

# TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

**March 21, 2011  
Meeting Minutes**

**Voting Members Present (14):** Sharon Anderson, Ed Bugliosi, Bill Garthwaite, Barry Goodrich, Joan Jurkowich, Dan Karig, Darby Kiley, Lynn Leopold, Gregg McConnell, Elaine Quaroni, Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, Damon Rodnac, Craig Schutt, Mary Shelley

**Voting Members Excused (7):** Liz Cameron, Carol Chock, Roxy Johnston, Rick Manning, Jim McGarry, Frank Proto, Cindy Schulte

**Non-Voting Members Present (3):** Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Helen Slottje (Associate), Linda Wagenet (Associate)

**Staff Present (1):** Kathy Wilsea (T C Planning Dept.)

Vice Chair Barry Goodrich called the meeting to order at 4:21 PM.

**Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes** – Linda Wagenet asked to speak briefly about the pharmaceutical collection event under Other Business. The draft minutes of February 28, 2011 were moved by Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, seconded by Craig Schutt and passed by voice vote. Barry announced he attended the annual meeting of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Auburn last week, where he received the Partnership Award.

**Comments on Dredging SEQR** – Dan Karig reported committee members reviewed the scoping document, and Jim McGarry and Dooley Kiefer sent him comments. Joan Jurkowich said the purpose of the scoping period is to provide information to EcoLogic on what should be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement. We must provide our suggestions in this phase – they cannot be added to the EIS later and we cannot comment on items that are not in the EIS. Dan said the committee members are concerned about fragmentation of the project – the scoping document only addresses the portion that would be dredged by the City and the dewatering site at Southwest Park. It is not explicit about the needs of the Inlet. The Canal Corporation expects to dredge the navigation channel portion, with the caveat that Canal Corp. will not transport spoils beyond the capability of their own pipe. Use of Southwest Park for dewatering requires additional piping and pumping. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton will provide money as a Member Item, and Dan presumes the budget for that will include the extra pipe and the pumping.

Linda Wagenet said she has been working with EcoLogic, and she thinks Lifton's Member Item is \$2 million. It is unclear who will perform the dredging for the City. Joan noted the contractor and budget are not part of the EIS. Joan also pointed out the environmental review has already been completed for the navigation channel (Canal Corp.). Linda said the project is segmented because DEC is the other player, and DEC is not ready to proceed. The only way to gain access to the Member Item funds is to act now. All parties are aware it is segmented, and that has evolved because the City wants to do what they can to move this along. Dooley pointed out if only the City portion were being done, we wouldn't need all that dewatering area. Jim McGarry had submitted comments that the scoping document only addresses Cascadilla and the dewatering site, and the dewatering site capacity is clearly for the unmentioned phases. Dan said the City wants to keep the dewatering site forever.

Helen Slottje said she was concerned at the EMC presentation. More technology is available for use of the spoils, and it is unclear if alternatives have been examined. Joan said some of the alternatives discussed are mentioned in the scoping document. Dan said DEC and other agencies shot down other proposals. He characterized the scoping document as a "we aim to please" document, couched so it meets no negative response. Page 2 talks about spoils, and trucking them to an unspecified site, which would require thousands of truckloads. He feels the dewatered spoils won't be taken out at all. And any wetlands at the proposed dewatering site are degraded beyond recovery, so not a barrier to such use of the site. Linda said there has been no decision about the spoils after the dewatering phase. She stressed all the agencies are trying to figure this out. If one partner pulls out, it will be difficult for the rest to move forward. The City is trying to provide a

dewatering site so dredging can occur. Elaine Quaroni asked how long spoils must be dewatered, and Linda responded nothing can be done with them for two years. Joan pointed out we want to put in our comments a question about whether long-term disposal is being considered, also how will the site be cleaned up prior to use.

Dan said Jim also raised concerns about Negundo Woods Unique Natural Area. Lynn Leopold said that is too far away to be an issue – it is above the fish ladder. But she pointed out Southwest Park has already been used as a dump – although maybe informally or for construction materials. Dan agreed Negundo would not be affected. He did wonder how the water removed from the spoils will return to the Inlet – nearest tributary? Ditch? Linda said maybe a lined ditch. Lynn noted the distance is too far to affect the big box stores.

Re Page 5, Jim had asked if household waste would be removed from Southwest Park to Seneca Meadows as part of the site preparation. Re Page 6, Ecosystems, the document mentions only salmon in transit for spawning, but Dan says there are many other kinds of fish that live there. Also many birds live by the dewatering site. He feels it is obvious that dredging will damage the Inlet ecosystem and changes at Southwest Park will wipe out that ecosystem, meaning the project will not fit into a “no adverse effects” category.

Concerning piping of waste from Cascadilla to the disposal site by an in-water system, the document doesn’t state where – only that it probably won’t cause serious obstruction for boaters. This is not clear enough, according to Dan. Barry reiterated Joan’s comment that all concerns must be in our response so they appear in the final scoping document. Lynn Leopold said the 1982 dredging wasn’t such a big deal as this project. Barry said phases need to be done in sequence. Dan said there is nothing in the scoping document about DEC responsibility for flood control. Craig Schutt said it is his understanding that the volume of spoils is so large, the project can’t all be done in one year, but will take several years.

Members asked why segmentation could be bad. Joan said the segment EISs could be written in ways to show lower environmental impact than one overall document. Sometimes cumulative impacts need examination. Segmenting can be a way to avoid examination of a total project, although she doesn’t feel that last possibility is valid here. Barry asked if segmenting can affect the budget, and Joan reiterated that budget is not an issue in scoping. Elaine asked what stopped the Canal Corporation phase after the EIS was completed. Linda said that was from lack of a dewatering site. DEC goals and strategies are not defined yet. If the overall project is broadened, it will stall all possible phases again. The point is: What can be done now? Discussion on all aspects is occurring. The Army Corps of Engineers has the right to issue a failure of the last inspection, and then there would be no possibility of remediation in the event of flooding. Joan said the EIS should state impacts expected if sediment is never removed. The Committee will organize all comments for review and return to the 4/18 WRC meeting if time allows, or work with the Executive Committee if needed.

**Work Plan Development** – Joan Jurkowich had pulled out items from the Water Quality Strategy that were to be accomplished by WRC committees. She asked members to comment whether each item was complete, underway, to do, or dropped. The updated digital document will be emailed to members for further comments.

**Committee Reports** – Education: Sharon Anderson reported they met and reviewed objectives for the Work Plan. They also seek projects from other committees. They have a meeting scheduled with Linda Wagenet and EcoLogic to plan outreach for dredging. Elaine mentioned a link for Smart Steps for Clean Water was added to the WRC website. Gas Drilling: They will meet 4/11. They are preparing questions for the April speaker. It is unlikely the GEIS on gas drilling will come out in June – maybe August.

**Staff Report** – 2011 committee list and updated member list were distributed.

**Announcements/Other Business** – Linda Wagenet provided flyers for the 4/9 pharmaceuticals collection event. New this time are satellite dropoff sites in Trumansburg and Newfield. Volunteers are still welcome. Mercury thermometers should go to a household hazardous waste event at Solid Waste, and many pharmacies and doctor offices accept sharps. Ed Bugliosi said the Lower Sixmile Creek Aquifer Study (print edition) is expected to be available in three weeks. Craig Schutt said he has been informed that both WQIP grant applications for Tompkins County will be funded. Concerning the four prior projects, he expects funding to arrive any day.

**Adjournment** -- The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Planning Department Secretary

Adopted by the Council on April 18, 2011.