

Tompkins County Council of Governments
Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 26, 2011 3:00 PM
Scott Heyman Conference Room

Approved 6-23-11

Members Present: (12 municipalities)

T/Caroline – D. Barber
T/Lansing – K. Miller
V/Lansing – D. Hartill
T/Ithaca – H. Engman
T/Enfield – R. Barriere
T/Ulysses – E. Thomas

V/Groton – B. Conger
V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke
T/Danby – L. Shawley (arrived at 3:06 p.m.)
Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson (arrived at 3:07 p.m.)
T/Dryden – M. Sumner (arrived at 3:10 p.m.)
T/Newfield – R. Driscoll (arrived at 3:32 p.m.)

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (5 municipalities) V/Dryden, V/Freeville, V/Cayuga Heights
C/Ithaca, T/Groton

County Staff: J. Mareane, M. Lynch, County Administration; B. Eckstrom, Kat McCarthy, Tompkins
County Solid Waste; D. Kiley, Tompkins County Planning Department; M. Pottorff,
Legislature Office

Guests: WHCU

Call to Order

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

Changes to the Agenda

The Governor's Office report by Kevin McCabe was withdrawn from the agenda.

A brief discussion of Time Warner Cable negotiations was added to the agenda for the purpose of seeing if there is enough interest to add this as an agenda topic at the June meeting.

Update from the Gas Drilling Task Force

Ms. Thomas reported:

- The Task Force voted and agreed to adding its name to the petition being sent to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) asking for action that would require manufacturers and processors of chemicals used for oil and gas develop to disclose chemical identities; conduct toxicity, and to produce information related to the chemicals impact on health and the environment.
- Carol Chock, Chair of the Assessment and Land Values Work Group, asked for assistance on how to send information that has been compiled to the press. It was decided that chairs of working groups would vet information through the press. If any member would like to see information before that happens they should let someone know.
- Carol Chock and others from the Assessment and Land Values Work Group recently traveled to Albany to meet with top advisers to the Governor and representatives of both Assembly and Senates and presented concerns over how communities will be impacted economically, how property values are changing already, and how leasing is affecting the residential lending market in the region.

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- Task Force members spoke about the various zoning and land use restrictions municipalities are considering to limit drilling on certain lands. A number of attorneys who have looked into the legal aspects of these restrictions feel that towns have the authority to amend zoning regulations. The Town of Otego was the first Town in the State to prohibit gas drilling. The Towns of Dryden, Ithaca, and Ulysses are working jointly to research possible solutions.
- Joe Wilson has been in contact with the Tompkins County Medical Society to find out if they have released any further public statements on hydrofracking. Dr. Adam Law has tentatively agreed to speak to municipalities about the health concerns surrounding hydrofracking.

Ms. Shawley and Ms. Robertson arrived at this time.

- Mr. Barber spoke at the United Nations about gas drilling. A copy of these comments is [available](#).
- Craig Schutt has forwarded a response about the Susquehanna River which has been designated as one of the top 10 rivers in danger.

Ms. Kiley reported the Mapping Work Group has created a presentation giving scenarios of what the County might look like as drilling progresses over the land area in time. This visual tool will help public officials make informed decisions about natural gas drilling. Cornell graduate student, Zack Patton, will bring the finalized presentation to the working group at their next meeting. This product will be presented by Darby to municipalities in Tompkins County this summer and fall. She would like to make a presentation to TCCOG at the next meeting.

Ms. Sumner was excused at this time.

It was agreed Susan Christopherson will address TCCOG on the economic impacts of hydrofracturing at the June 23 meeting at 4:30 p.m. for 30 to 45 minutes.

There was a brief discussion of water contamination; Ms. Thomas suggested inviting Bill Koppel in to speak about what he has seen with regard to this. Ms. Robertson spoke of the many ways by which water can be contaminated and noted it is not exclusively from the fracking process. Ms. Thomas announced as of May 19 Pennsylvania has prohibited frack flow back fluid from being taken to wastewater treatment plants.

Mr. Barber spoke of a study done by Duke University and said the Professor who conducted the study of analyzed sites in New York State as well as Pennsylvania that were close to a drilling site and away from a drilling site; higher levels of methane were found closer to drilling sites.

Approval of Minutes – April 28, 2011

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Conger, to approve the minutes of April 28, 2011 as submitted. A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 8, Noes – 0, Abstentions – 3 (Hartill, Miller, and Nottke). MINUTES APPROVED.

Update on 2012 County Budget

Mr. Mareane said the County is beginning its budget process and outlined how the budget is constructed and the issues the County is facing in these early steps in the process. He explained the

following local dollar costs:

Mandates (expenditures that the County has very little control over) make up 29% of the budget. Mandates include Medicaid, welfare, child care, PreK Special Education, Early Intervention, Assigned Counsel, Outside Colleges, Mental Health, Hospitalization, and Jail Board Outs.

Other Fixed Costs (20% of the County Budget): Insurance Reserve, Capital Program, Utilities and Rent, TCAT, Contingent Fund, Jail, TC3, History Center, Communications Center Maintenance.

Mr. Hartill requested a more detailed explanation of the items in the Other Fixed Costs chart. Mr. Mareane will provide to members electronically.

Mandated Responsibilities (21% of the County Budget): District Attorney, Probation, Sheriff-Civil, County Clerk, Elections, Personnel, Health Department, Weights and Measures, DSS, Assessment. These are services the County is required to provide but unlike the mandates above there is some latitude in how the services are delivered.

