

**EMC Minutes**  
**July 10, 4:00 p.m.**  
**CAP ArtSpace**

**Attendance**

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Dan Antonioli	A	At-Large	Susan Riley	P	At-Large
Steve Bissen	P	Town of Dryden	Barry Siebe	P	Town of Groton
Christine Collins	P	Town of Ulysses	Elaine Tietjen	P	At-Large
Cait Darfler	P	At-Large	Brad Will	E	At-Large
Edward Dubovi	E	Town of Lansing	Ingrid Zabel	P	Town of Ithaca
Ace Dufresne	P	Student 1	Jack Zinda	A	At-Large
Thomas Hirasuna	P	At-Large	<i>Brian Wendel</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Siobhan Hull	P	City of Ithaca	<i>Kathleen Yen</i>	P	<i>Associate</i>
Peter McDonald	E	Town of Danby	<i>Anne Koreman</i>	E	<i>Legislative Liaison</i>
Melissa Millspaugh	A	Town of Enfield	Darby Kiley	E	Tompkins Co. staff
Steve Nicholson	P	Town of Caroline	Kristin McCarthy	P	Tompkins Co. staff

**Guests:** Aubryn Sidle

**Call to Order** – Chair Cait Darfler called the meeting to order at 4:06pm.

**Agenda Review/Public Comment** – No changes to the agenda or public comment.

**Approval of Minutes** – The June 2025 draft minutes were not voted on.

**Executive Committee Report** – Cait reported on behalf of the Executive Committee regarding fall outreach event planning discussions. At a recent meeting, the committee explored formats such as a "Meet your County Departments" panel or presentations on FEMA flood insurance mapping updates. Additionally, they considered combining sustainability, adaptation, and resilience topics including flood prevention, extreme weather preparedness, and proactive approaches to solid waste disposal, solar development, and farmland preservation.

**Presentation: EMC Final Strategic Plan – Dr. Aubryn Sidle, Cornell University**

Dr. Sidle presented the results of a comprehensive strategic planning process undertaken by her and her students for the EMC, which engaged 40 participants through interviews and surveys, including EMC representatives, state officials, county stakeholders, and environmental nonprofits. She outlined four primary strategic priorities that emerged from this work: aligning programmatic work with the County's legislative mission, formalizing organizational structure to build capacity, enhancing funding opportunities, and strengthening research-based partnerships and public outreach. To better align with legislative priorities, she recommended adopting a formal legislative program, ensuring regular attendance at County meetings, and establishing a legislative affairs committee. For organizational improvements, she presented recommendations including creating committees that align with priority areas, developing standard operating procedures, and diversifying membership to include underrepresented groups such as farmers and indigenous communities. She also discussed strengthening external relationships through formal mechanisms for public reporting, including hosting an annual "State of the Environment" forum and building readership of communications like the Green

Scene newsletter. Dr. Sidle emphasized that determining appropriate venues for ad-hoc meetings on important environmental issues would be crucial for effective public engagement. She concluded that the strategic planning process provided a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening the EMC's role in Tompkins County's environmental governance.

### **Full Group Discussion: EMC Final Strategic Plan**

Members engaged in discussion about the strategic priorities and their implementation, with questions raised about the focus on attending PEEQ committee meetings instead of legislative meetings and clarification provided about the value of PEEQ meetings for understanding County department activities. While the overall plan was viewed positively, concerns were raised about capacity and implementation, with members noting that the organization doesn't have enough people to spread across all proposed activities and emphasizing the need for more associates and clarity about participation expectations. The group discussed perceptions of the EMC as an activist organization versus an advisory body, with stakeholder interviews revealing that some viewed the EMC as an "influencer body" and advocacy organization, which concerned some legislators. However, members emphasized the importance of maintaining credibility through science-based recommendations, noting that while Tompkins County has many environmental advocacy groups, there are better ways to build relationships with the Legislature, especially given upcoming legislative turnover.

### **Small Group Work: Strategy Priorities**

During the working session, participants identified three primary committee areas for implementation: Legislative Action, Engagement, and Outreach. The Legislative Action committee would handle relationships with County government, legislative advocacy, the UNA program, and work with town representatives who could serve as liaisons to their respective municipalities. The Engagement committee would focus on member recruitment, retention, internal structure, and organizational development to ensure all board members have meaningful assignments and address expertise gaps. The Outreach committee would manage public communications including the Green Scene newsletter, environmental directory, forums, workshops, and community relationships. The group emphasized the importance of being simple and clear about what the EMC accomplishes to help stakeholders understand how they can assist. Members also discussed strengthening relationships with town representatives and creating opportunities for them to network more effectively. While the overall plan was viewed positively, concerns were raised about capacity and implementation, with members noting that the organization doesn't have enough people to spread across all proposed activities. The conversation underscored the challenge of balancing limited bandwidth with numerous potential actions while maintaining the committee's advisory role and scientific credibility.

### **Full Group Discussion: Small Group Implementation Planning**

Attendees established planning groups for each committee area, with members volunteering to develop scope, sustainability plans, and recommendations for committee structure. Each group was tasked with defining the scope and mission of their respective committee, developing a sustainability plan, determining structure and how work will get done, and defining specific priorities and tasks. The groups will attempt to meet before the next EMC meeting to develop proposals for their respective areas.

**Adjournment** – Chair Cait Darfler adjourned the meeting at 6:02pm.