



Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Katherine Borgella, AICP
Interim Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

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TO: Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
From: Megan McDonald, Associate Planner
Date: November 28, 2017
Re: Allocation from the Contingent Fund for a Survey of Rental Housing Vacancy and Rents

Action Requested

Approval of a resolution to allocate \$28,250 from the Contingent Fund to pay for the Tompkins County rental housing vacancy and rent survey.

Background

The Legislature set aside \$30,000 from the Contingent Fund to support targeted Department of Planning and Sustainability projects to implement the Housing Strategy when it approved the County's 2017 budget. Earlier this year, \$1,750 of these funds were allocated and used to pay part of the cost of an infrastructure study in the Town of Dryden, leaving \$28,250 unallocated.

The Tompkins County Housing Strategy endorsed by the Legislature in July 2017 calls for the Department of Planning and Sustainability to undertake an annual rent and vacancy survey of rental housing in order to monitor changing conditions in our housing market as well as progress towards meeting housing needs. While some community members are worried that overbuilding of housing may occur, others express concern that disputes over vacancy rates may discourage needed development given that renters still struggle to find available units. There has also been disagreement among local landlords regarding the accuracy of vacancy rates from the Tompkins County Housing Needs Assessment and the American Community Survey, and conversations about the nuances of what vacancy information landlords share in various situations. This indicates the importance of developing a robust and replicable survey. An RFQ for consultant services to develop a methodology and conduct the first survey was issued in the fall of 2017, and the selection process is due to complete shortly.

Financial Impact

This request will draw the remaining \$28,250 from the County's Contingent Fund set aside in the County's 2017 budget to support implementation of the Housing Strategy.

Contact

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