

**Tompkins County Council of Governments**

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 24, 2011 3:00 PM

Scott Heyman Conference Room

**Approved 4-28-11**

Members Present: (8 municipalities)

T/Caroline – D. Barber

V/Groton – B. Conger

T/Dryden – M. Sumner

C/Ithaca – C. Peterson

V/Cayuga Heights – K. Supron

Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson

T/Ithaca – H. Engman, B. Goodman

V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (9 municipalities) V/Dryden, V/Freeville, T/Groton, T/Lansing, V.

Lansing, T/Danby, T/Newfield, T/Ulysses, T/Enfield

Guests: M. Whitmore, Cornell; L. Lawyer, Ithaca Journal; E. Gottlieb, Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility

County Staff: J. Mareane, M. Lynch, County Administration; E. Marx, D. Kiley, County Planning Department; K. Lansing, Sheriff, Amie Hendrix, Director of Youth Services; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

**Call to Order**

Mr. Engman called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes – February 24, 2011**

This item was deferred to the next agenda due to the lack of quorum.

**Changes to the Agenda**

Ms. Robertson asked that a discussion of including school board representation on TCCOG be added to the agenda.

**Safe Medication Disposal Event**

Ed Gottlieb of the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility announced the next Medication Disposal Event will take place on April 9 at TCAT in the City of Ithaca, Juniper Manor in Trumansburg, and at the Newfield Garden Apartments. He spoke of the many benefits of eliminating medications that have been sitting for long periods of time, prevents overdoses, illegal diversion of controlled substances, teen use of medications, being flushed down a toilet, and becoming environmental contaminants. A second event will be held in 2011; however, a date has not yet been set. This event has been held twice in the past; in March 2010 a national record was set with 501 participants disposing of over 1,700 pounds of medications. The October 2010 event was also successful with 401 vehicles coming through the sites with a collection of 741 pounds. As part of an additional effort to increase participation they have organized the two satellite collections and hope to continue outreach to the east side of the Lake with satellite sites for the Fall collection. He also noted Trumansburg Police, Ithaca Police, and the Sheriff have joined in this effort to provide the required law enforcement presence. Mr. Gottlieb said the long-term hope is to not need these intense one-day collections but to organize drop boxes at designated locations such as pharmacies and the police stations.

**Update on Emerald Ash Borer**

Mr. Whitmore reviewed his March 25, 2010 presentation on the life cycle impact on ash trees by the [Emerald Ash Borer](#) (EAB). Since his presentation at this time last year the EAB has spread to 15 states and 2 provinces. The strategy the State has adopted to address this is to slow down the spread of this beetle by a SLAM (Slow Ash Mortality) program; Mr. Whitmore noted the Northeast has the largest population of ash trees in the country.

He reported the EAB has made its way to this area and said approximately 100 trees in a campground in Bath are infested and need to be taken out. They hope that the SLAM program will be able to slow the population build up and gain some time; being proactive will be an opportunity to save both resources and minimize impact.

Vital steps to take include: community preparedness, inter-municipal cooperation, developing wood utilization options, and community education. Mr. Whitmore said there are people in every community who are interested in these issues and suggested communities create a local task force, such as the one that has been created in Tompkins County. That Task Force's first project is Arbor Day 2011. They will be tying a purple ribbon around ash trees with a tag attached providing brief information as well as additional contact information. This is a way to get people engaged and start to demonstrate the scope of the problem to the public.

Ms. Nottke asked if there is a certain time of year that infested trees should be removed; Mr. Whitmore said before May, but noted there are no infested trees at this time in Tompkins County. He said one concern he has is people unnecessarily treating trees with pesticides.

Ms. Supron asked who are the members of the Task Force. At this time Mr. Whitmore is on this, along with individuals from the Grounds Department at Cornell, and the Town of Ithaca. If any municipality would like to participate in the Task Force they should contact him.

Ms. Robertson said the information on moving firewood is not clear and suggested the information be very specific about how far firewood cannot be moved.

Ms. Sumner suggested including the Cornell Local Roads Program as a resource because they host a highway school for all highway superintendents around the State in June.

#### **Update from Gas Drilling Task Force (TANG)**

Ms. Kiley reported a number of work groups have been actively meeting.

She suggested inviting Carol Chock, Chair of the Assessment and Land Value Work Group, to talk to TCCOG about the group's efforts since they began meeting in December. Ms. Kiley said one of TANG's goals was to come up with some information on air quality and Joe Wilson, a resident of the Town of Dryden, has compiled a binder containing information and resources. He has come up with a "tool kit" that provides information on certain kinds of pollutants associated with gas drilling activities of which may have negative human health impacts. There are a number of ways municipalities can deal with these air quality issues; they will continue to discuss this at the next meeting.

The Mapping Work Group met this afternoon. Zack Patten, a grad student, has been developing visual assessments of what the gas drilling buildout could be and expects to have a presentation ready by next month.

Last Spring, Tioga County gas drilling task force put together a binder that contains resources on: communications, land use, environment, water quality, roads, workforce, public safety, and business opportunities. There are recommended strategies and sample laws under each of these topics within the binder.

