

1 EMC Final Minutes
2 Sept. 11, 4:00 p.m.
3 Via Zoom

4 Attendance

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

5 Guests: John Flemming

6 **Call to Order** – Chair Cait Darfler called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

7 **Agenda Review/Public Comment** – No changes to the agenda. No members of the public spoke.

8 **Approval of Minutes** – The June and July 2025 draft minutes were approved (motion by Melissa
9 Millspaugh, second by Steve Nicholson) as submitted. Motion carried.

10 **Guest Presentation: Sewage Sludge Spreading on Farmland: How to Protect Our Land and Food from**
11 **PFAS Chemicals** – *Claire Walsh Winsler, Environmental Advocates of New York*
12 Claire Walsh-Wensler from Environmental Advocates New York presented on protecting land and food
13 from PFAS chemicals in biosolids. She explained that biosolids are the solid waste remaining after
14 sewage treatment, which since 1989 have been processed as fertilizer due to their nitrogen and
15 phosphorus content. However, they may contain dangerous industrial contaminants including PFAS
16 "forever chemicals" that bioaccumulate and have been linked to various cancers and health issues.
17 Claire noted that Maine has banned all land application while Connecticut also has a ban and
18 Massachusetts is considering one, which means New York is increasingly receiving biosolids imports
19 from neighboring states. She shared that around 78% of New York's biosolids go to landfills, 19% are
20 land applied, and less than 10% are incinerated, with no Class B spreading permits currently in Tompkins
21 County. Discussion covered concerns about landfill capacity, the history and regulation of biosolids,
22 emerging technologies like pyrolysis and specialized bacteria, and whether gray water separation could
23 help address contamination. Potential next steps include the EMC passing a resolution requesting the
24 County Legislature implement a temporary moratorium on biosolids land application framed as a public
25 health measure, based on model language from other counties. The resolution could include provisions
26 for investigating public safety concerns and technological solutions during the moratorium period, and
27 the EMC could work with the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board on surveying farmers about
28 current biosolids use practices.

29 **Executive Committee Report** – Cait reported on the New York State Association of Conservation
30 Commissions (NYSACC) conference, which will be held October 23-25 in Ulster County, with registration
31 now open and several members planning to attend. Steve N. reported that the EMC donated \$500 from
32 past NYSACC conference earnings toward planting five trees at the Von Engeln Preserve in Dryden as a
33 memorial to long-time EMC member Bob Beck. Additionally, Cait gave an overview on the new approach
34 to municipal and committee reports where members share updates via an email thread started a few
35 days before the monthly meeting, allowing for follow-up discussion during meetings rather than
36 spending time just listening to reports.

37 **Strategic Planning Groups Update** – Cait shared a spreadsheet organizing the strategic planning work
38 with tabs for group scope and structure as well as tasks and timelines. It was reported that the executive
39 committee will continue handling most engagement-related work but will outsource tasks when
40 needed. The outreach group has been working steadily on the environmental directory and envisioned
41 their work in two aspects: partnerships with other organizations and NGOs, and public education
42 including perhaps a potential pilot program having graduate students present environmental talks at
43 local high schools. Three types of online resources were proposed including the aforementioned
44 directory of environmental organizations, a directory of environmental issues with curated information,
45 and a compilation of member expertise and contacts. The legislative action group's role was described
46 as tracking and prioritizing major issues where the EMC overlaps with other advisory groups and the
47 County Legislature, as well as making research-based recommendations through fact sheets and
48 resolutions. Concerns were raised about the large number of tasks being too ambitious for year one,
49 with suggestions to sort out structure first and better define what each working group does to avoid
50 overlap, confusion, and dilution of effort. It was noted that many items are ongoing processes rather
51 than tasks to complete in a single year. Discussion addressed member bandwidth concerns, with
52 clarification that the EMC previously dissolved committees because expectations were too high and
53 moved to task groups so people could work asynchronously. The concept of associate memberships was
54 discussed as an option for those who want to contribute to specific committees or working groups
55 without attending all EMC meetings. Members were asked to meet once more in their working groups
56 over the next month to flesh out tasks more specifically and consider what they are willing and able to
57 contribute, with the goal of having a structure set up by year end.

58 **Legislative Liaison Update (as needed)** – Annie reiterated that as her term on the County Legislature
59 ends in December, she would like to see a temporary moratorium on biosolids passed locally before
60 year end if possible; however, she was also confident that new legislators would support it if it extends
61 into early next year. She said she would consult with the County Attorney to learn whether a public
62 hearing is needed and ask questions about enforcement. Annie also noted it is a tough budget year with
63 some environmental items not getting funded in the draft County Administrator's budget, such as new
64 electric vehicles for the County fleet.

65 **Staff Report (as needed)** – None

66 **Member Announcements** – None

67 **Adjournment** – Chair Cait Darfler adjourned the meeting at 5:36pm.