

# **Tompkins County Sustainability Team Update**

*Report to the Legislature, May 19, 2015*

Since its establishment in 2006, the Tompkins County Sustainability Team has continued to promote sustainable practices within Tompkins County government. The Team has established the tradition of reporting about sustainability activities to the Tompkins County Legislature each spring in honor of Earth Day, and therefore, respectfully submits this update.

The Sustainability Team drafted the *Tompkins County Sustainability Strategy*, which the Legislature accepted in 2014, to provide a coordinated approach to integrating sustainable practices into Tompkins County government operations. In 2015 the Team continues to advance sustainability efforts throughout Tompkins County government operations, to collect data to help track these efforts, and to pursue formal recognition for the County's sustainability-related efforts. Updates regarding the County's sustainability efforts since the Team's last report are organized below across the eight categories detailed in the *Tompkins County Sustainability Strategy*.

## **Leading by Example**

- Affirming its commitments to reducing reliance on non-renewable energy sources, Tompkins County has contracted the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to offset 100% of the County's electricity usage through September 30, 2016.
- In March 2015 the Tompkins County Legislature adopted the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, which includes sustainability as an overarching principle reflected throughout the entire Plan.
- The County is currently collaborating with Tompkins County Area Development on addressing long-term and immediate energy needs and emissions in ways that contribute to a vital local economy.
- In May 2015, the Tompkins County Legislature approved a new local law to establish a sustainable energy loan program in the county, which will provide property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing for local energy-related improvement projects with repayments collected through a charge on the property's tax bill.
- In 2014, New York State announced the new Climate Smart Communities Certification Program that enables high-performing local governments to achieve recognition for their leadership, and which may improve a community's competitiveness for State grant funds in the future. Data collection is underway in 2015 to provide the documentation necessary to achieve certification.

## **Social Equity**

- Planning Department staff are working with funding partners of the Tompkins County Housing Fund to ensure that demographic data is collected for residents benefitting from the permanently affordable units funded through the program's future funding rounds.
- The County continues to implement its living wage policy, with the Legislature providing supplemental funding to Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division (TCSWMD) to enable workers at the County Recycling and Solid Waste Center to be paid a living wage beginning in 2015.

- The Health Department is evaluating the results of a pilot program with community supported agriculture (CSA) shares of vegetables and fruit to work out best practices for sharing or dividing shares among employees.

### **Transportation**

- The committee studying Alternative Work Arrangements (voluntary work arrangements in which eligible employees with approval work one or more days each work week from home or other work environments, or in satellite offices instead of commuting to their traditional work places) worked through 2014 and early 2015 to develop a draft policy, which is currently under review by County Administration.
- In 2014 the Department of Social Services opened a satellite office within the Groton Head Start office and within the Health Department building as part of its efforts to reduce commutes of employees living in proximity to these offices as well as distances traveled by clients.
- 2014 marks the first full year of WEX fuel record data, which combined with fueling information from the Highways Department, are providing baseline data to evaluate County vehicle fuel use and to track costs and associated emissions.
- Efforts are underway to update the County's vehicle fleet inventory and to integrate this information with fuel data to advance the County's Green Fleet policy.
- The County is partnering with a coalition of members from the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, Cornell University, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County to implement a NYSERDA Cleaner Greener Communities Grant to develop a plan for the infrastructure necessary to support electric vehicles in the county, including the benefits and potential drawbacks of implementation, the best locations in the county for implementation, the anticipated market effects, and the best method of implementation.

### **Facilities and Grounds**

- As the County transitions from the former Utilities Dashboard, in late 2014 the Tompkins County Planning Department began collecting and organizing utility bill data to track electricity and natural gas use and costs, adding in Solid Waste and Airport facilities data for the first time. This data also provides a basis for an updated greenhouse gas emissions inventory.
- In 2014 the Public Safety Building had a new and better insulated roof installed and 28 heat pumps replaced with more energy efficient units.
- The Facilities Department has hired an architect to design roof replacements at the Mental Health Building, Building C, and the Old Jail, which will include improved roof insulation to reduce heat loss. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2015.
- Wireless internet has been installed in the Main Courthouse, Solid Waste Office, Emergency Response Center, Health Department, Old Jail, Mental Health Building, and Legislature Chambers, with additional expansion planned, enabling the reduction in printed documents for meetings in County facilities.
- While expanding the County's computing power downtown, Information Technology Services has reduced the energy usage of servers and associated equipment. Plans are underway to minimize the air conditioning needs of servers at the Health Department to further reduce energy use.

