

## **Minutes of the EMC General Meeting May 12, 2010**

**Voting Members Present (17):** Sarah Adams, Eric Banford, Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Anthony Guarneri, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Stan Marcus, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Roger Segelken, Helen Slottje, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Eric VanEvery

**Voting Members Excused (3):** Clement Chow, Kristine Shaw, Roger Yonkin

**Non-Voting Members Present (2):** Karen Edelstein, Joyce Gerbasi

**Guest Present:** Roxy Johnston

**Staff Present:** Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Roger Segelken at 7:03 p.m.

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

**Changes to the Agenda and Approval of Minutes** – There were no changes to the agenda. Draft minutes were moved by Gary Stewart and seconded by Spring Buck. Kathy Wilsea will check on the “300’ wide” portion of the sentence at the end of the first page and make correction if needed. [Figure was found to be correct – sentence changed to “There is some negotiation between DEC and ACOE on what constitutes “navigable” and currently that is 300’ wide and 14’ deep, *but it varies throughout the project.*”] Minutes passed by show of hands. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: [www.tompkins-co.org/emc](http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc).

**Tompkins County Water Resources Council and Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership** – Roxy Johnston was introduced. Roxy is the First Vice Chair of WRC and Chair of the Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership. She said EMC member Jim McGarry serves in the WRC’s voting seat for EMC Liaison. The monitoring partnership developed over a dialogue between WRC and Cornell, and has been meeting regularly since 2006. It covers the southern basin of Cayuga Lake and has a reference point by Taughannock Falls State Park. Development of this partnership was based, in part, on the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network’s Restoration and Protection Plan for the entire lake watershed, and a Monitoring Framework for Cayuga Lake by Bill Kappel (USGS) and Cliff Callinan (DEC). Roxy gave a synopsis of food web interactions, and said all levels of the food web are impacted by changes in nutrients. She moved on to address circulation patterns and sediment transport.

The Partnership conducts a lot of outreach. They are trying to get data shared on eCommons, and Cornell Cooperative Extension is taking the lead on that. All members of the partnership acknowledge a need for a central depository. Partnership members have been authoring articles for the Ithaca Journal, which are expected to continue with around six more articles. Roxy spoke of the “Site 7” testing location in the southeast section of the lake by the Youth Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce. Stormwater drainage from Route 13, lake circulation, and stream discharges combine for the highest test results in most test parameters.

In the discussion period, Roxy said stream sediment comes from erosion and old farm practices that stripped trees from the streambanks. All data is showing that sediment comes from the streams. Volunteer monitors try to gather stream water during storm events. There are gaging stations in Sixmile Creek and Salmon Creek, but that equipment is very expensive to install and operate. Lab funds are also needed. A new grant is being sought to fund the Salmon Creek gaging station. The volunteer monitoring groups usually know the areas of highest sediment. Small streams are not in the monitoring programs. RUSS (Remote Underwater Sensing Station) units are very efficient, as they run 24/7, but they only provide seasonal data and are very expensive. Stream information provides good trending, but no day/night data, no winter data, and few storms. The Clean Water Act has designated the south end of Cayuga Lake as impaired, but it is in good shape and getting better. Under the Clean Water Act, water regulations for swim areas are actually stricter than for drinking water.

Gary Stewart asked for input on the Monitoring Plan from the EMC Liaison to WRC. Jim McGarry said he is happy with the plan because it looks at the lake instead of just Cornell's Lake Source Cooling. Study is identifying some particular streams as sediment sources.

