

Tompkins County Council of Governments

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 23, 2011 3:00 PM

Scott Heyman Conference Room

Approved 7-28-11

Members Present: (9 municipalities)

T/Ithaca – H. Engman

V/Groton – B. Conger

T/Enfield – R. Barriere

V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke

T/Ulysses – E. Thomas, R. Marino

T/Danby – L. Shawley

C/Ithaca – C. Peterson

Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson, C. Chock

V/Cayuga Heights – K. Supron

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (8 municipalities) T/Caroline, V/Dryden, V/Freeville, T/Newfield, T/Dryden, T/Groton, V/Lansing, T/Lansing

County Staff: J. Mareane, M. Lynch, P. Younger, County Administration; E. Marx, D. Kiley, Tompkins County Planning Department; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Guests: A. Pearce, TANG Mapping Workgroup; J. Turcotte, H. Dullea, TCAT; P. Pryor, County Legislature; G. Reinholdt, Broadband Committee; B. Callahan, Cayuga Radio Group; J. White, Trumansburg Central School District; J. Leifer, Town of Dryden; J. Wilson TANG

Call to Order

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

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes made to the agenda.

Report on TCAT Funding

Mr. Dullea, TCAT Board President, spoke of TCAT's service and said ridership has increased on a very regular basis over the last several years. In 2010 TCAT achieved a record ridership of \$4.6 million rides and ridership is up by 13% in 2011. The increase is likely due in part to increased fuel costs and he noted although TCAT has experienced an increase in ridership, it has also seen a significant increase in fuel expenses as TCAT uses approximately 430,000 gallons a year which costs \$.5 million. Mr. Dullea reported TCAT has received national recognition from the American Public Transit Association and a public announcement on June 30th. Mr. Dullea covered the following areas in his presentation:

Structure: TCAT is a not-for-profit corporation. A few years ago TCAT was a partnership between the City, Cornell in the County; however, legislation to create a local authority never got out of the Assembly and TCAT had to form a not-for-profit corporation; it is a private entity that provides public transit services. Employees are represented by the U.A.W. and TCAT engages in negotiations through the NLB (National Labor Board). They will be entering into negotiations with employees soon as the current contract expires on September 11th. Unlike some public sectors, there tends to be more of a push towards a contract decision in the private sector. TCAT depends on two sources of revenues: fares and grants.

Budget Challenges: Public transit throughout the country is heavily subsidized. In 2011, TCAT's expenditure budget is \$12.8 million. If ridership continues to increase at the 13% rate for the remainder of the year it will take TCAT up to 4.068 million in ridership for the year. The cost per ride is \$3.15 and the basic fare structure has not changed since 2003; the full price fare is \$1.50 and commuters have consistently been provided a discount. Passenger revenues make up only a small portion of the revenue. The largest source of funding to TCAT is New York State STOA (State Transit Operating Assistance) funding. Mr. Dullea distributed information showing STOA funding has declined from 41% to 33 % over the last few years. STOA funding comes to TCAT through a formula that is a combination

of the number of passengers who ride the bus and the number of miles traveled. If there had not been an increase in the ridership over the last several years there would have been an even larger drop in STOA.

The second largest source of TCAT's income is Cornell's volume discount program. Cornell provides a pass to employees and students to ride TCAT free of charge to them and Cornell pays TCAT. This provides an enormous incentive for their students to not utilize automobiles and relieves pressure on the community by not having additional automobiles on the roads. Cornell University annual ridership represents a very high volume of TCAT rides (2.47 million rides out of 3.6 million rides in 2010). The Cornell Volume Discount Program amounts to 20% of TCAT's budget on an annual basis. The third major portion of revenue comes from TCAT partners; together those partners contribute 19.5% of the budget. Ms. Peterson noted this represents only the shares and not the capital budget contribution. TCAT Funding is made of up 80% federal funding, 10% State funding, and 10% local funding. Currently, each partner contributes \$900,000.

Mr. Dullea said TCAT is running a deficit budget (\$546,000) that was consciously adopted because of the fiscal situation that existed at the time the budget was adopted. It was felt at that time that was in the best interest of the community to not have a fare increase, that partners not be asked for additional funding, and that service not be cut.

In 2012 there is likely to be a continued decline in STOA funds and local partners continue to be financially stressed. To continue an "as is" budget for 2012 the Fund Balance would be reduced to \$450,000 for \$12.8 million budget and auditors are demanding that TCAT maintain a Fund Balance of ten percent of the operating budget. The Board of Directors is working with staff on developing a 2012 Budget that would have a Fund Balance of approximately \$1.3 million. In order to do that they need to find expenditure savings and revenue enhancements. They will be taking hard look at routes and possibly shifting from the Capital Budget. In July the TCAT Board will vote on a draft budget that will be shared with fiscal partners at a meeting scheduled for August 4.

It was suggested that there be additional advertising, including creating a Facebook page and promotion within schools. Mr. Turcotte said TCAT is always interested in expanding student ridership and would welcome discussion concerning partnering with school districts. Mr. Dullea recognized the Town of Ithaca for its commitment to an annual contribution of \$50,000 and encouraged other municipalities to also contribute.

Members expressed appreciation to TCAT for the service it provides to the community.

Approval of Minutes – May 26, 2011

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Conger, and unanimously adopted by members present with Ms. Supron abstaining, to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2011, as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Time Warner Cable Negotiations

Mr. Engman asked if there is enough interest by members to convene a group to talk about a possible joint negotiation with Time Warner since many agreements will be expiring next year. Ms. Pryor said this item is addressed in the Interim Broadband Committee Report and spoke to that specific piece of the report. She said as the Committee discussed options for moving forward in trying to achieve universal access in Tompkins County one of the topics raised related to the Time Warner contracts. Since many contracts will be coming up for renewal it was suggested that consideration be given to having a

public service goal to expand service in some of the underserved areas and having that become a part of the negotiation.

