

TOMPKINS COUNTY
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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MEMBERSHIP

June 17, 2015 (two pages)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**“The Rest of the Story” on Shared Services in Tompkins County:
Council of Governments Presents Report to the Community**

This year, New York State required local governments and schools to present a plan to show how they will save over 1% of their tax levies through mergers, consolidations, shared services, and efficiencies that have been initiated since 2012. Governments within Tompkins County submitted a consolidated plan showing savings of \$1.7 million, or nearly 2% of their combined tax levies, from health benefit options made available through the inter-municipal health benefits consortium.

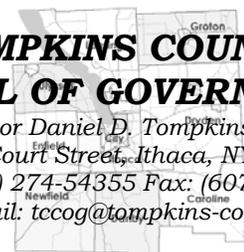
The Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) today released a report to the community that provides “the rest of the story” by documenting a long history innovative shared services that began well before the State’s recent push for consolidation of services, and is saving local property taxpayers an estimated \$3.8 million per year. The report, commissioned by TCCOG’s Shared Services Committee and undertaken by a team of Cornell University graduate students, looked at just eight major shared service and consolidation initiatives that have been undertaken in Tompkins County. The report found that even without considering large avoided capital costs, savings will approach \$3.8 million next year, and will continue to grow over time.

Specific savings from each of the initiatives analyzed in the report are as follows:

- Inter-municipal Health Insurance Consortium \$1,714,744
- Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) \$ 565,735
- Consolidated Property Tax Assessment \$ 475,203
- Digital Records Management \$ 441,699
- Ithaca Area and Cayuga Heights Wastewater Treatment Facilities \$ 314,943
- Consolidated Emergency Dispatch (911) \$ 268,639
- Bolton Point Water System \$ 41,521

In addition, a survey undertaken by TCCOG’s Shared Services Committee found that local governments within Tompkins County are routinely engaged in at least 65 shared services ventures that are as small as sharing a bucket truck to as large as the fire protection arrangement between the City and the Town of Ithaca. The Committee also found that local governments within the County are already engaged in most of the shared services included on “good idea” lists circulated by the State.

“Efficient, responsive government is at the core of our political culture in Tompkins County,” said Tompkins Legislature Chair Michael Lane. “While Albany tries to paint a picture of too many governments doing many things poorly, local governments within Tompkins County have a history of coming together, looking beyond boundaries, and finding the most efficient ways to serve our residents and businesses. Our centralized assessment operation is still the only one in New York State, TCAT is a unique partnership of two governments and a University, our world class 911 center is one of the few truly consolidated dispatch operations in the State, and the health



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insurance consortium is cited as a model for others to follow. The report we are releasing today shows that the result of these and other pioneering collaborations is not just better service, but a tremendous on-going savings to taxpayers.”

Lane thanked the graduate students at Cornell’s Johnson Graduate School of Management and the Cornell Institute of Public Affairs for their work in objectively analyzing the savings that have come from a generation of shared service initiatives.

“The fact that elected leaders of every local government in Tompkins County come together monthly as a Council of Governments is itself a best practice, and an assurance that we are always on the lookout for ways to collaborate to save money,” said J.R. Clairborne, 2nd Ward Alderman on the Ithaca City Council and co-chair of TCCOG. “Today’s report shows that decades of putting the interests of taxpayers ahead of jurisdictional turf has produced at least \$3.8 million in annual savings for our taxpayers. What the report doesn’t show is that those shared successes have built relationships and confidence between governments large and small that form the foundation for even more change in the future.”

Don Barber is the Supervisor of the Town of Caroline and also the Executive Director of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium. “Local governments in Tompkins County have worked together for the good of the taxpayer long before Albany told us we had to,” said Barber. The health insurance consortium alone is saving town, village, city and county taxpayers \$1.7 million a year. Those pioneering ventures weren’t forced on us. They happened because local governments in this County are relentless in looking for ways to save money, and have demonstrated the courage to change.”

“The benefits of these consolidations and shared services aren’t restricted to the larger governments,” said Kate Supron, Mayor of the Village of Cayuga Heights and Chair of TCCOG’s shared services committee. “Even the smallest villages have been active participants in a multitude of shared service initiatives, and have shared in their savings. There are several major water and sewer projects that would have been prohibitively expensive if we hadn’t found ways to collaborate. Beyond the high-profile initiatives, the abundance of everyday shared service arrangements makes it clear that collaboration isn’t the exception in Tompkins County, it is the rule.”

The Report to the Community is available for review on the Tompkins County website at www.tompkinscountyny.gov (See “Popular Links” section).

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