

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting March 9, 2011

Voting Members Present (10): Sarah Adams, Eric Banford, Kenny Christianson, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Kristine Shaw, David Slottje, Gary Stewart

Voting Members Excused (4): Spring Buck, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Roger Yonkin

Voting Member Absent (1): Lucia Tyler

Non-Voting Member Present (1): Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Bert Bland, Ed Wilson

Staff Present: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Dan Lamb at 7:06 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor – There were no visitors who wished to speak under Privilege of the Floor.

Changes to the Agenda – There were no changes to the agenda.

Cornell's Climate Action Plan and Sustainability Initiatives: Updates, Next Steps and Seeking Inputs – Gary Stewart welcomed Bert Bland and Ed Wilson, who were present from Cornell's Facilities Services Division. [Link to background was included on the agenda: <http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/>] Bert provided a quick outline of the CU Climate Action Plan, saying main components included efforts on campus such as use of steam to produce electricity, chilled water to provide air conditioning, drinking water, and energy conservation measures. In 2007, President Skorton signed the American University and College Presidents Climate Commitment, which included providing update information for calculation of CU's carbon footprint every two years. The overall goal is to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Lake Source Cooling and the Combined Heat and Power Plant have already shown improvements. CU is phasing out all coal use. Energy conservation is easiest to implement and shows immediate results, but the largest impact would come from conversion of energy sources. Their hope is to engage EMC in conversation on how CU can be successful in implementing their goals. The main projects being addressed by Ed Wilson are biomass and wind energy sources for campus. The large drop on the projection chart reflects planned implementation of deep geothermal, anticipated 2025-2030.

Bert said CU proposed a large wind project about five years ago, which met with much public opposition. They are now looking at smaller units on scattered sites. These units would not be grid connected, but would serve the building(s) near the turbines. The size of these turbines fits in with a NYSERDA installation project, and would also meet the NYSERDA minimum lot size and windspeed requirements. While there is more community support for wind energy now, people still shy away from having turbines near their homes. Specific information is not available yet, but this would be one of the efforts of CU to get away from burning coal, which the campus has done since 1865.

Katie Kelly asked if there were any comparisons to other campuses for the scope of the Plan and CU's current success. Bert said there are 600 colleges in the commitment group, and CU received an award for their Plan in the large private research university category. Issues that will be reported out go beyond sustainability, and include tracking and grading the system for ratings on many other aspects. When asked why the blue wedge contributed the most towards the goals, Bert said the Combined Heat and Power Plant will produce 85% of the campus electricity and all of its heat. There will only be credit for biomass under the wedge system if the biomass is sustainably harvested. The chart showed some sketched lines at the beginning, which represent initial actions that were made before CU had to start reporting under the Clean Air Act. Sarah Adams commented that she sees a woeful lack of energy awareness on the part of students living off campus. She asked if CU was working on any awareness programs for off-campus residents. Bert acknowledged they don't do a good job with off-campus students, and are most effective with changes to CU buildings. There are student organizations that include off campus efforts, though. Katie said competition is probably the best way to inspire them. Gary said it is also effective to let them know people are watching.

Dan asked about financial returns on CU's investments in energy efficiency. Bert said right now this is investment of CU money. Some projects in the future will implement research grants. They are careful in using their limited funds, as they don't want to do any poor investments. Kenny asked about models that track savings. Bert said there have not been enough savings to pay for a project yet. In Massachusetts, utilities are required to have certain percentages of their power come from specific sources, which is the only reason Cape Wind is proceeding. Kenny said he and the Energy Committee supported the prior CU wind proposal, and acknowledge the need for better outreach to neighbors. Bert noted that site is not off the table. Ed said NYSERDA has an interactive weblink with a map that shows recorded wind speeds. Highest wind speeds are in the Adirondacks, but CU wants to select sites close enough to campus for use in student research. Eric Banford concurred with Kenny about the need for conversations with neighbors in bringing about success.

Sarah posed a question to EMC members – if a private energy source produces more than the facility uses, what is the reimbursement rate? She noted in Europe it is almost equal. Dan and Steve said this is referred to as reverse net metering, when unused energy goes into the grid. Currently private producers get the wholesale price, but the amount that can be sold into the grid is very limited. As Steve said, the industry is still winning. Dan thought it would be worth pursuing an update in Albany.

Committee Reports – Environmental Review: Jim McGarry said EcoLogic released the documents for the dredging project yesterday. He was appalled that it only includes the City portion of the project (Cascadilla Creek). This is the smallest of the three components, as DEC and Canal Corp have larger quantities of spoils to remove in their jurisdictions. He doesn't see anyone in charge of the project overall. The Army Corps of Engineers is threatening to issue a failure result for last fall's inspection, which would mean no reparations in case of flooding. ERC will provide comments on the dredging scope.

Municipal Reports – Town of Ithaca: Kristine Shaw pointed out the Conservation Board wants the EMC invasive species list updated, as some of their work refers to this document. Katie said the Communications Committee is working on that list.

Other Reports – Legislature Liaison: EMC does not currently have a liaison from the County Legislature. Dooley Kiefer said there has been concern about NYS Department of Transportation potentially contracting to have a cell tower on their property on Cayuga Inlet. The County has worked in the past to arrange for DOT to move from that site so the waterfront could be developed. **Chair:** No report. **Staff:** Copies were distributed of the 2010 Annual Report, updated member list, and 2011 committee list. Kathy Wilsea said she has contacted the chair of PDEQ and requested appointment of a Legislature Liaison. Dooley said she has also mentioned this to the PDEQ chair. As Kathy was finishing the Annual Report, she thought it would be a nice idea to distribute our next annual report during personal contacts by members with municipalities that have vacancies. EMC might hold a 40th anniversary party later in the year, and invite former members. Recruiting and anniversary party will be topics for the Executive Committee to discuss. Katie said Exec would also welcome ideas for agenda building. Sarah expressed interest in learning about the district heating project proposed for the former Emerson site. Dooley wanted to learn about use of liquid propane for hydrofracturing. Gary asked if EMC was interested in learning about the bridge fences proposed on campus as a means of reducing suicides. The bridges are over UNA gorges.

Member Items – Dan said the CU Law School is sponsoring a conference on gas drilling March 31 – April 2. White House participation is anticipated. Registration is free, and done on the law school website. **Eric** announced Sustainable Tompkins and Shaleshock are sponsoring an Energy Security event on April 6th at the Women's Community Building. This is a followup to the Marcellus Challenge. **Kenny** reported he attended the Delaware River Basin Commission hearings last week. Environmentalists were clearly outnumbered, and he estimated they were only a quarter of the participants. Drilling supporters were quite hostile. He pointed out we are in the comment period for the EPA water study.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of February 9, 2011 were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Adjournment – Dan was thanked profusely for ending at 8:30 when the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department
Approved by Council on April 13, 2011