

**EMC Minutes**  
**Feb. 12 4:00 p.m.**  
**Via Zoom**

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**Attendance**

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Dan Antonioli	A	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	<i>Adam Vinson</i>	P	<i>Legislative Liaison</i>
Edward Dubovi	P	Town of Lansing	<i>Karen Edelstein</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Ace Dufresne	E	Student 1	<i>David Weinstein</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Thomas Hirasuna	P	At-Large	<i>Brian Wendel</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Siobhan Hull	p	City of Ithaca	<i>Robert Wesley</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Pete Loucks	P	Town of Ithaca	<i>Kathleen Yen</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Peter McDonald	A	Town of Danby	<i>Jack Zinda</i>	A	<i>Associate</i>
Melissa Millspaugh	P	Town of Enfield	Darby Kiley	P	Tompkins Co. staff
Steve Nicholson	P	Town of Caroline	Kristin McCarthy	P	Tompkins Co. staff

5 **Guests:** Kitty Gifford, Michael Lawless, Ron Szymanski

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

7 The December 2025 and January 2026 draft meeting minutes were approved (motion by Barry Siebe,  
8 second by Christine Collins) as submitted.

9 **Icebreaker**

10 Attendees participated in a brief icebreaker conducted in breakout rooms. They were asked to share  
11 one thing they find difficult about winter and one thing they enjoy about it.

12 **Presentation: Key Highlights from DPS Work Program**

13 Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability Katie Borgella provided an overview of the department's  
14 14-person staff and broad portfolio, emphasizing that because the County holds no land use authority,  
15 its primary roles are data collection and analysis, convening municipal and agency partners, providing  
16 technical support, and pursuing grant funding. A question was raised about the County's role in  
17 municipal planning review; Katie noted that while a state law requires municipalities to submit certain  
18 actions for County review, the department also maintains an open-door relationship with municipal  
19 planning boards and is available for informal consultation. Chief Sustainability Officer Terry Carroll  
20 highlighted two 2026 initiatives: a greenhouse gas inventory using 2024 data and a refresh of the  
21 County's Energy Roadmap, which will assess progress toward net-zero goals and engage the EMC as part  
22 of a community outreach process. Cait noted that in many counties the EMC takes on clean energy and  
23 climate-smart community work already supported here through the Planning Department.

24 Natural Resources Planner Darby Kiley described stream corridor assessment studies for Six Mile Creek  
25 and Fall Creek, funded through a state DEC grant, focusing on erosion, flood storage, and stream  
26 stabilization opportunities; fieldwork has been delayed by winter conditions. A question was raised  
27 about Salmon Creek, a significant watershed with erosion and flooding concerns; Darby acknowledged it

28 as a priority and noted ongoing work by the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District in  
29 that area. Environmental Planner Abigail Conner discussed baseline report updates for the County's  
30 2,000-plus acres of agricultural conservation easements and a forthcoming Hazard Mitigation Plan  
31 update. A question about what happens if federal funding does not materialize prompted Abigail to note  
32 that the Department of Homeland Security is actively exploring alternatives, and that the update  
33 remains essential regardless, as it determines municipal eligibility for state and federal funding. She  
34 invited the EMC to help disseminate information through its municipal networks.

### 35 **Committee Updates**

36 **Executive** -- Cait shared highlights from her report, distributed in advance by email. Key items included a  
37 plan for each committee to facilitate one EMC meeting per quarter, with the Outreach Committee  
38 taking March. The annual report is due end of March, with contributions and photos requested by late  
39 February. The May meeting will be held in person from 4 to 6 p.m., inviting conservation advisory  
40 councils and conservation boards from all municipalities.

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42 **UNA**— The committee is producing one to two articles per month in the Green Scene in honor of the  
43 50th anniversary of Unique Natural Areas. Following news that Trillium Woods was listed for sale, the  
44 committee met with the Finger Lakes Land Trust, which agreed to strive to notify the committee if any  
45 property containing a UNA comes to market. The committee is also cultivating real estate contacts to  
46 improve early awareness of land availability. The EMC's letter to the Dryden Planning Board was  
47 credited with contributing to a strong public hearing on Trillium Woods.

48 **Outreach** – The committee discussed staffing an EMC table at the Earth Day event in the Ithaca  
49 Commons on April 18; members were encouraged to check their availability. Content guidelines for the  
50 Green Scene newsletter—specifically the line between education and advocacy in article selection—  
51 were flagged for broader EMC discussion at a future meeting. Logistics for the event table, including an  
52 insurance requirement, are being coordinated with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

53 **Legislative** – Committee members have attended meetings of the Climate and Sustainable Energy  
54 Advisory (CaSE Board) Board, PEEQ Committee, and Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal  
55 Organization, and compiled links to relevant NYS Budget Bill updates and testimony hearings. The  
56 committee presented a Venn diagram identifying areas of overlap between the EMC, CaSE Board, and  
57 Water Resources Council around shared advisory and environmental priority functions.

### 58 **Municipal Representative Updates (as needed)**

59 Several municipal representatives provided updates. Highlights included a joint fiber optic broadband  
60 installation underway between the Towns of Caroline and Dryden; progress on the Coddington Valley  
61 Rail Trail extension in Caroline; the City of Ithaca's forthcoming Climate Action Plan and the launch of a  
62 Community Choice Aggregation program that other county municipalities may opt into; a solar  
63 ordinance rewrite in Groton prompted by a recent project approval; and ongoing legal and  
64 environmental permitting developments surrounding the proposed TeraWulf AI data center on the  
65 former Cayuga Power Plant site in Lansing.

### 66 **Legislative Liaison Update (as needed)**

67 Adam Vinson, the new legislative liaison, introduced himself to the group. He serves as vice chair of  
68 PEEQ and expressed a personal interest in land conservation. No formal PEEQ report was available for  
69 this meeting, as the committee had only recently met for an introductory session.

70 **Member Announcements**

71 Group shared information about Earth Day trash cleanup events being organized in multiple  
72 municipalities.

73 **Adjournment** – Chair Cait Darfler adjourned the meeting at 5:35pm.