

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting July 12, 2012

Voting Members Present (17): Spring Buck, Poney Carpenter, Kenny Christianson, John Dennis, Brian Eden, Darrick Evensen, Martha Ferger, Bill Halton, Emily Hamilton, Katie Kelly, Steve Nicholson, Carolyn Peterson, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Ed Wilson, Roger Yonkin

Voting Member Excused (3): Kate Engler, Pegi Ficken, Jim McGarry

Non-Voting Members Present (2): Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Scott Miller, Michael Cullotta, K.C. Alvery, Keren Bitan, Mariana Caballero

Staff Present: Scott Doyle

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 4:05 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. The draft minutes were accepted with two minor changes. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Committee Reports – UNA: Steve reported that the UNA committee did not meet at their regularly scheduled time this month though they did discuss a question regarding the UNA adoption process which will occur hopefully in September with subsequent outreach in October. He noted that it was their understanding that the planning department is responsible for outreach to individual landowners regarding changes in UNAs. Contracts for the update conclude at the end of August and according to Steve, the consultants are on schedule to complete work within the contracted time frame. Gas Drilling Working Group: Martha reported that they renamed and restructured their committee and would like to no longer be a sub-committee of the ERC. She introduced a letter to Gov. Cuomo which has been circulated via email in advance of the meeting and called for a vote to send the letter. Martha Ferger made a motion to send the letter on behalf of the EMC as a whole. The motion was seconded by Kenny Christianson and the motion was opened for discussion. Darrick Evensen noted that he did not think the argument regarding climate change and a switch to renewables (point 6) provides as strong an argument as the others and further recommended removal of this specific point. Dooley Kiefer spoke in favor of leaving this point in, explaining that she felt it was one of the most important things the Governor needed to hear. Brian Eden agreed that the Governor needed to be reminded of this specific point, while Roger supported the removal of point 6. A vote was called for the removal of point 6. 5 voting members voted in favor of removing point 6, 10 voted against. Point 6 stands. Carolyn Peterson asked about point 2 – which discusses the protection of water and property – and suggested adding water resources as well. The group considered this a friendly amendment. Evensen also spoke of point 3, which centers on air pollution and the environment. He asked if water pollution also be included here as well. Ultimately the group agreed adding a reference to water would take away from the air pollution point. A vote was then held to send the letter to Governor Cuomo on behalf of EMC, on EMC letterhead. 14 voted in favor, 1 against, and 1 individual abstained. Motion carried for letter to be sent. Martha also spoke of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board's recent statements on the impacts of gas drilling on tourism. Dooley asked if there was any likelihood of need to comment on anything in short order which the committee would be unable to do independently as they are now independent from ERC. Scott Doyle explained that by making this a stand-alone committee, they would lose the ability to comment independently. All correspondence would have to come through EMC. There were no added, stated objections to this restructuring. State of the Environment: Brian reported on the discussions that he had with Kate regarding the report and indicated that they were looking to set up a committee meeting next month. Carolyn explained that she compiled a document of all the initial discussions on how the report should be structured and felt they have a positive starting place. Environmental Review: Brian noted they are working on a number of comments including the Cascadilla Landing project, an analysis of the current City dredging process, an advance review of the City of Ithaca Bike Boulevard proposal, review of the proposed Portland Point boat launch, and asked if guest Michael Cullotta

from the City of Ithaca's Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) had any comments on other projects and opportunities. Michael described a project they are currently involved with in regard to the subdivision of land at the end of Cherry Street, a portion of which is deemed developable. The Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA) is currently developing a RFP for this development that respects the unique environmental aspects of the site. The CAC has advocated that the RFP state a preference for proposals that are sensitive to the habitat benefits of this site. Michael also discussed a meeting to be held at Corks and More at 7PM next Monday July 16th to provide collaboration opportunities with the City Natural Areas Commission (NAC) and the CAC. He also invited EMC membership to attend. Energy: Brian discussed the transfer of AES to Upstate Power Producers/Cayuga Operating Group and the fact that they were back in business on some level. Steve noted that they were encouraged prior to the recent heat wave to go back online. Dooley noted that Jerry Goodenough formerly of AES now oversees the new operation. Brian also spoke of the County's electric contract which is soon to expire and wants to meet with the decision makers on this issue soon to encourage the new contract includes the use of renewables. He also noted the committee's recent focus on wind power and they have discussed an interest in adding a focus on solar. He expressed an interest in setting up a meeting this fall to help encourage more solar installation. Executive: Spring discussed meeting logistics for this fall. In September, the EMC will conduct a UNA worksession and then lead a public meeting regarding the changes to the UNA at the Public Library in October. In November, they'd like to invite Fernando De Aragon of the ITCTC to discuss our area's burgeoning transportation improvements. Also, Spring noted that the Transportation Initiative of the Year has received two nominations to date: one for Zimride, the other for Gadabout. She specifically discussed the number of environmental benefits that Zimride has provided. Brian added that Kathy Luz-Herrera was the previous EMC liaison from the Legislature and had to resign due to work conflicts, so the EMC is still looking for a Legislature liaison.

