

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting January 12, 2011

Voting Members Present (9): Eric Banford, Spring Buck, Clement Chow, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Steve Nicholson, David Slottje

Voting Members Excused (7): Sarah Adams, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Kenny Christianson, Jim McGarry, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin

Non-Voting Members Present (2): Dooley Kiefer, Roger Segelken

Staff Present: Scott Doyle

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:04 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor – There were no visitors who wished to speak under Privilege of the Floor.

Changes to the Agenda – There were no changes to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of December 8, 2010 were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc. Steve Nicholson noted he liked the written committee reports listed at the tail end of the minutes and would like to see this practice continued.

Election of Vice Chairs for 2011 – Martha Ferger presented on behalf of the Nominating Committee a slate of candidates for Vice Chairs which was identical to that from last year. Those candidates included Gary Stewart, Dan Lamb, and Katie Kelly. Motion for this slate of vice chairs was passed unanimously (9:0).

2010 Year End Committee Reports – Communications Committee: Spring Buck reported on behalf of the committee. She stated that the major events for the year included coordinating the EMC's participation in the Ithaca Festival Parade as well as gathering nominations, selecting and presenting the 2010 Transportation Initiative of the Year (TIY) Award to the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative for Phase III to the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce. Spring went on to list the acquisition of the meeting space at the East Hill Office Building. The group discussed its pleasure with the new meeting space and expressed its interest in continuing to meet there. Spring indicated that she had it reserved through 2011, Roger Segelken indicated that he followed up with TCAT to let them know the EMC would no longer be using its meeting space. Spring concluded her report in saying that she felt the Communications Committee was a good group and accomplished positive things in 2010. Energy Committee: Steve Nicholson began the report in saying the committee was very active in 2010. At the start of the year the committee took a tour of the solar panels atop the library and found reason for concern over the need for maintenance of the panels. Committee members investigated warranty issues of the panels in working with the County to examine the contract with the company who installed the panels. Eric Banford discussed the committee's work in supporting local commercial wind efforts. This work included facilitating a public meeting on local wind energy efforts and developing a resolution supporting the most recent wind energy proposal in Enfield. This resolution was endorsed by the EMC in December and will go to the Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee next month. Brian Eden reported on the committee's meeting with facilities at Cornell University along with its climate action committee to discuss projects of mutual benefit. Brian discussed some of the impressive efforts including the fact that Cornell now derives approximately 70% of its electricity from the Combined Heat and Power Plan. They have discussed interested in geothermal efforts as well, but are having trouble obtaining funding to support this work. Eric concluded the Energy Committees report in noting that County Planning recently developed a Commercial Wind Farm Atlas for local governments which is available on its website - http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/energyclimate/documents/WindFarmAtlasDecember2010_000.pdf. Gas Drilling Subcommittee: Martha Ferger reported on activity of the subcommittee over the last year. She acknowledged that they are not terribly active at the present moment, however she noted efforts earlier in the year that included the coordination of two comment letters.

The first letter was which ran through the full EMC addressed to Governor Patterson urging his signature on the Thompson bill (S-8129-B). In the second letter, the sub-committee commented directly to the DEC regarding the State Forest Plan, urging no hydrofracking on State Forest land. Martha asked for a recommendation from the group for direction on what types of things to comment on in the approaching year. Steve Nicholson noted the upcoming review for regulations related to the Susquehanna River Basin. Katie Kelly recommended the committee refer to the EMC's Review and Comment Procedure (attached) from March 2010 to help guide which efforts to undertake. Executive Committee: No formal report. UNA Committee: No UNA Committee members in attendance, though Scott Doyle did inform the group about his afternoon meeting with Karen Edelstein in which she provided an update of the committee's work. At this meeting Scott said Karen shared a proposal for how the committee would recommend a UNA update. This proposal will be shared with the EMC in the early part of the year. Other Items: Brian Eden reported on his follow up with the Village of Cayuga Heights and their DEIS related to deer culling. He determined there was not enough interest among EMC members to review the document within the given timeline. He did note that the NYS Deer Management Plan will be out soon and recommended its review.

