

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting April 13, 2011

Voting Members Present (9): Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Katie Kelly, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (6): Sarah Adams, Eric Banford, Dan Lamb, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, David Slottje

Guests Present: Marian Brown, Ed Marx

Staff Present: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Katie Kelly at 7:04 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda – Due to absence of a quorum at this point, draft minutes were addressed later in the meeting.

The Ithaca College Sustainability Plan – Marian Brown, Special Assistant to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, was welcomed. She said the “plan” is not complete yet, but many activities are occurring on campus. She said there is no end point with sustainability – it’s not a “what”, it’s a “how”. As an example of how an economy exists within a society, which exists within an environment, Marian gave an example of Hurricane Katrina and explained how the blow to the environment damaged the society and the economy of the region. Ithaca College encourages examination of any action in terms of how it will impact people, the environment, and business. Impacts can be positive, neutral, or negative. A positive impact means it is a sustainable decision at this time, allowing us to “get some traction”.

She spoke of the interaction of the three parts of the IC Mission Statement: Community Outreach, Curriculum & Research, and Campus Operations. Two-thirds of IC students live on campus, and the college wants to create a living laboratory for the Curriculum & Research component. They learn by doing – experiential learning reinforces classroom learning. The college sponsors the Finger Lakes Project, an annual workshop for regional educators on how to incorporate sustainability into teaching. IC’s Environmental Studies initiated many projects, which extend throughout the college community even to the environmental policy (drafted by a student) adopted by Campus Operations ten years ago. The college signed on to the Climate Commitment, with a goal of 100% carbon neutrality by 2050, although so far they only have steps planned for the first ten years. Two LEED Platinum-level buildings have been constructed, and some aspects of those successful designs will be incorporated into existing buildings. LEED Silver-level certification is anticipated for the Athletic & Events Center under construction. IC recycles, although she is sure they can do more. A feasibility study was conducted for wind energy, and that might yield 5 to 10% of the energy demand for the campus. They are committed to purchasing green power, and are focusing on energy efficiency. Even the Dining Services staff has been extremely supportive, and initiated a move to compostable serviceware, which is sent to Cayuga Compost. Trayless dining has become the norm, and means far less food waste. The Bookstore has found ways to buy green, re-sell textbooks, and sell items made of recycled paper.

Outreach components include the website, listserves, progress reporting, making presentations, and doing consulting. Residential Life is on board with renovations, shower timers, and communal meals. Public Safety participates by encouraging bike, pedestrian, carshare and TCAT transportation. Student Outreach is a large component, with the Environmental Society sponsoring events like Green Teams for event cleanups, Take It or Leave It, composting, zero waste targets, publication of a Green Office Guide, RecycleMania, posting of “Installments” info flyers in bathroom stalls, bulletin boards in residence halls, Hall Wars energy challenge, films with faculty discussion panels, Jump Start regional bus tour of local food sources for freshmen, and a flyer on transportation options for freshmen (written by a student). While they do not have an organized plan, IC is getting everyone to participate and share their stories.

Brian Eden asked if IC would be interested in participating in the district heating discussion for South Hill, which is generating lots of interest community-wide. Marian said IC has no feasibility study yet for the campus, and only one experience with geothermal. They are reluctant to damage any of their natural areas in order to connect the buildings.

Martha Ferger asked what level of awareness IC is finding. Marian said they get students from all of the states, and many are not aware. Even at age 18, it can be pretty late to start changing their habits. Now part of the marketing for IC is that students will have new experiences. It is amazing how many appliances students bring to the dorms – sometimes as many as 20 plug-in devices. Some staff has not been exposed to the concepts before, either. Marian feels the local support of academics, government and not-for-profit organizations in our area is immense and rare.

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

Downtown Sustainability Center – Ed Marx, Tompkins County Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability, said this Center would provide greater public awareness and engagement. He is not sure yet how EMC members can get involved. The vision includes a gallery of rotating displays of the range of local actions on sustainability – energy, local food, businesses, etc. Campuses will be involved, with interns, work study and class projects. He hopes this will provide a message that visitors and tourists can take home. The Strategic Tourism Planning Board sees this as part of the tourism draw in the future, which will enhance the experience of visiting our area. The facility could send a broad message beyond our community that we have a positive message about our future, and help businesses see reasons to invest in our community.

Currently one grant application has been submitted, and more will be completed. The colleges, Downtown Ithaca Alliance, Sustainable Tompkins and Strategic Tourism Planning Board are behind it. Outreach is being planned. Ed expects to start with one half-time staff person, students and volunteers. They have a possible site identified, and might open this year. Spring Buck encouraged engagement with college staff as well as students and parents. Ed said other ideas include reaching people new to the area through realtors. The partners want to get it up and running, then expand to include municipalities and possibly rotate displays into other public places. Lucia Tyler asked if they might include home building ideas. Ed said it is too soon for that, but it might come along later. They also hope to have some meeting space. The owner of the property is willing to help with startup costs, and the partners are drafting a budget for two years. First they will portray the breadth of efforts going on in Tompkins County.

Committee Reports – Environmental Review: Kristine said they did not provide official comments on dredging of Cayuga Inlet. Brian said some individuals submitted comments, and we need to be ready to respond to the EIS in May. He also encouraged members to comment on the DEC draft management plan for Shindagin and Danby State Forests. Kathy Wilsea reported that Eric Banford asked to be excused tonight because he is participating with a Danby group that is providing comments at the DEC public hearing in Candor tomorrow. Communication: Katie said they are working with Solid Waste on an event at the Public Library during the Ithaca Festival. They request that each committee prepare a summary sheet on their activities for the year. Brian said Dooley Kiefer may ask the County Legislature to issue a proclamation for Earth Day. Energy: Brian said the Energy Security event was held last week. He spoke with 30-40 people who visited the EMC table. A couple polls were conducted, and all supported wind power, and 10% said they would pay more to have wind power. The gas drilling symposium held at Cornell Law School was packed, even at 8 AM on Saturday morning. Gas Drilling: The committee did not meet this month. Kenny Christianson provided more information on the status of hearings by the Delaware River Basin Commission.

Municipal Reports – Cayuga Heights: As an update, Brian reported the Village Trustees adopted a findings statement for the deer management plan. A public hearing was held on the proposed fence law. Lawsuits are anticipated. Brian suggested sending update correspondence to property owners in UNAs.

Reports – Staff: Kathy Wilsea reported that Roger Segelken will not be serving as an associate member of EMC this year, which means we need a new Highway Cleanup Coordinator. The commitment for cleanups extends to the end of 2011.

Member Items – Brian said the CU veterinary school waste incinerator has no final DEC permit yet. Waste is going to Watertown. The facility continues to undergo their validation tests, and is waiting for Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility to be approved to treat the waste locally.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department
Approved by Council on June 8, 2011