## **Sustainable Materials Management**

- In 2014 the Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Division (TCSWMD) launched satellite Food Scraps Recycling Drop Spots at the Dryden Town Highway Barn, Lansing Village Offices, and Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- The residential curbside food scraps recycling pilot was expanded in 2014 to encompass areas within the City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, Town of Ulysses, and Village of Trumansburg in order to better understand the strengths, costs, and challenges of collection.
- TCSWMD expanded food scraps recycling in County facilities to include Building C and the Old Jail in 2014, and the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building in 2015, with plans to expand the program to other County facilities. In the process, County employees are being reminded of recycling guidelines through outreach at staff meetings.
- TCSWMD staff are working with the waste reduction representatives for each department to:
  - determine the status of the original recommendations from each department's waste assessment
  - identify new opportunities for diversion from the waste stream; and
  - identify next steps for waste reduction and sustainable materials management.
- During spring 2015 Information Technology Services is measuring the paper reduction that has resulted from the use of multifunctional devices (such as combined copiers/scanners/fax machines) and software installed throughout County offices.
- Recycling bins in County facilities have been updated with single stream recycling information, and continue to be adjusted as needed to accommodate changes at facilities while maintaining easy access, high visibility, and clear labeling of recycling bins.
- In November 2014 the Tompkins County Legislature adopted a resolution supporting a statewide campaign to recover textiles from the waste stream.
- In 2015, TCSWMD launched a ReUse Diversion Program with Finger Lakes ReUse and Casella Recycling to remove reusable materials from the waste stream.

## **Purchasing**

- In March 2015 the Purchasing Department began using a new online bidding system, which is a joint project of Information Technology Services, Purchasing, and County Administration to reduce the amount of paper used to submit bids and to respond to requests for proposals.

## **Protection of County Lands**

- In 2014 the Tompkins County Legislature authorized a request for proposals for the purchase or lease, and redevelopment, of the Old Library property with special consideration given towards proposals that are energy efficient and minimize impacts of demolition/deconstruction and/or remediation.
- Properties under foreclosure continue to be screened by County staff to identify the presence of agricultural districts, Natural Features Focus Areas (NFFAs), scenic resources, stream buffers and Unique Natural Areas (UNAs) and to determine when deed restrictions should be placed on properties prior to auction. The County also continues to seek out conservation-oriented owners for parcels, as appropriate, and to look for other alternative options for parcels that can advance the County principles and policies.

## **Employee Engagement**

- In addition to workplace CSA shares at the Health Department and the Department of Social Services, the successful participation of Courthouse Complex employees in a workplace CSA has resulted in Ithaca Organics adopting the DeWitt Park Farmer's Market as a pickup location for the general public, improving the ease of access of downtown residents and employees to healthy foods.
- Beginning in 2014, two bicycles have been made available to Health Department staff for use during lunch and breaks. Business use of the bicycles is currently being evaluated to potentially provide transportation as well as health benefits, and discussions are underway regarding a bike share for downtown County staff to reduce the use of vehicles for nearby meetings.
- Staff in the Old Jail are working to reduce the carbon footprint of their coffee consumption, using timers to minimize energy used to heat and refillable/reusable alternatives to Keurig cups.
- Information Technology Services staff began developing an online mapping prototype in 2014 that will ultimately enable both County employees and the public to learn about sustainability projects underway at various County facilities.

## **TOMPKINS COUNTY FUEL USE**

Tompkins County is committed to reducing the fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from County-owned vehicles and fuel-using mobile equipment. As part of this effort, Tompkins County began switching some of its vehicles and equipment from diesel to biodiesel in 2009. In 2014, 23,574 gallons of B10 biodiesel and 28,522 gallons of B20 biodiesel were purchased, representing a reduction of approximately 67 tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions over the equivalent amount of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel.