2010 Year End Liaison Reports – Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee: Brian Eden reported on the committee's recent work, but noted that Kenny Christianson is officially the EMC's liaison to the committee. Brian said that the committee hasn't met in several years, but met recently due to two spills from the Vet School digester. They specifically discussed the safe-fail system. The problem with the spills resulted because of an offsite update to the system that prevented detection of a problem and subsequently the discharge of effluent through a vent. He mentioned the difficulty of coordinating the work of the vendor hired to install the system with the priorities of the local community. Dooley Keifer noted the great dedicated participation of this committee which has met for over 15 years. Dredging: Brian Eden followed up with the City's Lisa Nicholas on the dredging project, as the EMC Liaison Cliff Babson is no longer an EMC member. Lisa told Brian that the City approved the Southwest Park dredging site in July and also identified approximately 15 wetlands on this site that needed to be addressed. A map of these wetland was finalized in December 2010, though Lisa was unsure when permitting and a draft scoping document would be available. Dooley Keifer mentioned that the Water Resources Council still has a dredging committee and recommended that the EMC join forces with the WRC in reviewing the scoping document when it becomes available. She also went on to recommend that the consultant working with the City on this project do a better job posting project materials on their website. Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI): Reporting on the most recently formed liaison role, Brian Eden noted the upbeat and positive activity that this group is involved in. Most recently they discussed entrepreneurial efforts of an operation called e2e that takes vegetated matter and refines it to make a poured material that is four times stronger than wood. They also recently discussed district heating efforts. Adopt-A-Highway: Roger Segelken reported on the two highway clean ups conducted this year, one in the spring and another in the fall. Both were successful, though he noted the ideal number for conducting the clean up was at least eight people. He estimated with this number it would take about an hour and a half. This ideal number of participants has yet to be realized. He also noted the great tradition of awarding the Golden Hard Hat and as it could not be currently located he nominated himself the Adopt-A-Highway coordinator for 2011. The recommendation was that clean ups occur this year prior to grass cutting. Cayuga Sustainability Council: Kristine Shaw was absent and no report was given.

Formation of 2011 Committees – Scott Doyle began the discussion about committees with a brief presentation titled 'Tompkins County EMC Membership / Committee Structure'. Gleaning details from EMC Enabling Legislation, Bylaws and Charter, Scott began by outlining the different membership types: Voting (Municipal, At-Large) and Non-Voting (Associate and Ex Officio) and described their roles and responsibilities within the group. He then went on to discuss how these various documents outline committee structure. He said that the EMC establishes committees based on a vote on an "as needed basis" and that at least two of the EMC's voting members are needed to form a committee. Committee chairs shall be elected among the committee's voting members which includes Associates. Term of committees run one year or until the assigned task is done. He went on to explain that final results, recommendations and actions of the committee must be approved by the full EMC. Lastly, he offered up a challenge to the group in 2011, to produce a "State of the Environment" report which could not only summarize the work of committees and the council, but also formally make a statement of the group's opinion of where are local environment stands to both the Legislature and broader community.

Scott then opened a discussion about 2011 committees stating that the group had to be mindful of how many committees were formed, as the EMC currently only has 16 voting members. There was then a short discussion among the group about ways to increase membership through advertisements, direct appeal, the Council of Governments and County Legislators. Steve Nicholson then noted that he felt three committees capture the bulk of the EMC work: ERC, UNA and Energy. He went on to suggest that members should be required to sign up for one of these three committees prior to signing up for others. He recommended that the group vote on that as an approach. Discussion followed on concerns over this approach. This included Martha Ferger and David Slottje stating their interest in working on gas drilling issues through the Gas

Drilling Sub-Committee and concerns over whether the important work of that group would be limited should that sub-committee be absorbed into the overarching Environmental Review Committee. There was added discussion among the membership regarding the UNA Committee, specifically how and why updates were proposed. Scott Doyle noted that should the EMC vote on prioritizing the UNA update and further if at least two voting members commit to serving on this committee, then it is his understanding that further details regarding the proposed update would be presented at an approaching EMC meeting. Due to the limited attendance Steve Nicholson recommended designing an online poll for EMC members to gauge interest in committees. Spring Buck recommended short descriptions of these committees, including their time commitments, accompany this poll so that members can assess the most appropriate fit. The results of this poll will be discussed at the February meeting and committees will be formally established and voted on at that time.

Letter to Governor Cuomo Supporting Increased DEC Staff Numbers – Following up on discussions at the December meeting along with work at the Energy Committee level, Brian Eden presented a draft letter to Governor Cuomo regarding support for environmental protections in his approaching budget. Brian expressed his hope that this letter be considered and sent prior to the February release of the proposed Executive Budget. He asked for input on the letter including proposed additions. Dan Lamb voiced concern over the EMC's endorsement of this letter that discussed statewide issues. He felt that the EMC should focus more on issues directly affecting Tompkins County and further recommended the group utilize the aforementioned 'Review and Comment Procedure' to determine whether the EMC should dedicate time to letters like this. He went on to say that he did not object to the content of the letter, but thought a group like Sierra Club that deals with statewide issues would be more appropriate to submit a letter like this. Some of the group disagreed with this assessment. A motion was made to have the letter distributed electronically to the membership for an opportunity to recommend changes and then vote via e-mail if the final letter should be sent. Motion passed unanimously (9:0).

Reports – Legislature Liaison: Legislature Liaison not present.

Chair: There was no Chair report.

Staff: There was no Staff report.

Member Items – Spring Buck asked that time be allocated on the February agenda for Barbara Eckstrom to come speak with the group about the recycling measures to be implemented countywide this year.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott D. Doyle, AICP, Senior Planner, Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on February 9, 2011