

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting March 11, 2009

Voting Members Present (15): Kenny Christianson, Martha Ferger, Dan Lamb, Kariann Mackie-Cunningham, Stan Marcus, Jim McGarry, Michael Miles, Tony Nekut, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Jacie Spoon, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Mark Whitmore

Voting Members Excused (4): Neha Khanna, Larry Sharpsteen, Marissa Weiss, Roger Yonkin

Non-Voting Members Present (2): Carol Chock, Herb Engman

Guests Present: Spring Buck, Roberta Dixon, Katie Kelly, Deborah Marcus, Kristine Shaw

Staff Present: Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Amy Risen at 7:06 p.m.

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

Changes to the Agenda – No changes were made to the agenda.

The Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine Waste Management Facility – Paul Jennette, Biosafety Engineer, gave a presentation on the waste management project and provided paper copies of his PowerPoint material. The project started before 1992 while examining possibilities for a new incinerator for carcasses and other waste. Concern was voiced in the community about the height of the stack and emissions, so the project was halted. In 1996 the Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee (CCWMAC) was formed, and EMC members Ed Cope, Kenny Christianson, and Dooley Kiefer have served on this committee. CCWMAC produced a report of recommendations in 1998, a scoping and draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2000 and 2002 respectively, conducted a public hearing in 2002, and issued a supplemental EIS in 2003. Permitting, design, and construction have occurred since 2004. Current focus is on what will go into Cayuga Lake if liquid waste is treated at the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility (IAWWTF).

Medical waste is now shipped to Buffalo for decontamination and disposal. Bedding from animals with infectious diseases is currently incinerated and shipped for disposal. In the future these wastes would have steam sterilization at the new waste management facility (WMF), then be shredded and hauled for disposal.

This leaves the biggest concern of animal remains, which are currently incinerated. In the future they will undergo alkaline hydrolysis, which is like a gigantic pressure cooker with an alkaline agent added to raise the pH. It is considered safer than transporting untreated waste; has reduced energy use; and has corresponding reduction of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate waste emissions. Cremains would go to a sanitary landfill, and liquids to wastewater treatment. Most existing alkaline hydrolysis systems put the liquid waste into a sanitary sewer. WMF plans to haul it to an anaerobic treatment plant – this is a permitted treatment at Watertown, and is under review at Endicott and IAWWTF. IAWWTF's Special Joint Committee was part of the EIS process. The anaerobic treatment is a digestive process in the absence of oxygen, and provides energy recovery.

Paul went on to speak of prions, which were characterized as “rogue” proteins that are resistant to conventional disinfection methods. Cornell Vet College does not routinely handle prion-infected carcasses, and does no prion research. However, Cornell has a role in public health testing for NYS. Alkaline hydrolysis meets or exceeds recommended conditions for prion inactivation in tissues. In testing elsewhere, prions go into sludge, and have not discharged into water. Even if there are failures in the alkaline hydrolysis phase or wastewater treatment phase, there is only a very remote chance of prions going into Cayuga Lake. Extensive tests have been conducted in UK and the

US. Construction is underway for the facility at Cornell, with operational test in spring 2009 and hopes of being fully operational in the summer.

In a discussion period, Paul said there was also extensive analysis of sludge in the tests. They are getting impressive results in tests for pharmaceuticals being destroyed through the processing of carcasses. IAWWTF is the only facility locally being considered to treat the liquid waste – Cornell has a drinking water treatment facility, but none for wastewater. The Rockefeller University facility is right in Manhattan, but is not large. The pilot study result of 39 parts per million was under extreme conditions when they were trying to stress the unit, so Cornell feels 39 ppm is not representative of usual use. Expectation of reduced utility expenses is based on reduction of natural gas usage. Instead of paying NYSEG for natural gas for the incinerator, Cornell would be paying the IAWWTF fees to process liquefied waste. The EIS projected 750,000 pounds per year of solid waste from carcasses and bedding. The EIS also projected 300,000 gallons per day of liquid waste, and IAWWTF usually processes 10,000,000 gallons per day from other sources. The EIS examined hauling risks and expenses, too. DEC permits for solid waste and the incinerator are in place. The current incinerator will be demolished as soon as the new facility has a permit. The process was tested in terms of the possibility that it created new compounds, and none were found to be toxic. All the treatment systems are biological. Although not part of it's mission, Cornell would probably continue to cremate pet remains. The cremains are identical to those produced by an incinerator, and the ability to segregate a specific carcass exists. DEC tests for chronic wasting disease (CWD) are shipped to Ohio. In case of an emergency, NYS might require Cornell to process CWD. This process is able to cover emergencies, and is protective of public health. The complete process takes 13 to 14 hours, with the pressure & temperature phase being about 6 hours. Any pre-treatment process for liquid remains would be conducted at the Cornell facility, not at IAWWTF. Herb Engman said the IAWWTF governing body is examining the findings statement, and they welcome public input. Partners for IAWWTF are Town of Dryden, Town of Ithaca, and City of Ithaca. Bolton Point also examined the original study. Digestion at IAWWTF would be done by living organisms, and there is a need to control nutrient loads. SPDES permits from DEC have effluent test requirements. Kenny Christianson said he joined the CCWMAC process in the middle of the projects, and there is "lots of scary stuff", but the Vet School seeks the best solution.