Tompkins County began using WEX Fleet Cards for fuel purchases in 2013, with 2014 marking the first full year's worth of fuel purchases by all County departments. The WEX network captures data when fuel is purchased, enabling Tompkins County to review this data to track trends related to fuel use and costs. As Sustainability Team members seek to more fully implement the County's Green Fleet Policy and its reporting requirements, the 2014 data summarized below will provide a benchmark.

**2014 WEX Fuel Card Purchases by Department**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Fuel (gallons)</b>
Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport	80
Tompkins Co. Dept of Emergency Response	1,252
Tompkins Co. Info. Technology Services	86
Tompkins County Board of Elections	5
Tompkins County Clerk	763
Tompkins County Dept of Assessment	905
Tompkins County DSS	6,373
Tompkins County Facilities	78
Tompkins County Health	2,974
Tompkins County Highway	1,682
Tompkins County Mental Health	1,563
Tompkins County Planning	131
Tompkins County Probation	1,388
Tompkins County Sheriff	51,962
Tompkins County Solid Waste	1,224
Tompkins County Weights & Measures	396
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>70,858</b>

**2014 WEX Fuel Purchases by Fuel Type**

<b>Fuel Type</b>	<b>Gallons Used</b>
Diesel	507
Unleaded	70,352
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>70,859</b>

With the addition of fuel purchased by the Airport through a contract with Griffith Energy and non-WEX recorded fueling at the Highways Department, total fuel use is provided below.

**2014 Fuel Use by County Vehicles (WEX, Griffith Energy, and Highways Combined)**

<b>Fuel Type</b>	<b>Gallons Used</b>
Diesel	75,014
Unleaded	98,282
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>173,296</b>

## TOMPKINS COUNTY ENERGY USE

In 2005, Tompkins County entered into an energy savings performance contract with Johnson Controls, Inc. to make infrastructure improvements to County facilities that save energy and operational costs and are paid for from energy savings and the utilities budget. More recently, a “Utilities Dashboard” was created to enable County staff to input electricity and natural gas billing information and track usage and costs. However, with technical support for this dashboard ending, Planning Department staff have begun collecting and organizing utility bills in Excel to provide a simple framework for maintaining records that will require no specialized training for current or future users. Although Solid Waste and Airport utility bills were not historically part of the Utilities Dashboard, their records from 2014 onwards have been incorporated into the new tracking system, making 2014 a benchmark year for electricity and natural gas data. Details are summarized below.

### 2014 Electricity and Natural Gas Use by Building/Facility

Facility Name	Electricity Use (kwh)	Natural Gas Use (therms)
Airport - Crash Fire & Rescue	249,520	12,454
Airport - Old IHA Hangar	8,308	-
Airport - Parking Lights	4,109	-
Airport - Sand Storage Building	10,321	7,604
Airport - T Hangar I	11,459	-
Airport - T Hangar II	10,737	-
Airport Terminal	1,092,800	43,755
Board of Elections Training and Storage Center	18,912	3,123
Bostwick/Highway	211,300	31,722
Building C	194,480	7,306
Courthouse Complex	582,000	32,415
Department of Motor Vehicles	44,040	2,681
Emergency Response Center	367,448	6,936
Fire Pump Mental Health	201	-
Health Department	276,000	17,398
Human Services Annex Building - COFA	12,076	3,163
Human Services Building	725,885	27,676
Mental Health	542,400	11,284
Old Library Building	225,600	24,721
Public Safety Building	604,560	22,771
Solid Waste - Household Hazardous Waste Building	-	1,995
Solid Waste Office	66,520	2,189
Tompkins County Public Library	784,800	21,057
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,043,476</b>	<b>280,249</b>

## **NEXT STEPS**

Data collection and analysis is a large focus for sustainability efforts in 2015. This work will assist the County's efforts to achieve Climate Smart Communities Certification, to update its greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and to assist sustainability-related policy and program implementation. The Climate Smart Communities Certification is an intensive process and one that is anticipated to be a primary focus for the remainder of 2015. However, the organization of records and documentation of the County's past sustainability-related efforts will provide an excellent basis for disseminating lessons learned and fine-tuning the County's next steps in working towards sustainable government operations at every level, from individual employees through departments and the larger organization. The *Tompkins County Sustainability Strategy* will continue to direct the Sustainability Team's work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the risks associated with climate change for the health, safety, and well-being of the local and broader global community.