

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting November 12, 2008

Present: Carol Chock, Kenny Christianson, Martha Ferger, Neha Khanna, Dan Lamb, Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Stan Marcus, Ashley Miller, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Jacie Spoon, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin

Excused: Herb Engman, Michael Miles, Larry Sharpsteen, Anni Skoler, Gary Stewart, Marissa Weiss, Mark Whitmore

Absent: Cliff Babson, Glynn Bebee, John Dennis

Associates: Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer

Guests: Caren Cooper, Steve Komor, Deborah Marcus

Staff: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:11 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor – EMC applicant Steve Komor was introduced, and he provided some personal history.

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

Is This Climate Change Story True? – Caren Cooper said she is a biologist at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology. Her presentation is geared toward science literacy and media literacy, and she usually speaks to college students. She was trained in April 2007 by Al Gore for The Climate Project. Mr. Gore’s goal was to train 1,000 people to disseminate information from An Inconvenient Truth. Most of the trainees were not scientists. Al Gore explained all the concepts of his movie and urged trainees to budget three things: time, complexity, and hope. In a 2004 study, 53% of a sample group had some doubt that people are causing global warming. But in a peer-reviewed group of scientific articles, 0% had any doubt that people are causing global warming. Looking at our solar system, the surface temperature of the planets is not just governed by distance from the sun or mass. The late Carl Sagan developed the theory that carbon is a factor. There are other ideas about the causes of global warming, which were examined and dismissed in the 1980s. Carbon dioxide contribution by humans is the only cause that “stuck”. Caren spoke of how glacier core samples are used to check gasses that were trapped in snow. The concepts of ice ages are well established by scientists. Carbon dioxide and temperature are coupled, and historically temperature changes first. CO₂ was never over 300ppm until today, now it is 380ppm, and Dr. James Hansen (NOAA) warns that it is urgent to bring it below 50ppm to have a chance of controlling the worst outcomes (“350 Project”), and it is projected to be 600 by 2050. Glaciers and ice caps are shrinking, which means shifts in habitat and projection of fresh water shortages for people and agriculture. Lack of fresh water could become a national security issue, too. Caren went on to talk about misrepresentation by the media. Some material is presented with omissions, downplayed in terms of importance, or laundered by agencies that represent themselves as promoting science but are funded by big business. Carol Chock said the Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions element being considered for addition to the County’s Comprehensive Plan is coming to the County Legislature soon. Public hearing and vote to adopt will be held 12/2. She felt the public outreach process and draft of the plan were amazing.

Liaison Reports – Water Resources Council: Roger Yonkin said WRC has a Dredging Committee, which is interacting with the City of Ithaca on dredging plans for Cayuga Inlet. Newman Golf Course has been mentioned as a dewatering site for spoils. Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee: Kenny Christianson said, after more than ten years of study and development, the incinerator at the veterinary school is finally being replaced.

Establish Nominating Committee – Jacie Spoon and Roger Yonkin volunteered to serve. Kenny Christianson will serve as an alternate. Kathy Wilsea will send out an email to absent members to see if anyone else is willing to be on the committee. The committee needs to provide nominee(s) for Chair in December and three Vice Chairs in January. Steve Nicholson indicated he will step down as Chair.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of October 8, 2008 were accepted with two changes suggested by Dooley Kiefer. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Chair's Report – Steve Nicholson reported that presentations from the Conference on the Environment will be posted on the website of NYS Association of EMCs. Mike Miles is excused from tonight's meeting to attend the Town of Enfield public hearing on a proposed wind power ordinance. There was discussion on press coverage on the topic, including the comments from the County Planning Department that triggered the requirement for the Town to adopt the ordinance by a supermajority. Dooley Kiefer requested information be given EMC from TCPD when staff does reviews on projects that are of interest to EMC. Kathy Wilsea will distribute by email the comment letters from TCPD on Enfield wind and Town of Ithaca docks and keep an eye out for future reviews that EMC would be interested in.

Staff Report – Kathy Wilsea reported that a forum on gas exploration has been scheduled for County advisory boards. It will take place 11/24 from 4 to 6 PM at the library. It is open to the public, and their questions will be addressed if time allows. She suggested EMC members start looking at providing committee reports for the EMC annual reports and planning for 2009. She felt large goals should include work on the Unique Natural Areas inventory and updating the website. Jacie Spoon wondered if an intern could help with the website, and Kathy will check at the office on that.

Legislature Liaison's Report – Carol Chock apologized for her recent absences, which were due to the budget process for the County. The Expanded Budget Committee developed a budget that is under target. It includes a stream monitoring proposal for Cayuga Inlet, and funding to help County departments invest in hybrid vehicles. Carol attended the public meeting on gas drilling by the Attorney General's office. Most of the information was targeted at the nuts and bolts of leases. People still need information on incorporating environmental restrictions into agreements. There is a nodal development meeting taking place tonight. Cooperative Extension made a presentation to the County Legislature on the new search capabilities of their website <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/tompkins/>. Dooley Kiefer announced that Solid Waste and Cooperative Extension opened the Finger Lakes Recycling & Reuse Center today in Triphammer Mall.

Member Items – Martha Ferger announced an Adopt-A-Highway cleanup for Saturday, 11/15 at 10 AM. Jacie Spoon announced that her reports on EMC activities to the Town of Groton will be posted on the Town's website. She attended the 10/29 meeting of Central New York Resource Conservation & Development. Steve Komor asked about the Town's use of a kennel in Freeville for dog control. Jacie said the Town doesn't think the SPCA is a good financial option. More information is on the Town website. Roger Segelken provided an update on deer in the Village of Cayuga Heights. He said the recent article in the Ithaca Journal was accurate. The two ways to control the herd are sterilization and culling. Cayuga Heights wants to collaborate with neighboring municipalities for a regional effect. They are working with the Coalition for Humane Deer Solutions. Amy Risen announced ERC still has topics to address: City of Ithaca drinking water supply by 12/5 and DEC scoping for supplemental generic Environmental Impact Statement on gas drilling by 12/15. Interested members may contact her.

Adjournment – Steve Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on December 10, 2008