Discretionary (30% of the County Budget): Emergency Response, Road Patrol, Highways, Facilities Maintenance, Library, Mental Health, Youth Services, Information Technology, Office for the Aging, County Administration, Agencies, and others.

Mr. Mareane explained that the County's 2012 budget process begins by being \$5.3 million out of balance as a result of the following sources:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Effect on levy</u>
Pensions	\$1.0 mil	2.4%
Health Benefits	\$0.9 mil	2.2%
Wages and Other	\$0.9 mil	2.2%
Major Mandates	\$1.0 mil	2.5%
State Aid losses	\$0.9 mil	2.2%
Mortgage Tax	\$0.9 mil	2.2%
Other (incl. Fuel)	\$0.4 mil	1.0%
Sales Tax	<u>-\$0.7 mil</u>	<u>-1.8%</u>
Total	\$5.3 mil	13.0%

County departments are being asked to present two budgets scenarios:

- 2% increase in tax levy - equals an 11.2% cut to programs; and
- 5.4% increase in the tax levy – equals a 7.8% cut to programs

Mr. Driscoll arrived at this time.

The proposed Tax Cap of 2% would allow for a growth in the tax levy of \$812,000. Mr. Mareane explained the provision that would allow for consideration of growth and said an adjustment factor is being given for growth from “new lumber”. For example, an increase in a tax base by one percent would give an additional one percent of taxing authority. *Ms. Sumner said she would share information on this from the Fiscal Officers Association.* It was noted the versions of the tax cap legislation in the Assembly and Senate are quite different and it is unclear what the final bill will be or what the rules will be with regard to requirements needed to be met to exceed the cap.

Solid Waste Management Strategy

Ms. Eckstrom, Solid Waste Manager, reviewed the following points in a presentation on the County's Solid Waste Management Strategy:

- Many years ago (early 1990's) the State required that several landfills be closed; Tompkins County closed two and attempted to site a new landfill. At that time Ms. Eckstrom did not believe siting a new landfill would be a wise financial decision and that the County should instead be investing money into programs to reduce waste. This received a lot of support and the County did not proceed with constructing a new landfill. This was a very good decision because many other counties are trying to support landfills that are bankrupting those counties.
- A Solid Waste Management Plan was developed that called for disposal to be the last method for disposal of waste. A goal of 50% diversion was included in the Plan. As of last year 60% of the waste in the community has been diverted.
- Success is attributed to funding of programs that reduce waste, primarily recycling programs; partnerships in the community and with private and non-private partnerships. 88% of the Solid Waste Budget of \$6.3 million is private partnerships. The County has adopted laws and regulations, has an enforcement officer, and has provided incentives for residents to dispose of less.
- The Solid Waste Program is not funded by the property tax. There is an annual fee that pays for the disposal costs.
- The goal is to divert 75% of waste from the landfill by 2015 while still saving costs, with another goal of 85% in 20 years.
- Develop a new 10-year plan; the 20-year plan expires at the end of this year. Debt service is retiring, therefore, the Annual Fee may be reduced in addition to creating new programs.
- A ten-year contract was just signed for upgrading of the Recycling and Solid Waste Center. In July residents will receive information on all of the items that will now be accepted. The importance of public education about what can be recycled was noted. Ms. Eckstrom said she would like to roll-out a food composting program and is waiting on DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) approval on more tonnage; pilot programs are expected to begin in 2013.
- Ms. Eckstrom expects eight green jobs being created in October.

A groundbreaking ceremony will take place on June 3rd at 11:30 a.m. at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center. All members are invited to attend.

Ms. Nottke thanked Ms. Eckstrom and Solid Waste Division staff. Ms. Eckstrom extended an offer to municipalities to have staff make presentations to communities. She distributed information on acceptable materials targeted for recovery at the Recycling Center, a summary of the contract for operation of the Center, summary of functions of the Center, a 2011 recycling calendar, and several informational flyers.

It was suggested to Ms. Eckstrom that a household hazardous collection day be held after Christmas.

Discussion of Inviting School Boards to Attend TCCOG Meetings

Ms. Robertson suggested topics that may be of interest to both TCCOG and school boards:

Transportation needs of youth, including School Success Transportation Coalition;
Shared use of school and TCAT buses;
Funding for recreational and developmental youth program;

Ms. Sumner suggested the Senior or Disabled property tax assessment, particularly the affects of the income limits being increased.

Mr. Barber suggested this group hosting a brainstorming session to develop the framework for any meetings. Mr. Driscoll said he has already begun discussions with the Newfield School Board President and Superintendent to explore opportunities for shared services. He mentioned in some cases there may be tension between a town board and school board and there are benefits to bringing both groups together as a way to open communication.

Mr. Engman asked if members want to pursue having a discussion with school representatives and if so, whether it should be at a regular or special meeting. There was interest in scheduling a special meeting at the Ithaca Town Hall (or another larger location). Members will begin to have discussions with school board members about this to see if there is interest. *Members were asked to report to Ms. Robertson by June 15 on who the contact people would be in each school district.*

Time Warner Negotiations

There was a brief discussion of whether to add a discussion of feasibility of joint collaboration on Time Warner Cable negotiations to the June agenda. *Ms. Sumner said Jason Liefer has been working on this for several years; she will provide a summary of issues and information prior to the next meeting. Members were asked to come to the meeting prepared with information on when their current contract expires.*

Ms. Pryor will be invited to attend the next meeting.

Next Agenda Items

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

Presentation on Mapping by Art Pearce and Darby Kiley
Time Warner Cable Negotiations – Pat Pryor
Redistricting – Mike Lane
TCAT Funding – Hank Dullea
Report back on discussions with school boards

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office