Resolution No 01-2009: In Support of EARTH HOUR 2009 – Moved by Kenny Christianson, seconded by Steve Nicholson and passed by unanimous vote of members present. Jacie Spoon suggested putting this on February agendas in the future, so municipal members have time to share information.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of February 11, 2009 were accepted with one change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Municipal Reports – Town of Dryden: Stan Marcus reported their Conservation Board has a new chair, Nancy Munkenback, and they now meet on the final Tuesday of the month. The Open Space Inventory is now progressing to an Open Space Plan. They are also developing a riparian buffer management law, and would like to modify the energy ordinance developed a couple years ago. They have worked on the Verizon tower project, which is proposed near Ludgates on Hanshaw Road. Herb Engman reported the Town of Ithaca provided comments and offered to co-locate on their water tower. Verizon is not interested. Carol Chock said the Tompkins County emergency response system towers are available for co-location, and the contact person is Lee Shurtleff at Emergency Response. Stan said Cornell also has seven ideal sites. Steve Nicholson pointed out no business will co-locate until forced to do so by having their plan to build denied. Mike Miles said there was a tower permit issued for Enfield that expired, so the applicant had to apply again for a tower at maximum height. **Town of Ulysses:** Lucia Tyler reported the Town board established itself as lead agency for their comprehensive plan. A thermal imaging flyover study was conducted a few years ago with the goal of identifying septic system failures, but the results are not useful. Cayuga Lake is the drinking water source for the Town, so identifying septic failures is important. They wonder if they can require septic system tests when property changes hands. Kathy Wilsea referred her to Liz Cameron at the Department of Health, as Liz is familiar with the regulations in place in Cayuga County.

Committee Reports – Consumer Products: Amy Risen said they expect to continue research on compact fluorescent lightbulbs, and hope to review Tompkins County's green procurement policies and compare them to policies of other counties. **Communications/Website:** Mike Miles reported that they are working on website updates, have developed a

mission statement, and are planning a display for Earth Day (4/26 at Farmers Market). Amy asked that each committee contribute a display and arrange one or more volunteers. Energy: Tony Nekut is hoping for better attendance at future committee meetings. They will be working with County staff to review accounting methods for data in the Local Action Plan. The Planning Department and the County Sustainability Team will take over the lead on some of the LAP work. Tony is involved in the Danby BioMass Project, which will hold its second meeting this Saturday. Environmental Review: Jim McGarry said the committee has responded to two projects this year: Ithaca College wetlands mitigation, and the Verizon cell tower in Dryden. Projects on tap: City zoning changes, Carrowmoor, Sixmile Creek streambank stabilization, and gas drilling (addressed by a subcommittee). Meetings will be held on 4th Wednesday of the month, 5:30 PM in the Old Jail. Invasive Species: Jacie Spoon reported she will attend a workshop on Friday, and information was sent to members by email. Mark Whitmore contributed to an article planned for tomorrow's Ithaca Journal on the Hemlock wooly adelgid. Transportation: Mike Miles said they have met twice and developed a mission statement. They arranged for Fernando deAragon, Exec. Dir. of Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, to visit EMC in April to demystify transportation planning and provide information on use of stimulus funds. The committee wants to make sure transportation is being examined from an environmental/sustainability stance. They will meet at 6:15 PM prior to EMC meetings at the Transit Center. Unique Natural Areas: Steve Nicholson said they met to work on the update. In 2000, the UNA Inventory was distributed in large binders. This was inaccessible, but protective of landowners and rare species. For the 2010 edition, they are trying for an interactive CD, and will seek additional information on animals and reptiles. It may develop into a user-friendly Google map with green dots instead of exact boundaries.

Chair's Report – Amy Risen reported EMC was invited to co-sponsor some gas drilling information forums with ShaleShock. The Executive Committee considered it and declined. Info on the first presentation was in the News and the mail folder.

Staff Report – EMC Annual Report, member lists, and committee lists were distributed. Scott Doyle announced he is the new staff contact at Tompkins County Planning Department.

Legislature Liaison's Report – Carol Chock said PDEQ met this afternoon and she will probably be the liaison from the Legislature to EMC. She suggested EMC should examine Scott Doyle's analysis of which comments from Tompkins County got included in the DEC scoping document for gas drilling. PDEQ passed a resolution supporting continued funding of the Environmental Protection Fund through real estate transfer taxes. She is proud that Tompkins County is moving forward with housing initiatives, which are in partnership with the City of Ithaca and Cornell University. PDEQ passed a resolution to use stimulus funds for new busses, and a resolution asking NYS to apply for funding for more busses and Gadabout.

Member Items – Kenny Christianson announced that EMC member Neha Khanna is in Washington reviewing project applications for EPA. Roger Segelken reported that deer are a big issue in the Cayuga Heights elections that will be held in a few weeks.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on April 8, 2009