Staff Report – Scott outlined the Planning Committee of the Legislature's discussion of their need to appoint a new liaison, Kathy Wilsea's recommendation as to a EMC summer picnic, and his recent trip to Montreal and use of the City's innovative Bixi bike share program. At the conclusion of the staff report, Dooley asked about the previous meeting's vote to discontinue the EMC's highway clean up commitment and felt it did not coincide with EMC Bylaws. She asked for that vote be examined further.

Green Umbrella – Brian introduced KC Alvery and noted her work with the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI) and the Green Umbrella. KC spoke of the Green Umbrella, which is a youth based initiative to build relationships and advance environmental change. The purpose is to empower young people to make changes in climate issues and be a part of a sustainable future. The group discusses how can we do things with young people beyond our own campus. She expressed the interest in bridging the gap between campus and the community. A great deal of energy was generated from the PowerShift conference which engaged young people throughout the state and country. She spoke of climate justice organizing and putting communities at the forefront of this discussion. She described youth as being a front line community and they are asking themselves how they can align their frontline with others. One way they've done this is in taking direct action against fracking and participation in the recent tar sands action. She provided an overview of the proposed tar sands project and the PowerShift New York training and action which highlighted impacts of fracking on young people and provided an alternative recommendation through a march for a Green Economy. KC described the next action with support of 350.org to assist in stopping fracking in NY. This fall they are looking for other opportunities for involvement locally. She asked for more ideas on ways young people can help advance a Green Economy. Please provide comment to KCA27@cornell.edu. Steve asked if the Green Umbrella brings high school students into these efforts. KC indicated that was something they were actively doing.

Tompkins County Energy Conservation Corps – Brian introduced this effort that grew out of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (CCETC) and TCCPI to expand energy conservation efforts. Keren Bitan and Mariana Caballero attended from the Corps in order to discuss these efforts. They talked about the home energy upgrade program, specifically why you should have a home energy upgrade, who you can hire to do this work and how you can pay for it. Why get upgrades: old housing stock is very inefficient, improvements can have health benefits, they can increase comfort, fossil fuel reduction and can create jobs. Keren noted that for every 12 houses upgraded in Tompkins County, 1 job is created. They went on to discuss common misconceptions of why people do not undergo upgrades including: their house is already weatherized, they need new windows (payback very long on window replacement), or they are in the process of installing solar panels – upgrading helps reduce the size system you need. They also discussed the Path to Home Energy Savings and included a handout. The path includes: Energy Waster – Low/No Cost – Tune Up Energy Users – Whole-House Energy Assessment and Upgrade with a certified contractor – Use of Renewables. They outlined how people can apply for this work, how they recommend choosing a contractor and how to pay for the work. upgradeupstate.org provides more detail on this process including the various programs that you are eligible for based on income tier. Roger discussed his concern

over insuring there is adequate air exchange when conducting these improvements and Lucia discussed some of the unintended consequences of insulating 19th Century housing, John Dennis discussed the positive rate of return on geothermal improvement, Poney Carpenter asked about the use of Mini splits, and Martha Ferger asked about how successful they have been. Mariana responded to Martha's question in saying their progress has been slow but steady. She said specifically getting to the upgrade level is difficult.

Member Items and Municipal Reports – Katie Kelly outlined the Floating Classroom's work with Hydrilla and indicated it was a great hands-on way to be involved with this important matter. You can find the schedule of events on floatingclassroom.net. Brian spoke of Celebrate the Lake! event next Tuesday and the folks from the Finger Lakes Land Trust, State Parks and County Planning's own Ed Marx who will be paddling up the lake through the Seneca River to Lake Ontario next week as part of a kick off to the future blueway trail project. Lucia discussed the Black Diamond Trail excitement in the Town of Ulysses. Katie added Scott Doyle's recognition of his recent vehicle donation winning of prizes through Ithaca CarShare. Peter Harriott discussed the former Cornell President Frank Rhodes recently published book, "Earth".

Strategy for Upgrading EMC Web Site – Brian will provide details shortly on the items he feels need work on the EMC website. He asked for assistance from anyone who has background in this work.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Planning Department
Approved by Council on September 13, 2012

Report from the Gas Drilling (formerly) Subcommittee, now Gas Drilling Working Group July 11, 2012

This change in name was made at the suggestion of the Executive Committee for various reasons of structural clarity. We have the same membership as before but are not considered part of ERC. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 1 pm (unless it's a holiday!).