Ms. Pryor said there is a misconception by the public that municipalities can compel Time Warner to provide all residents with access. She has had to explain to the public that providers cannot be forced to provide service where it would not be economically viable to do so. She said it may be, however, an option for municipalities to come together as contracts are expiring to pool and strengthen negotiation power.

Mr. Reinbolt spoke of the history behind Time Warner becoming a monopoly in this area. Mr. Engman asked if Time Warner would have to stop broadcasting if new agreements aren't reached. Mr. Liefer said the Public Service Commission will automatically renew it; this has been happening in Dryden for the last 18 years. Mr. Engman asked what negotiation power municipalities have if Time Warner couldn't be forced to stop broadcasting. Mr. Reinbolt said the purpose of having an agreement is to protect them from competition. An option would be for municipalities to join together and issue an RFP (Request for Proposals) for this service. Members were in agreement that it is important to become educated about this and to develop a strategy to move forward. All municipalities present expressed interest in working together on this. A meeting will be set up to begin discussing this.

Presentation of [Interim Report](#) by the Broadband Committee

Ms. Pryor said since the Committee began meeting in November 2010 they have invited several speakers to meetings to discuss issues facing rural and underserved areas, and State initiatives. She announced on July 25th at 5:30 p.m. at the Public Library Dr. Luvelle Brown will be making a presentation to the Committee about the intersections between broadband, education, and economic development.

The Committee was charged by the County Legislature to look at broadband in the community and to center discussions on the following areas: economic development, government performance, public safety/emergency medical services, telehealth, education equity, energy and environment, rural broadband access, and civic engagement. Up until this point the primary discussion of the Committee's discussion has related to rural access. Ms. Pryor said the maps produced at the State level gives the impression that most of the County has broadband access; however, there are large areas within the County that have no access. One of the subcommittees is working on a "gap map" that should be ready in the next week.

There are three subcommittees; each has a separate written interim report that have been included. The Committee will be putting together the work of the subcommittee and will produce a synthesis of the material and discussion leading to conclusions and recommendations to the Legislature. She called attention to the following conclusion in the report "It will be useful to make certain that we connect to these networks in the final execution, but for now the assumption should be that Tompkins County will be going this alone." She said at this point Tompkins County is centrally isolated in New York State and all the surrounding counties have already formed networks.

Ms. Pryor said the Committee would be placing emphasis on the other areas as it moves forward, particularly on economic development in the community. The full interim report is available on the Legislature website.

Discussion of Inviting School Boards to Attend TCCOG Meetings

Mr. Engman said at the last meeting some members said they would be speaking to their school board representatives to see if there is interest in schools being engaged in discussions with TCCOG. Ms. Robertson said she made contact with City of Ithaca School Board members. They were unable to attend this meeting, however, they confirmed they are interested in being invited.

Ms. Nottke introduced Mr. White from Trumansburg Central School. Ms. Robertson reviewed areas that were suggested for discussion at the last meeting: sharing of resources and coordination of youth recreation and after school programs, transportation, and purchasing. Mr. White said all parties have the best interest of the community at heart and would welcome discussions that could lead to any cost savings. He noted the importance of understanding the complex funding system within the schools.

Announcement

Mr. Engman called attention to the Finger Lakes Trails and Greenways Conference that will be held on September 23 and 24 at Cornell University. Additional information can be obtained at www.ptny.org.

Task Force on Natural Gas Drilling - Mapping Presentation

At this time Ms. Kiley and Mr. Pearce presented TCCOG with a Power Point [presentation](#) containing several photos and maps showing what the landscape might look like with natural gas drilling in Tompkins County. Ms. Kiley said this presentation was made in the Town of Ulysses last week to approximately 70 people. Additional presentations are being planned in the Towns of Dryden and Lansing, and possibly Danby. If others are interested they should contact Ms. Kiley or Mr. Pearce.

Mr. Pearce noted as of late 2009, 39% of the land in Tompkins County was leased and it ranges from zero in the City of Ithaca up to 69% in Groton. He spoke of compulsory integration and said only 60% of land within a unit needs to be leased to allow forcible integration of the rest of the land to complete it. Mr. Pearce said potentially 50% of the land area in Tompkins County could potentially be drilled, which could allow for 210 pads with each having anywhere from 8 to 12 wells that would be fracked multiple times. He developed a map of where pads would be and displayed what would happen to the landscape. He also spoke of the impact on farmland and water consumption, saying he estimates over 10 billion gallons of water consumed in the fracking operation. This number is based on a well being fracked one time and all indications show wells are fracked multiple times during their life span. Currently, the total water processed in all three County treatment plants equals 2.6 billion gallons. Ms. Robertson noted the water in the treatment plants is reused and the frack water is contaminated and cannot be reused. He spoke of the flowback water and said there are varying estimates of how much there will be. He noted whether it is 5% or 20% the water will need to be treated. In Tompkins County, this will mean approximately 2.1 billion gallons of water that will need to be treated. There will be 1,200 truck trips per well, totaling 250,000 (one-way_ per year; currently there are 600,000 on County roads. There would be a significant number of jobs created that would go to both out-of-County residents and local residents. He suggested members go to www.tcgasmap.org to view where there are signed leases.

Next Agenda Items

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

Time Warner Cable Negotiations – Pat Pryor

Minutes
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Redistricting – Mike Lane
Report from the Governor’s Office (McCabe)
Update on Cell Towers
Report back on discussions with school boards
Presentation by Eric Roof, Susquehanna River Basin Commission

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m. to a presentation by Susan Christopherson. An audio recording of that presentation is available on the TCCOG website.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office