

**Press Conference/Special Meeting**  
**Council of Governments**  
February 2, 2009 – 4 p.m.  
Beverly Livesay Conference Room, Human Services Building

Present: (see attached attendance sheet)

The special TCCOG meeting followed a press conference held by Congressman Maurice Hinchey at 2:45 p.m. concerning the Federal Stimulus package

**Press Conference**

Mr. Hinchey thanked Tompkins County for providing him the opportunity to address officials about the Economic Development and Investment Bill (“Stimulus Bill”) that passed the House of Representatives last Wednesday and is now in the Senate. The bill at the present time is for \$819 billion, although a number of amendments have been adopted. He said this is legislation that will make a “significant positive difference” in the nation’s economy over the next 18 months. But he added that it is imperative that municipal leaders communicate with their elected representatives to help ensure that the federal funding is allocated for local stimulus projects.

Mr. Hinchey advised that much of the money will be allocated directly to states, with state spending based on what it sees as its needs, and another large portion awarded to localities through existing federal agency funding streams. Since federal stimulus funding could win final approval as early as mid-February with funds beginning to flow by March, the Congressman said local governments need to alert their representatives quickly about recommended stimulus projects in order to be in a competitive position to access the funding. Congress, he stated, has not specified how the money is to be spent, so continual monitoring by state and federal legislators will be essential. Infrastructure, education, investment in new technology (such as alternative energy) are some of the interest areas included, as well as tax cuts for middle-income Americans.

**Questions:**

Ms. Coles asked if one-third of the \$819 billion is going to be in the form of tax cuts. Mr. Hinchey responded yes, and said most of the tax cuts are going to have a positive quick effect on the economy and will have a focus on a middle income people. Ms. Coles expressed concern that tax cuts don’t create jobs. Mr. Hinchey said this is true, but these cuts will result in more money being spent. The economic development items contained in the bill focus on new technology, new industry and new jobs, research and development; upgrading of existing corporations, and incentives for the creation of new companies.

Mr. Hinchey said with regard to Tompkins County, \$867,000 of the \$2.7 million goes to construction; but the rest goes to increase in title IA, and IDEA increase. One of the things they are doing is trying to focus attention on making education open for young children. There is also going to be more funding for higher education and reducing the cost of getting a higher education. They are trying to drive down the debt of people who get a higher education and make it significantly less expensive for people to go to college.

Mr. Dietrich referred to Mr. Hinchey’s earlier comments that “the wealth is in the top five percent of the population”, and said he is concerned that communication may be locked in the top five percent also. He said the information from small entities who do not participate in the process on a regular basis may be left out and asked Mr. Hinchey to make sure information is dispersed to everyone. Mr. Dietrich then asked how the monies would be dispersed. Mr. Hinchey said a large portion would go to the States

and a decision would be made by the State as to what its greatest needs are. It will be very important for State representatives to be informed about the perception of what the needs are here in Tompkins County.

Ms. Robertson asked how money will come to localities. Mr. Hinchey said there will be a mechanism by the various federal agencies that will have responsibility for various funding; however, additional work is needed on this area.

Ms. Peterson stressed the importance of communication amongst municipalities when trying to access this funding in order to avoid working against each other.

A question was raised as to why the rail industry was not allocated more money in this bill. Mr. Hinchey said there support for additional funding, there was also some political support for eliminating funding for Amtrak. Major corporations, such as oil companies and car manufacturers opposed more funding for the rail industry.

Ms. Robertson spoke of the home-ownership crisis and asked if that was addressed. Mr. Hinchey said the TARP bill attempts to deal with that and he is optimistic things will change to improve the home-ownership crisis.

Mr. Mareane said it seems Congress is going to allocate large amounts of money to states and states will be allocating those funds. He asked if Congress will dictate anything that will make the distribution across the state equitable and based on need. Mr. Hinchey the bill contains no earmarks so there are no stipulations as to how the money is going to be spent.

Ms. Peterson said the City is looking for more funding for its water systems. Mr. Hinchey said clean water and clean sewer treatment facilities are very important. While there is additional funding, Mr. Hinchey does not believe it will be enough to meet existing needs.

Ms. Chock asked if there are things that are being lost by the wayside, such as support for the arts and "net neutrality" (how the intranet gets used). Mr. Hinchey said the piece of the legislation that deals with the arts has been taken out of the bill; however, it does address the internet. There are other things that are starting to be a part of the national dialogue that the federal government would like to hear about, such as mass transportation, new and advanced technologies, and energy production.

Ms. Coles asked how this stimulus package would address or impact poverty. Mr. Hinchey said it will impact poverty by strengthening Medicaid, creating more jobs, addressing the quality of poor housing and energy efficiency, and there are food stamp provisions.

Mr. Engman spoke of the need to emphasize sidewalks, stating trails are very important to localities. This is labor-type work that creates opportunities for individuals to ride bicycles to jobs. He noted the great need manual labor jobs for people.

Mr. Wilbur asked if the bill contains any opportunities for police or fire stations. Mr. Hinchey said there are specific funding allowances for those types of public buildings. There is also a long term provision that provides funding for volunteer and professional fire companies to upgrade materials they have.