Ms. Kiley reported TANG and the Schuyler County Task Force are clients for Susan Christofferson's at the Cornell's Office of City and Regional Planning. They are looking into housing impacts, rental rates, home value changes. They are finding that the greatest changes are happening in semi-rural

counties; they are also looking at adjacent industries such as tourism and agriculture. A webinar will take place on this in May.

Ms. Kiley announced the following upcoming activities:

**March 28<sup>th</sup>** - Natural Gas Task Force Forum in Owego, NY

**March 30-31** – *A Systems Approach to Energy Transitions: Land, Economic and Community Transformations*. For municipal officials, planners, extension, community leaders, and land managers grappling with how we will responsibly and sustainability meet the energy demands of the Northeast.

**March 31-April 2** – Cornell Law School’s Energy Conference: *Gas Drilling, Sustainability & Energy Policy: Searching for Common Ground*.

**June 24, all day event** - Cooperative Extension and the Association of Towns will host "toolbox for local officials" in Binghamton

Mr. Barber provided an update on the Roads Work Group and said at the last meeting there was discussion of the similarities between road use regulations and road use agreements. Mr. Barber said the group reviewed complex engineering data and learned there are certain factors that need to be considered, including exemptions for areas such as agriculture or certain types of other industries, and thresholds. He said thresholds are complicated because roads have different strengths at different times throughout the year. They are trying to get a better understanding of what a “structural number” means and a number of other areas to work through. Mr. Barber said there are many opinions about which approach is best and the group will continue to work on moving all parties forward with a common approach. *Ms. Sumner said she would like to see more follow-up from a legal perspective.*

Ms. Robertson announced the County will hold a meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. to obtain feedback on the proposed road preservation local law. Mr. Mareane said this is intended to be a fact-finding meeting. One of the intentions is to build a law from a regulatory approach that will have “teeth” behind it and also have the flexibility of a road use agreement. Mr. Engman spoke of preparation being key, as engineering firms will not have the time to work on this once drilling activity comes into the area.

### **County Comprehensive Plan Lead Agency**

Mr. Marx said in association with TCAD and the County, TCCOG sponsored the Countywide inventory analysis of the sewer and water infrastructure and the intent of the action plan is to maintain that information and keep it current. He said there is not a specific mechanism for doing this at this point but the intent would be to work with municipalities to determine what mechanism would work best. Mr. Marx said they are asking for TCCOG to agree to be a lead agency along with TCAD for the purpose of pulling together this information. Mr. Marx said as lead agency, TCCOG would cooperate in any way to enable to the updating of that information, just as was done for the original study. TCAD has already agreed to their portion of the work.

*Due to lack of quorum, action to approve this item was deferred to the April 28 meeting. The letter and explanation from Mr. Marx dated January 20 will be included in the agenda packet.*

### **Report on Health Insurance Consortium**

Mr. Barber reported the Consortium meets every other month. Financial information for the first two months has been received. A Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design has been created and is getting organized as well as working on things such as wellness programs. Premium information for next year should be available in July. He reported on the Administrative Clerk position and interviews of three candidates said the process to fill that position should be completed in the next couple of weeks.

**Youth Services**

**Resolution: Requesting New York State to Maintain Funding Streams for Youth Bureau and further Urging Elimination of Competitive Bid Funding**

Ms. Hendrix reported on the proposed State Budget and said the Senate and Assembly have removed funding for the PPIP (Primary Prevention Incentive Program). Funding streams have been put in the budget at approximately 50% for each of the three funding streams. She said this is still a large reduction, especially because over the last five years they have already faced a 25.5% reduction. There is some talk about restoration of these funds to the 50% level with funds taken out of the block grant.

Action could not be taken on the resolution due to lack of quorum. Ms. Robertson said Tompkins County adopted a similar resolution; the Town of Ithaca did as well. Ms. Hendrix said it appears a State Budget will be in place before TCCOG meets again but she has heard from a majority of State representatives that they heard a strong message from this community urging that funding not be cut.

Ms. Hendrix reported the municipal youth services system and youth boards met Saturday with representation from all but one community. They discussed the system as a whole and conducted a spot analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, where the system is, and how it is going forward. This session, which was facilitated by Denise Dyer of the Office of Children and Family Services, went very well; Ms. Hendrix believes it will result in a lot of energy directed towards this in communities. The Youth Services Department will also be doing a spot analysis; information will be gathered and made available.

**Discussion of School Board Representation**

Ms. Robertson said the TCCOG bylaws contains language that states school districts might be invited in the future. She has been in discussions with the Ithaca City School District recently on another matter and they have expressed interested in being involved in this group.

Ms. Sumner suggested having a discussion with school board representatives to see where interests may intersect. She asked Ms. Robertson to develop a list of bullet points and she will discuss this with someone from the Dryden School District.

There was discussion of who would be invited to attend from school districts: superintendents, school board members, or BOCES representatives. It was noted that many school districts cross county lines. Mr. Engman said an initial discussion should provide enough time for a thorough discussion. This item will be placed on an agenda in May, once school budgets are approved.

**Next Agenda Items**

The following items were suggested for inclusion on the next agenda:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Presentation on Census
- Discussion of Redistricting

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office