We have been working on a letter to Governor Cuomo to convey the same message that many groups and individuals have been addressing in recent weeks. At the EMC meeting tomorrow we will ask for a decision on whether the letter should be sent in the name of EMC or just in the name of the Gas Drilling Working Group of EMC. If the latter, should it go on an EMC letterhead or not? The text is as follows:

Governor Cuomo:

*We write to add our voice to the chorus of protests you have already received about the idea of possibly allowing high volume horizontal fracking (HVHF) for natural gas in five Southern Tier counties, presumably after DEC regulations have been finalized. Our objections include the following and **many** more:*

- 1. The deleterious effects of this process have been amply demonstrated in neighboring Pennsylvania and in many other states.*
- 2. If the dangers are considered great enough to require protection of citizens, property and water in certain large areas of the state, the citizens in **all** areas deserve the same protections.*
- 3. The state has not yet undertaken needed detailed studies of the health effects of HVHF, but the disastrous health effects of air pollution **near the well heads** have been amply demonstrated elsewhere.*
- 4. The state is totally lacking in any adequate facilities for handling waste water from the HVHF operations.*
- 5. The state has not acknowledged the devastating impacts of HVHF on established industries that are essential parts of our economy, including tourism, dairy, wine, fruit growing, field crops, hunting, fishing and other kinds of outdoor recreation, among many others.*
- 6. In the light of the impending climate change disaster, we should be doing everything possible to curb investments in fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy instead. STAYS*

*Governor Cuomo, You could become a national hero by **saving** our beautiful, productive state from going down the disastrous path already taken by so many other states, rather than by obediently falling in line to repeat their mistakes. Sincerely yours,*

In another matter, the Working Group responded to a request by the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board for comments on the **Strategic Plan** that they were about to release publicly. Deadline for comments was July 10 at 4 pm. Our response targeted specifically a paragraph in the introductory section called "What We Value Most" which listed (among 5 other things) "Improve and never harm the quality of life for local residents, businesses and institutions. Tourism programs should enrich the lives of all who live here." Our comment was as follows:

We believe that there should be a section near the beginning of the Strategic Plan which states clearly that any high volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) activity in this area would have a very deleterious effect on many of the projects being proposed in the Plan and indeed on the level of tourism in general in Tompkins County. The cumulative effects of the inevitable noise, water, and air pollution, traffic congestion, damaged roads and shortage of housing for gas field workers would become quickly apparent after the start of HVHF. Landscape fragmentation begins in earnest as pipelines, compressor stations, and water storage sites network all the landscapes where wells are located and beyond. The industrialization of these landscapes will take an inevitable and more or less permanent toll on the County's viewsheds, its forests, lakes, and agricultural lands. Tourism will be seriously harmed in innumerable ways for the longer term, all for gas production capacity that in some instances begins to taper off dramatically within 3-4 years of the initial fracking.

Hi Kate,

I apologize for sending you my comments only a few hours in advance of the meeting, but I thought you would rather have them late than never!

I like your initial list and feel that it captures many of the issues that we are dealing with in this county. I agree with Carolyn that two major categories that should also be included are the health of Cayuga Lake and Solid Waste (e.g., recycling efforts). While the issues related to Cayuga Lake may also fit into other categories (e.g., invasive species, erosion, nutrient loading), I feel that the Lake is such a huge part of our ecosystem and our self identity that it warrants separate treatment.

In terms of your "hydrofracking" category, I would suggest changing the name to "natural gas development". Heuristically, I think most of us associate the process of hydrofracking with all the social, economic, and environmental effects that attend the gas development process, but in reality, there are several issues such as population increases, traffic, auxiliary industries, etc. that are not directly tied to the process and event of the hydraulic fracturing of the shale. I think "natural gas development" is more inclusive of the potential effects. Additionally, you list "water quality" and "land use" as categories under which hydrofacking may fit; I would also offer energy as a necessary category and air quality as a potential additional category.

A final additional category that I would suggest for the State of the Environment Report is something related to the agricultural landscape. A healthy and sustainable agriculture industry is very important for a healthy environment in our county. There are several issues such as erosion, nutrient loading, riparian buffers, pesticides/herbicides/chemical application, etc. that are closely tied to agricultural land use. Agriculture helps to define our culture in this county and would be an important aspect to reflect on in the report.

I hope these few reflections can be of some help.

Best regards, Darrick

Darrick T. N. Evensen
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On Mon, Jun 18, 2012 at 4:28 PM, Katherine Neafsey Engler <kjn23@cornell.edu> wrote:

Hi everyone,

As we discussed on Thursday, the State of the Environment Report committee is starting to think of topics to include in our report. Below is a list of topics that I have come up with based upon our recent EMC activities, and the categories I thought they might fit under, but I'd like to encourage each of you to send me a few topics that you'd like to see included or at least touched upon. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks, Kate

List of possible report topics and their associated categories:

Hydrofracking (water quality, land use)

Invasive species (water quality, land use, plant and animal life)

Wind farms (energy, land use)

CO2 targets and policies (energy, land use, administrative affairs)

Green buildings (land use, energy)

Air quality, including need for air monitoring stations and impact of cars and buses on air quality (air quality, transportation)

Unique natural areas, including the recent updating of various areas (plant and animal life, land use)