

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting December 14, 2011

Voting Members Present (10): Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Katie Kelly, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler

Voting Members Excused (3): Eric Banford, Dan Lamb, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Absent (1): Sarah Adams

Non-Voting Members Present: Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Al Becker, Kate Engler, Emily Hamilton, Ed Wilson

Staff Present: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:03 p.m. Introductions were made around the room. Kate Engler and Ed Wilson have applied for EMC membership to begin in 2012. Emily Hamilton (City of Ithaca CAC member) and Al Becker (Danby resident) are considering applying for municipal seats.

Privilege of the Floor – There were no visitors who wished to speak under Privilege of the Floor. Jim McGarry said he added an article on atrazine to the mail folder, and members can request that he send it to them by email.

Changes to the Agenda and Approval of Minutes – The Transportation Initiative of the Year Award will not take place tonight. Due to staff illness, Way2Go could not have a representative here tonight. Spring Buck will present the award at their office tomorrow, take photos, and wrap up the press release. The draft minutes of October and November received minor edits. Amended drafts were accepted by the Council. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Report on Dredging Event 12/1 – Brian Eden reported on this event. He arranged to have a Cornell horticulture class report on their semester of work learning about dredging in general and Cayuga Inlet in particular. Brian reviewed the photo display that was at the Library during the event and provided a brief history of channelizing streams that flow into the Inlet. DEC happened to release the dEIS on dredging at the same time, with a short comment period which has been extended from 12/16/2011 to 1/6/2012. Increasing precipitation is predicted due to climate change, and wetlands have the ability to buffer flooding. Cayuga Lake wetlands have been changed over two centuries of human intervention, and we no longer have the marshes at the south end of Cayuga Lake such as are found at the south end of Seneca Lake. Brian said the Catherine Marsh in Watkins Glen has been designated a Critical Environmental Area, effective mid-January 2012. Steve Nicholson pointed out the event had good attendance even though it competed with the TCCOG hearing on gas drilling that was taking place at the State Theatre. We hope to get the PowerPoint report for our website. The students want us to consider finding a new term for the dredged product, something other than “spoils”. Scott Doyle complimented EMC and Brian on a successful event with good discussion and potential solutions presented.

Establish Meeting Place for 2012 – Since our current meeting place is available for our planned dates and parking is usually adequate at that time of day, Steve Nicholson announced EMC will continue to meet at 395 Pine Tree Road. As previously determined, new dates will be second Thursday of each month, 4PM to 6PM.

Election of Chair for 2012 – Kenny Christianson reported that he chaired the Nominating Committee, which also consisted of Lucia Tyler and Katie Kelly. They had two persons nominated to serve as chair, but Brian Eden declined. Steve Nicholson was elected by show of hands to serve as Chair for 2012. Kenny pointed out we need at least three nominees for vice chair for election at the January meeting. Gary Stewart served this year, but declines nomination for 2012. Kathy Wilsea passed around job description for vice chairs.

Update on Restructuring of EMC – Steve Nicholson reported that the County Legislature’s PDEQ committee decided not to move forward with our restructuring proposal. Steve will make sure the 2012 PDEQ chair is aware of our need to fill

seats. He will also work to increase communications in general between EMC and Legislators. Gary Stewart said he found it discouraging that they wouldn't accept our proposal. Brian Eden said he was at PDEQ for the first discussion and felt it was positive at that time. Dooley Kiefer said Legislators didn't want the responsibility of appointing applicants, but would be happy to help find applicants.

Planning Membership Drive for 2012 – There was discussion about ways to reach out to the public and municipalities for members. A letter has been drafted by staff and will be edited by the Chair. Follow-up will be necessary. Kathy Wilsea said a previous suggestion had been to have existing members focus on filling one other seat. It was suggested to include the City of Ithaca Natural Areas Commission in our mailing list. Martha Ferger asked how our visitors found out about us. Emily was doing research for a handbook and found us online. Ed has presented to EMC in the past and became interested in membership. Kate heard word-of-mouth, then had contact from Katie Kelly. Al Becker has shared concerns about water resources and dredging options, and the Supervisor of his municipality suggested he should learn about EMC.

Committee Reports – Environmental Review: Report went out with agenda. Unique Natural Areas: Scott Doyle provided an update. He reported Dan Lamb, committee chair, is pleased with progress. The 2012 County budget has funds for more work next year on the Inventory update. Steve provided some background on UNAs for visitors. Energy: Brian reported a meeting was scheduled, but no one else attended, and Dooley arrived after he left. Several members attended the Sustainable Tompkins reception on Sunday, where Signs of Sustainability awards were presented. NYSERDA grants for charging station applications were due last Friday. The proposal for District Energy for the Emerson site was submitted to EPA and the grant is pending. Cayuga Medical Center is also meeting with West Hill neighbors on a district energy proposal. The recent distribution of compact fluorescent bulbs and literature for Get Your Greenbacks was just the start, and they will have another wave in February/March. Tompkins County purchases energy for county operations through MEGA, and Integrys again got the bid for the county. Fortunately, the price of renewable certificates has dropped, so the county will pay a lower price for renewable energy. The County will be renting solar panels for seven county buildings. Brian attended the Empowered films and recommends that others view them if another opportunity arises. [At this point, Steve Nicholson left and Katie Kelly took over leadership of the meeting.] Gas Drilling: Martha Ferger reported the final draft comments to DEC on the dsGEIS on gas drilling were distributed to members by email yesterday. Dooley Kiefer suggested adding a section on air quality mitigation, which was considered a friendly amendment and will be finalized by the committee after Dooley sends proposed language. Kenny Christianson moved to have the Executive Committee finalize the document with the amendment, which was seconded by Kristine Shaw and passed by show of hands by all but Gary Stewart, who abstained. Communications: Spring Buck mentioned some of the reasons Way2Go was selected for the Transportation Initiative of the Year Award. In addition to their general efforts to coordinate ride sharing, they even fund car repairs in certain instances and work to find drivers for out-of-town medical appointments. Executive: Katie reported they did not meet. Gary will not serve on the Executive Committee next year, although he said it was wonderful.

Municipal Reports – Village of Dryden: Martha Ferger will approach the Village trustees about a hydrofracturing ban. The Village has its own zoning, so is not covered by the ban in the Town of Dryden. Lucia Tyler pointed out the ban in the Town of Ulysses is based on air pollution, effects on water resources, and traffic.

Reports – Staff: Scott Doyle reported the Planning Department is coordinating efforts for an update of the Multi-Jurisdictional All Hazards Mitigation Plan. They want to integrate predictions from Cornell on climate change as an impact on hazards. Part of the funding announcements for the Regional Economic Development Council is for an eight-county sustainability plan. Tompkins County received two Signs of Sustainability awards from Sustainable Tompkins, for the Sustainability Internship program and the stream buffer planting project by Ithaca High School.

Member Items – Lucia expressed interest in having the incoming mayor of the City of Ithaca visit so we can talk about his priorities on environmental concerns. Gary volunteered to ask about that. Lucia also wants to know if there are any home rule concerns that apply to dredging. Katie passed on Steve Nicholson's thanks for electing him as EMC Chair again.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on January 12, 2012