**Committee Reports – Environmental Review:** Jim McGarry said he received an email from ERC member Roger Yonkin that he will miss meetings and may need back surgery. ERC met and discussed dredging. They agreed it is difficult to assess because many aspects are not part of what can be examined at this point. Following ERC, EMC and WRC conversations, Jim drafted the statement that was emailed to members last week. This can come from ERC or might be something the whole council can get behind. Steve Nicholson moved that the letter be sent from the Council, which was seconded by Sarah Adams. Spring Buck asked if there was any need to make a statement, since it did not provide the backing that the City sought for examination of the Southwest site as a potential dewatering location. She mentioned that last month's discussion included some questions about the need to dredge. Jim said there were questions about the need to dredge that quantity. ERC did not want the site considered as a *fait accompli*. We have no information on other components of the project – infrastructure, costs, etc. There is no solid proposal, so no Environmental Impact Statement or SEQR. No one was clear on any reason for Cliff Babson's resignation from EMC and the DPAC. Vote on motion to send letter from entire Council: 11 yes; 1 no; 3 abstentions. In other ERC business, comments were sent on the South Hill Housing development. Two more projects have come in for review: College Circle apartments by IC, and the Enfield Wind project, which the Energy Committee will also contribute to. **Executive:** Katie Kelly said she likes everyone sitting at the table. [Kenny Christianson said we like her, too!] She was referring to more chairs having been put at the table so no one was sitting by the wall. There was agreement it is good for group dynamics. **Unique Natural Areas:** Although an associate member, Karen Edelstein is coordinating this committee. Karen reported this is an important time to be working on the UNA, as it has been getting lots of attention at the municipalities in the last 18 months because of the interest in designating Critical Environmental Areas in response to threats from potential natural gas drilling in the area. The 2000 update intended to create a living document, in theory updates would be done and distributed to the municipalities. Grant funding will be sought for consultants and updates. This will need lots of legwork. She felt the direct mail stewardship/education material sent to property owners following the 2000 update was an important component. **Communication:** Spring Buck reported they are working on a float for the Ithaca Festival parade. **Energy:** Steve Nicholson reported he received an invitation to an ICLEI webinar, which will be forwarded by email. Eric Banford reported on wind energy, saying he has been learning about birdkills. He met with John Rancich, the developer of the Enfield project, and attended the Enfield presentation to the Tompkins County Legislature. There are several models for wind as community projects. He has also talked with Don Barber and Dominic Frongillo about a potential project in Caroline, and is checking in Danby. He welcomes other feedback. He read a brief draft statement of support for 50 megawatt community wind projects. **Gas Drilling:** Martha Ferger reported this subcommittee of ERC sent a letter supporting State Legislature vote on a bill that would establish a moratorium on hydrofracturing in NYS until the EPA study is complete. Dan Lamb noted the EPA study could take a couple years and mean a delay before any permits could be issued by DEC. Brian Eden said there is a need to get more Upstate people involved, as 80% of the supporters of the bill are from New York City. Lucia Tyler moved to polish the letter and send it from the entire Council, which was seconded by Eric Banford. Vote 14 yes, 1 no.

**Municipal Reports – Town of Danby:** Eric Banford reported that Danby has a gas drilling task force that is interacting with other towns. **Town of Lansing:** Eric VanEvery said there is a push in Lansing to build an environmentally friendly playground at Myers Point. This has a price tag around \$120,000. Roger Segelken asked about the purpose of the earth berm by the railroad tracks at Myers. Eric said he will try to get an answer. Karen Edelstein added that Lansing has a natural gas committee that is examining drilling and potential impacts on the town, agriculture, environment, etc.

**Other Reports – Chair:** Roger Segelken thanked members who signed up for a highway cleanup on May 15. **Staff:** Scott Doyle reported the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas report is up on the Planning Department website. Following development of a green fleet policy and receipt of a partial grant, three Prius vehicles have been purchased for use as County cars. Scott will be out of town for a couple weeks, and suggested members contact Kathy Wilsea with any questions.

**Member Items –** Joyce Gerbasi mentioned the death of former EMC member Steve Uzmann, who was an active voting member for many years and then an associate. He was a geologist who brought the perspective of his professional training to his contributions at EMC. Steve started the move to get rid of plastic bags from area grocery stores (Paper or Plastic? No thanks!) Steve Nicholson told the story of Steve and Alex Uzmann bringing a supply of market baskets and canvas bags to the Ithaca Festival by canoe. Dan Lamb announced a meeting tomorrow on the Fall Creek Management Plan in McLean.

**Adjournment –** The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department  
Approved by Council on June 9, 2010