

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2025, 4:00-6:00PM

Old Jail Conference Room/Via Zoom

Final Minutes

Meeting Facilitator: Irene Weiser

Attendance

Member		Member		Staff	
Andrea Aguirre	E	Rebecca Evans	P	Terry Carroll	P
Ethan Bodnaruk	P	Guillermo Metz	P	Hailley Delisle	P
Louise Bruce	A	Martha Robertson	P	Kristin McCarthy	P
Veronica Pillar*	P	Irene Weiser	P		
Brian Eden	P	Chris Wirth	P		
Danielle Eiseman	E				

*Non-voting member

Guests: Anne Koreman

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review/Draft Minutes Approval – Meeting facilitator Irene Weiser called the meeting to order at 4:04pm. No changes were made to the agenda. The August draft minutes were not voted on.

2. Public Comment – None

3. Member Updates – Members shared updates on various topics including state and federal comment periods and funding releases. Martha reported attending a Lawyers for Good Government webinar about the EPA's endangerment finding for greenhouse gas emissions. Brian noted multiple October comment deadlines including the State Energy Plan and nuclear power plant refinancing, with roundtables scheduled. Rebecca shared that the City of Ithaca finally received \$1.5 million in federal funding for school district energy assessments and the Energy Warrior program. Irene announced upcoming public hearings including the Town of Lansing's development moratorium hearing and NYSEG rate case hearings. She also shared that she has been invited to participate in a New York State Senate hearing on the Public Service Commission.

4. Report/Discussion: Ithaca Airport Sustainability Master Plan – *Roxan Noble, Mia Held, and Joni Steigerwald*

Irene introduced Airport Director Roxan Noble, who presented with consultants Joni Steigerwald and Mia Held on updating the Ithaca Airport Sustainability Master Plan, a 20-year planning document that includes forecasts, facility requirements, and alternatives development guided by the FAA. Joni explained the project timeline running from October 2024 to May 2026 and noted the project is currently awaiting FAA approval before moving forward. Mia highlighted that Ithaca had the first sustainable airport master plan in the country in 2012 and has since implemented initiatives including geothermal well fields, energy-efficient lighting, solar canopies, and electric vehicle infrastructure. The update process has included public workshops, advisory committees, school outreach, a waste audit, and an internal sustainability charrette, with two additional community meetings planned. Discussion topics included FAA review criteria, the airport's economic viability and return to pre-COVID

sustainability levels, environmental concerns about de-icing chemicals, the tension between economic and environmental sustainability regarding flight operations, regional transportation coordination, and federal support for sustainable aviation fuels and alternative technologies. Members also discussed passenger carbon offset programs and the potential for biofuels, hydrogen, and electrification to reduce aviation emissions. The airport team encouraged board members to share questions with Terry and Roxan and attend upcoming public meetings.

5. Report/Action: Bylaws Update

Irene Weiser moved consideration of voting to approve the board's bylaws. She proposed incorporating language from the County Attorney into the bylaws regarding the executive committee. The proposed addition states: "The committee shall meet as necessary to act on administrative matters, including finalizing letters and comments discussed at a previous board meeting."

Action: Martha Robertson made a motion to incorporate the County Attorney's amendment regarding the executive committee, which Rebecca Evans seconded. Motion carried.

Action: Irene Weiser made a motion to approve the entire set of bylaws with permission to fine-tune language, which Rebecca Evans seconded. Motion carried.

6. Discussion: Working Groups

Irene led a continued discussion on working groups and future priorities, noting new ideas including educating incoming legislators. The mobile home working group continues to address environmental threats and challenges facing residents during extreme weather events. Several board members remain involved with the NYSEG rate case, though not as a formal working group. Rebecca separately mentioned that she is working on developing an RFP to hire an attorney to represent multiple municipalities in the NYSEG rate case. Previous discussions included climate resiliency and mental health impacts on children and young people. Members expressed interest in working group topics including NYSEG issues, mobile homes, data center development and its connection to energy issues, and resiliency for lower-income populations. Others mentioned wanting to better understand County sustainability initiatives.

7. Staff Report – Terry and Hailley presented updates on County projects and initiatives. Terry reported on the budget process, noting that no funding is proposed for green facilities or electric vehicle purchases for the next year. He also discussed the ongoing Center of Government project and the limitations of the geothermal feasibility study, which restricted the number of buildings that could be connected. Furthermore, Terry mentioned challenges in spending the Clean Energy Communities Program grant. Hailley shared that a sustainability conference for municipal staff was successful and that she is working on information requests and drafting comments related to the NYSEG rate case and the New York State Energy Plan.

8. Discussion: Board Recruitment/Officer Selection for 2026

Three board members will be departing by year-end, creating vacancies that need to be filled. Martha volunteered to chair the nominations committee to identify new officers from among existing board members, while Martha, Rebecca, and Irene will work together on membership recruitment with staff assistance. Previous applicants will need to submit new applications rather than simply reaffirming

interest, though the committee can reach out to encourage them to reapply.

9. Discussion: November/December Meeting Planning

Kristin will distribute a scheduling poll for a combined November-December meeting that will also serve as a farewell gathering for departing members.

10. County Legislature Update – Anne Koreman

Annie reported that the first public forum for the budget process is scheduled for Sept. 30 at 5:30 p.m. She is drafting three budget enhancement requests, including paying full dues to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Inter-Municipal Organization (approximately \$3,772 increase), catching up on deferred vehicle purchases and leases, and increasing the Planning and Sustainability Department's training budget from \$400 to \$800 per person. Members discussed the importance of addressing deferred vehicle purchases after two years, noting that vehicles are breaking down and anticipated Medicaid cuts make it important to address these needs now. The vehicle enhancement involves a mix of vehicle types as the fleet gradually becomes greener. Members also noted that reduced commitment from Tompkins County to the watershed organization could lead other municipalities to pull back, potentially eliminating funding for the organization's staff position. The board discussed whether to support Annie's enhancement requests with a letter from CASE.

Action: Martha Robertson made a motion that the CASE board support Anne Koreman's three proposed enhancements: \$3,772 for Cayuga Lake Watershed Inter-Municipal Organization dues (from target budget), Planning & Sustainability Department training increase to \$800 per person (from target budget), and vehicles to catch up on deferred purchases (from fund balance) and empowered Martha Robertson, Danielle Eiseman, and Annie Koreman to work on developing this letter together after the meeting. Brian Eden seconded the motion. Guillermo Metz abstained. Motion carried.

11. Chair's Report – While no formal chair's report was given, Irene provided updates and facilitated discussions throughout the meeting on various board business items.

12. Meeting Wrap-up – Rebecca requested future agenda time to discuss the Resilient Cities Network and CDC Building Resilience Against Climate Effects. Irene suggested inviting Abigail Connor, the County's Environmental Planner, to a future meeting to discuss resilience planning. She also shared about the successful Danby Resilience Fair, which attracted over 100 people and engaged attendees in conversations about disaster preparedness and community resources.

13. Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned at 6:02pm.