and the City of Ithaca Police Chief that the system will be used appropriately. Legislator Travis Brooks says he's seen a noticeable decline in the availability of guns in our community. Despite the long debate the measure passed 10 to 4.

The Tompkins County Sheriff's Office has received reports of threatening emails sent to several local schools within the County. These messages also contain threats directed toward County employees, elected officials, and local financial institutions. I was on that list along with some specific County employees and the Assemblywoman and State Senator.

The Sheriff's Office is actively investigating these threats in coordination with local law enforcement partners and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). At this time, similar threats have been reported in multiple counties across New York State, and law enforcement agencies are working together to identify the source.