

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting December 10, 2008

Present: Carol Chock, Kenny Christianson, John Dennis, Herb Engman, Martha Ferger, Neha Khanna, Dan Lamb, Stan Marcus, Michael Miles, Ashley Miller, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Larry Sharpsteen, Jacie Spoon, Lucia Tyler, Marissa Weiss,
Excused: Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Anni Skoler, Gary Stewart, Mark Whitmore, Roger Yonkin
Absent: Cliff Babson, Glynn Bebee, Hank Spencer
Associates: Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer
Guests: James McGarry, Tony Nekut
Staff: Joan Jurkowich

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:08 p.m.

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

Changes to the Agenda – Amy Risen asked to add discussion of a letter on chemical regulatory reform. It will be inserted after item IV.

Successes and Initiatives at Tompkins County Solid Waste – Barb Eckstrom, Linnett Short and Kat McCarthy were present from Solid Waste. Barb (former EMC Coordinator!) provided a brief history of the department. Projects for 2009 include the Re-Business Partners, Finger Lakes Buy Green program, opening a food waste compost center, opening the re-use center at Triphammer Mall, and green product purchasing. The first three projects are part of the Go Green Program. Linnett and Kat did a presentation on the Go Green Program. Tompkins County received the first national “Go Green County of the Year” award in 2008 for their work in schools. 23 schools participate to date.

Barb reported a draft Request for Proposals is expected to be released in March for revisions to the recycling program. This is a step in the direction of single stream recycling, where all recyclable materials are collected in one bin. The department will continue to recycle when it is cheaper than disposal. A compost subsidy is available for eligible businesses, and municipalities and hospitals will be targeted to join this endeavor in 2009. There is currently a pilot assessment program for single stream recycling going on with Ithaca College and Cornell University. Container size, location, and some other details are very important in the initiation of this project. Tompkins County has a mandatory recycle law, and participation rate was 88% at the time of the last survey.

Tompkins County Government’s Sustainability Team – Cheryl Nelson was present from Tompkins County Public Works. She reported that the Sustainability Team started meeting two years ago to develop policies and procedures that would make County operations more efficient in terms of sustainability. It was decided to participate in the Finger Lakes Environmentally Preferred Purchasing, which is an organization of counties, municipalities, IC, CU, Chamber of Commerce and schools. Their first goal was to find the best supplier for office paper. Within our county, a Green Fleet policy is being developed with the help of project assistant John Simeone. The County’s 2008 budget included \$50,000 to subsidize alternative fuel vehicles. The Energy Efficiency Policy continues to yield efficiency through new thermostats, lights, windows, appliances, etc. The new Health Department building is being designed for LEED Silver certification. Efforts continue for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste reduction, composting (particularly at the Sheriff’s Department), infrastructure design, and meeting the goals of the Local Action Plan. The Facilities Manager is looking into the efficiency of vending machines in County facilities.

Addition to Agenda: Amy Risen spoke of a letter she received from the Just Green Partnership. They are looking for agencies to support changes in federal policy. Members may comment by email on whether or not they agree EMC should support this effort. Comments are due by 12/17 to Kathy wilsea.

Election of Chair for 2009 – Jacie Spoon reported for the Nominating Committee. Jacie moved the appointment of Amy Risen as Chair of EMC for 2009, which was seconded by Kenny Christianson. Passed unanimously by show of hands. Jacie announced that Anni Skoler, Mark Whitmore and Gary Stewart are willing to serve as vice chairs. Election of vice chairs will occur at the January meeting. Any other members interested in becoming vice chairs should contact Jacie.

Presentation of Awards – Martha Ferger presented the Golden Hardhat Award to Roger Segelken for his participation in Adopt-A-Highway cleanups. A t-shirt was presented to Herb Engman for 29 years of service to EMC. The number of his at-large seat, #10, will be “retired”.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of November 12, 2008 were accepted with one change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Year-End Committee Reports – Invasive Species: Jacie Spoon reported that Stan Marcus, Mark Whitmore and she attended a conference on the Emerald Ash Borer, and there was a full page article in the paper on the subject. Mark organized a conference in October, which was videotaped. They are waiting for permission to put their followup article in the Ithaca Journal. Energy: Kenny Christianson said the first six months of 2008 were devoted to exploration and discussion on the carbon tax issue. In June they held a picnic at Stewart Park to celebrate the committee’s 50th meeting. The latter part of the year has been focused on the Local Action Plan and the Sustainability Team. Environmental Review: Lucia Tyler reported that the committee reviewed and provided comments on eight projects. Consumer Products: Amy Risen reported that they met during the first six months, and concentrated on learning about compact fluorescent lightbulbs; thereafter members suspended activities to devote larger amounts of time to both the ERC and the ad hoc Gas Drilling Committee.

Chair Report – Steve Nicholson reported that the annual NYSAEMC Conference on the Environment will be held in Watkins Glen next year on the third weekend in October. Steve attended the gas drilling presentation arranged for members of County advisory boards. This was well attended and provided good feedback. At the end of his six years as chair, he said he left every meeting excited about what’s going on, and has become interested in other organizations as a result of his participation in EMC. Members gave him a standing ovation. He announced the Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the County Legislature.

Legislature Liaison’s Report – Carol Chock reported that the County budget passed. It includes funding for stream monitoring by Community Science Institute, and for fuel-efficient vehicles. Following the gas-drilling forum, the Legislature passed a resolution on the draft supplemental EIS scoping document. She thanked Amy for providing contact with Deborah Goldberg, an attorney with NRDC researching what jurisdiction municipalities and counties have on proposed gas drilling operations. She expressed special recognition for the efforts of Katie Borgella and Leslie Schill in the drafting of EGGE. Carol attended the annual award ceremony of Sustainable Tompkins and was amazed by the depth and breadth of activities in our county. She felt this year’s budget process met their target, but Tompkins County will be affected by the upcoming state budget.

Member Items – Neha Khanna said her teaching schedule will probably force her to arrive at meetings late through June, and she will miss the January meeting. She would like to join the Energy Committee. She is interested in the economic issues connected with drilling in the Marcellus Shale. John Dennis announced this is his last meeting representing the Village of Lansing, but he expects to continue on EMC as an associate member.

Adjournment – Steve Nicholson adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Jurkowich, Deputy Commissioner
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on February 11, 2009