Mr. Hinchey noted the funds he has been talking about today are those that apply to only the district he represents. Congressman Arcuri also represents a portion of Tompkins County and additional funding will be brought in for that area.

Mr. Hinchey concluded his comments and the question and answer session at 4 p.m.

**Special Meeting - Council of Governments**

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Mr. Mareane said at the last TCCOG meeting he offered that the County host this meeting for the purpose of sharing information about the Stimulus funding and to exchange information and ideas about what municipalities in the County should be doing to begin a discussion of ways to communicate and stay in touch with one another on the various focus areas. He stressed the importance of everyone being on the same platform of understanding and said this meeting is a first step in coordinating that effort.

At this time Mr. Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Public Works, reviewed County projects that meet the criteria of pending legislation and that are ready to go in the 90-day, 180-day and two-year time-frame established by Congress.

Some of the target areas are: Energy efficiency - public buildings, energy efficiency - housing, renewable energy, transportation infrastructure, resources for TCAT and Gadabout, Airport safety and infrastructure, job training, solid waste recycling, rural broadband, green fleet vehicles, higher education infrastructure, greening vehicle fleets, and alternative fuels.

Ms. Peterson said to date, a list of 28 projects have been generated by the City as ideas or possibilities. Mr. DeAragon said it will be important that once lists are developed that they are prioritized.

Mr. Engman said there needs to be a mechanism developed that would allow a town or village to let their needs be known.

Mr. Mareane offered using the County as a presentation vehicle to communicate to the State about what needs exist in Tompkins County and at every level of government within the County.

Mr. Lamb offered to attend the next TCCOG meeting to provide an update to the Council on where the legislation stands at that point.

It was agreed that the County would put together a presentation piece that would include a bundle of requests from every community within the County. Mr. Mareane stressed that in order to do this effectively it would need to be done quickly. Ms. Robertson asked municipalities to be very serious about what is ready to go because this is "use it or lose it" money.

*Ms. Pottorff was asked to send TCCOG members both the House and Senate bills.*

TCCOG members agreed that the challenge is to present a strong overall case for the funding without municipalities working against each other. With the State legislative delegation the current primary focus, County Administrator Joe Mareane offered the help of his office to develop a common presentation piece, communicating information about potential local stimulus projects ready to go in 90 days, 180 days and two years, as the legislation specifies. He reiterated Congressman Hinchey's message that time is of the essence. Mr. Barber urged municipalities to submit initial stimulus proposals to Paula Younger in County Administration by the end of this week, to be included in a coordinated package.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

**ATTACHMENT**

<b><u>February 5, 2009 TCCOG Attendance</u></b>	
Carolyn Peterson	City of Ithaca
Phillis DeSorno	City of Ithaca
Schelley Michell-Nunn	City of Ithaca
Steven Thayer	City of Ithaca
J.R. Clairborne	City of Ithaca Common Council
Brian Wilbur	City of Ithaca Fire Department
Ed Vallely	City of Ithaca Police
John Barber	City of Ithaca Police
George Ferrari	Community Foundation/TC
Dan Lamb	Congressman Hinchey's Office
Mary Beth Bunge	Hangar Theatre
Betty Falcao	Health Planning Council
Fred Bonn	Ithaca Convention and Visitors Bueau
Tim Ashmore	Ithaca Journal
Nels Bohn	Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency
Fernando deAragon	Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council
Sue A. Poelvoorde	New York State Parks
Ed Marx	Tompkins Count Planning Department
Nancy Zahler	Tompkins Count Planning Department Youth Services Department
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administration
Norma Jayne	Tompkins County Administration
Paula Younger	Tompkins County Administration
Heather Filiberto	Tompkins County Area Development
Patricia Buechel	Tompkins County Department of Probation and Community Justice
Patricia Carey	Tompkins County Dept. of Social Services
Brenda Grinnell-Crosby	Tompkins County Health Department
Dooley Kiefer	Tompkins County Legislature
Martha Robertson	Tompkins County Legislature
Michael Koplinka-Loehr	Tompkins County Legislature
Michelle Pottorff	Tompkins County Legislature Office
Leslyn McBean-Clairborne	Tompkins County Legislature/City of Ithaca
Robert Deluca	Tompkins County Mental Health
Marcia Lynch	Tompkins County Public Information
Peter Meskill	Tompkins County Sheriff
Jay Wrolstead	Tompkins Weekly
Don Barber	Town of Caroline
Laura Shawley	Town of Danby
Ric Dietrich	Town of Danby
Susan Beeners	Town of Danby
Dan Kwasnowski	Town of Dryden
Mary Ann Sumner	Town of Dryden
Bill Goodman	Town of Ithaca
Herb Engman	Town of Ithaca
Jonathan Kanter	Town of Ithaca
Bud Shattuck	Town of Lansing
Doug Austic	Town of Ulysses
Elizabeth Thomas	Town of Ulysses
Maurice Hinchey	US Congressman
Miles McCarty	Village of Freeville
Chuck Rankin	Village of Groton
Ken Thompson	Village of Groton
Larry Fresinski	Village of Lansing

