



Tompkins County

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

**121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850**

**Katherine Borgella, AICP
Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability**

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TO: Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
From: Megan McDonald, Associate Planner
Date: December 21, 2017
Re: Amending Section 224 of the New York State County Law to Permit Counties to Appropriate Funds Towards the Development, Maintenance, or Management of Affordable Housing

Action Requested

Approval of a resolution urging the New York State Legislature to amend Section 224 New York State County Law to permit counties to appropriate funds towards the development, maintenance, or management of affordable housing.

Background

Initial research regarding potential next steps for implementation of the Tompkins County Housing Strategy brought to light a potentially critical impediment to County action. Section 224 of New York State County Law does not expressly permit counties to appropriate funds towards the development, maintenance, or management of affordable housing. Section 224 currently provides a list of 28 objects and purposes for which counties have the option to appropriate funds and enter into contracts in order to promote public benefit services. However, this list currently includes no mention of affordable housing.

The County's current efforts to address the persistent and significant affordable housing challenges impacting the community, such as the Community Housing Development Fund and its Homeownership and Home Rehabilitation programs, are all funded through Federal and State funds. The State funds Tompkins County uses for affordable housing efforts originate from Federal assistance passed to states, who then make awards to local governments. With federal tax reform already having negative repercussions on various programs and funding mechanisms critical to the development, maintenance, and management of affordable housing, Tompkins County and other counties throughout the state of New York may want to consider using local funds to support the development, maintenance, or management of affordable housing. This amendment would provide the option for counties in the state of New York to do so, should they so desire.

Housing is an essential human need, as well as an important component of health and safety for individuals and families. An inadequate supply of affordable housing compromises the health and safety of community members who may live in unsafe housing conditions and/or use precious resources that might pay for adequate food, medicine, and clothing in order to secure housing for themselves and their families. Although counties certainly cannot address affordable housing challenges alone, they currently lack the authority to use any local funds to assist in the development, maintenance, or management of affordable housing and are therefore largely powerless absent the award of Federal or New York State funds for these affordable housing efforts.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact to this action. Should the New York State Legislature amend the law to permit counties to appropriate funds towards the development, maintenance, or management of affordable housing, the Tompkins County Legislature would need to approve any resolution to appropriate funds for these purposes.

Enclosures

Resolution No. ___ Amending Section 224 of the New York State County Law to Permit Counties to Appropriate Funds Towards the Development, Maintenance, or Management of Affordable Housing
New York State County Law Section 224, accessed December 21, 2017 at
<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/lawssrch.cgi?NVLWO>:

Contact

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