

**EMC Final Minutes**  
**Jan. 8, 4:00 p.m.**  
**CAP Artspace**

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**Attendance**

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

5 **Guests:** None

6 **Call to Order** – Chair Cait Darfler called the meeting to order at 4:10pm, noting quorum had not been  
7 achieved. An item regarding a development project that could impact two Unique Natural Areas in the  
8 Town of Dryden was added to the agenda.

9 **Icebreaker – Conversation Cards**

10 Group participated in an activity using conversation cards designed to help members get to know each  
11 other better.

12 **Report/Discussion/Action: Dryden Development and Unique Natural Areas**

13 David Weinstein presented an urgent matter concerning a developer's proposal to subdivide land in the  
14 Town of Dryden into residential lots, affecting two significant Unique Natural Areas: Trillium Woods  
15 (UNA 74), which contains one of the densest populations of trillium flowers in Tompkins County, and  
16 Freeville Fir Tree Swamp (UNA 73), one of the only known balsam fir swamp forests in the region  
17 containing a globally endangered population of Trollius (globe flower). David shared that the Dryden  
18 Planning Board was scheduled to consider the proposal on Jan. 22, 2026. Since the meeting lacked  
19 quorum, Cait confirmed that the Executive Committee had authority to approve and send a letter on  
20 behalf of the EMC, and a show of hands indicated unanimous support from all members present. The  
21 UNA Committee committed to finalizing the letter by Monday, Jan. 12, after which the Executive  
22 Committee would approve it.

23 **Roundtable Discussion: Environmental Priorities/Focus Areas for 2026**

24 The roundtable discussion covered several environmental priorities and initiatives for the coming year. A  
25 major focus was the 50th anniversary of Tompkins County's Unique Natural Areas, with plans to  
26 celebrate through monthly newsletter features, media outreach, and special events at publicly  
27 accessible UNA sites. Earth Day planning was encouraged to begin early, and ongoing work in Caroline to  
28 extend the South Hill Recreation Way was highlighted. Ways in which the EMC could assist in  
29 strengthening coordination and support across municipalities were also covered.

30 **Committee Breakout Discussions**

31 Cait organized the group into breakout sessions to allow focused discussion of committee-specific issues  
32 and initial task planning, encouraging members not yet assigned to a committee to sit in on discussions  
33 that interested them. The UNA and Outreach Committees met together to coordinate on both the  
34 emergency response to the Dryden development and the 50th anniversary celebration, discussing media  
35 strategy and the potential for featuring UNAs in the Green Scene throughout the year. The Legislative  
36 Affairs Committee discussed organizational approaches, including creating a shared calendar to track  
37 meetings across multiple bodies, exploring methods to monitor state and local legislation, and  
38 considering outreach to NYS Assemblymember Anna Keller's office for legislative updates. The  
39 committee also discussed creating shared folders in the EMC's Google Drive and identified priority issues  
40 including mattress recycling, extended producer responsibility, solar impact mitigation, and data center  
41 environmental impacts.

42 **Committee Reports & Collaborative Problem Solving on Initial Tasks**

43 Committees reported back to the full group on their discussions and plans. Members discussed the  
44 importance of cross-committee collaboration, recognizing that legislative tracking and comment periods  
45 identified by one committee could be publicized through outreach channels, while protection of Unique  
46 Natural Areas could benefit from policy and regulatory responses. Members emphasized that improved  
47 organizational infrastructure should support collaboration with other environmental organizations in the  
48 county, ensuring research and information could be shared rather than duplicated. Attendees expressed  
49 satisfaction with the concrete progress made during the meeting.

50 **Adjournment** – Chair Cait Darfler adjourned the meeting at 5:32pm.