

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting February 13, 2008

Present: Cliff Babson, Glynn Bebee, Carol Chock, Kenny Christianson, John Dennis, Keith Epstein, Martha Ferger, Neha Khanna, Lara Kimber, Dan Lamb, Stan Marcus, Michael Miles, Ashley Miller, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Larry Sallinger, Roger Segelken, Hank Spencer, Jacie Spoon, Gary Stewart, Marissa Weiss, Mark Whitmore,
Excused: Herb Engman, Larry Sharpsteen, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin
Associates: Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer
Guests: Joann Cornish, Jeanne Fudala, Sylvester Johnson, Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Lisa Nicholas
Staff: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:02 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor – Jeanne Fudala and Sylvester Johnson spoke as members of the Climate Change Action Group of Central New York on the need for a carbon emissions tax instead of the current cap & trade system. They wish to make the carbon emissions tax idea understandable to the public, and said it is a consistent motivator. Members were referred to the website <http://www.federalcarbontax.org> for further information.

Introductions – Introductions were made around the room. Keith Epstein announced his resignation, stating he has accepted a job in Vermont.

Changes to the Agenda – A resolution from the Energy Committee was added to the agenda following presentations.

Status Report on Cayuga Inlet Dredging – Lisa Nicholas, Planner, and Joann Cornish, Acting Director of Planning for the City of Ithaca, were present. Dredging has been a topic of discussion for ten years, and 50,000 cubic yards of sediment have been added during the discussion time. The main problem is selecting a place to dewater the spoils. Spoils need to be placed within a one-mile radius of the dredge site because that is the capability of the dredge pumps, but there can be multiple dewatering sites. Lisa is the staff person working with the consultant on a grant-funded project for design and planning. The extent of impairment and soil class of spoils are not yet clear. The purpose of dredging is to maintain the capacity of the flood control channel and provide navigable clearance. The City, DEC, and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) are responsible for dredging. ACOE dredged the flood control channel from the State Street bridge to the fish ladder in the late 1990s. It would be a waste of money to only take out part of the sediment, as that area would fill back in quickly. The City used to dredge creeks and dump the sediment into Cayuga Lake, but DEC permit parameters have changed and that may no longer be possible. The team working with EcoLogic will be looking at all alternatives, needs, possibilities, and partnerships. The process can't speed up too much because of the necessary steps of environmental reviews, public meeting, and work of the project advisory committee. The City wants to explore establishing wetlands borders at Cass Park and Stewart Park, but they don't know yet if that is feasible. Dredging and dewatering are the biggest engineering tasks. Previous tests showed no contamination in the sediment, which is mostly clay (most difficult to dewater). Moving spoils beyond one mile is very difficult, but the City has been approached about filling some gravel pits. Although a timeline needs to be established for regular future care, control of erosion upstream, and reduction of agriculture chemicals, this project is for the current "crisis". Lisa warned this is an ugly process, with ugly spoils and smells. All County citizens can and do use the free City parks, but there is probably no mechanism to get all the municipalities to contribute to the costs of dredging and that would entail a much larger study. Hank Spencer said the coal tar ducts went underground along Court Street in the direction of the Inlet, and if coal tar shows up in tests DEC might accept some responsibility. Lisa and Joann said the location and design of dewatering sites would be

affected if the sediment shows contamination in preliminary testing. The largest barrier right now is selection of dewatering sites. Joann said City staff recently attended a meeting with Canal Corporation staff, and Director Carmela Montella was present. Joann wondered if this would become a media blitz or a photo op. Dredge sites will also need to be remediated with environmental responsibility. Updates will be available on the City website, dredging link:

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of January 9, 2008 were accepted with clarifications and the addition of a second website address in the privilege of the floor section < www.carbontax.org >. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Addition to Agenda: Resolution Recommending County Support for a Federal Carbon Tax – Kenny Christianson presented the resolution drafted by the Energy Committee (it was also distributed by email prior to the meeting). The Committee provided a condensation in the Whereas clauses, and tried to support the carbon tax without getting into the debate presented in the sample provided by the Climate Change Action Group of CNY. Discussion raised these points: (1) possibly include a Whereas clause to include reference to current cap & trade system, (2) mention reason to support one over the other, (3) anything that is a tax is not likely to make it through Congress in the current climate, (4) background needs to be clearer for members and legislators who are not familiar with the issues. Kenny moved to table the resolution and have the committee provide information for March discussion. Seconded by Amy and passed by majority show of hands.

Municipal Reports – Town of Caroline: Steve Nicholson reported that Caroline Supervisor Don Barber is running for NYS Senate, district 51. Don is a former EMC chair. The Town is working on their Comprehensive Plan with Katie Borgella of Tompkins County Planning Dept. This probably will lead to limited zoning to encourage cluster development and protect open space. A Trails Committee has been established for extension of the South Hill Recreation Way to Brooktondale. In creating a Town Hall Annex from the former Midnight Sun site, an application has been submitted to the Health Department to allow a septic system, and the existing building will probably be demolished instead of being used for storage. City of Ithaca: Glynn Bebee reported the Planning Board has recently reviewed an addition for warehouse space at I.D. Booth, the Cornell Combined Heat & Power project, and the Johnson Museum addition. Village of Cayuga Heights: Roger Segelken had provided a report in the EMC News. Roger spoke of the passing of former Ithaca Mayor Ben Nichols, and his vision for Ithaca.

Chair's Report – Steve Nicholson reported that he attended the Cayuga Sustainability Council meeting. Participants favorably received the idea of establishing the Council. Sustainable Tompkins will provide web space for their information. They had a report on the Ithaca Festival at the January meeting, and will continue to meet quarterly.

Member Items – Larry Sallinger announced the Town of Ithaca Planning Board will meet 2/19 and have a presentation on the Ithaca College Athletics and Events Center. Gary Stewart suggested inviting the Cornell University Director of Construction again, as many projects are proceeding on campus. Also, CU Planner could speak about the status of the Master Plan. Gary said he would prefer to have members bring chairs up to the table instead of sitting around the wall, and thought it would facilitate discussion. Neha Khanna said she is willing to speak to EMC any time about carbon tax vs. tradable carbon permits. She asked about use of personal opinions vs. EMC statements in the EMC News, and efforts will be made to make clear anything that is shared information rather than EMC position.

Adjournment – Steve Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on April 9, 2008