

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting June 8, 2011

Voting Members Present (12): Eric Banford, Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (2): Sarah Adams, Lucia Tyler

Voting Members Absent (1): David Slottje

Non-Voting Members Present: Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Peter Harriott (Associate)

Staff Present: Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 7:07 p.m.

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

Changes to the Agenda and Approval of Minutes – Tony Nekut canceled his visit this evening due to an emergency, and we will try to rearrange that item for the July meeting. The minutes of April 13, 2011 were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc. Dooley Kiefer had not attended the April meeting and asked for clarification of Brian Eden's municipal report reference to sending update correspondence to property owners in UNAs. Brian said it was an idea generated by the fact that trees were removed from Pleasant Grove Cemetery, and cemetery staff was unaware it was in a UNAs and what that entails. Kathy Wilsea said she did a quick count, and projected such a mailing would cost about \$700 for postage. Most UNAs include multiple tax parcels. UNA chair Dan Lamb said right now public outreach is anticipated as part of the UNA update process.

Reorganization of EMC – Steve Nicholson said 12 people participated in the Doodle poll concerning possible changes to our membership structure. The Executive Committee met a couple times. They are trying to get EMC to fit 2012 instead of 1987. They met with Ed Marx and Scott Doyle. Exec came up with some specific proposals for discussion, which would combine municipal village and town seats, reduce the number of at-large seats, and add new seats dedicated to other environmental organizations in the community. He reviewed Doodle poll results: combine village and town seats 10, add T C Climate Protection Initiative 12, add Sustainable Tompkins 12, add Chamber of Commerce 8, add T C Area Development 7, add Ithaca City School District 8, add BOCES 8, add Cornell 8, add Ithaca College 8, add TC3 8, add Cooperative Extension 10, add EcoVillage 9, and add Finger Lakes Land Trust 11. Katie Kelly said they would find ways to keep all current members. Steve noted he would like to make changes without changing our Bylaws. Dan said we need to examine how to keep a dialog going between environmental organizations and the County Legislature. Gary Stewart thought we were fooling ourselves if we think the current seat structure works – it should be specific to organization.

Spring Buck supported changes, saying we are not relevant right now, and have no output. This would give us new legitimacy. Kenny Christianson pointed out EMC members are public officials, and this would confer that status on the selected members of these organizations, whether that is good or bad. He sees a difference between villages and towns in terms of needs and contributions. Dooley commented that some of these groups are very small, and their projects have environmental components, but mostly relate to business and tourism. She also agreed with Kenny that villages and towns are different. Gary said we already can fill municipal vacancies with anybody we want, so that loses the purpose of municipal representation. Kenny said we can certainly reach out to other groups, but pointed out we could change our structure and still not get anything done.

Brian referred to the historical data emailed to members by Kathy Wilsea. In 1976, EMC had 48 members, but now there are many more environmental groups. People can now join a group by matching their interests to the group's

goals. EMC has presentations from other groups, but has anyone from EMC gone out and spoken to another group in the past year about EMC? Kristine Shaw was the only person who raised her hand. Brian said EMC passed by opportunities for action in the past year – commenting on the draft State Forest Management Plan, deer population management, Statewide Climate Action Plan, and Statewide Solid Waste Plan. We should be participating on those levels, but couldn't get organized because members are not interested in those issues.

Scott said he applauds discussion on this topic. He feels the structure, which is set by County Legislature resolution, is beautifully designed in allowing the group to keep membership numbers up by permitting the conversion of vacant municipal seats to at-large. Maybe it would be more appealing to other organizations if they had a dedicated seat, and it leaves the onus on the organization to find someone to serve. Once EMC defines the proposal, it needs to go to PDEQ for discussion. Kathy Wilsea said NYS Environmental Law requires EMCs to have seats for municipalities with conservation advisory councils and conservation boards, and she always thought having a seat for each municipality was Tompkins County's bow to that. Kathy said maybe the municipalities feel their interaction through T C Council of Governments is a better way to share, since the success of TCCOG matches the timeline of the decline in EMC municipal seats.

Dan wants a fair and comprehensive balance of seats. In Tioga County, World Area Economic Partnership is a group of volunteers who have met every month for 12 years. WEAP has municipal reps, youth, business, seniors. They keep the focus on municipalities, and include organizations. At EMC, a Youth/Education member could report on all schools, and an Environmental Issues member could report on Shale Shock. Roger Yonkin said EMC was originally very active, with many arguments. He conceded mistakes were made – some projects were untimely, ill advised, or overwhelming. He feels we need to find municipal representatives. Katie asked how WEAP fills seats, and Dan said frequently the person leaving finds a replacement.

Brian said the relationship with the County Legislature is lacking. He sees times when they are not thinking of us. Martha Robertson sends things out from ShaleShock and Walter Hang without conferring with our Gas Drilling committee. Brian wondered if we should interact with TCCOG. Gary said he has talked with Don Barber at TCCOG. We don't do specific recruiting – many of us don't have time. He encouraged getting people with different viewpoints. Kristine Shaw said we can't be redundant. We should be the conduit to the County Legislature. ERC and UNA committees are understaffed, yet these are our most important projects and need our focus. We are not doing what we need to do. Other organizations have other conduits to lawmakers. EMC needs to focus on our biggest tasks and goals. Steve Nicholson said there are still lots of in-between opportunities for seat organization. Much of EMC's best work has been individual projects – burn barrel ban, solar panels at Public Library, pesticides Neighbor Notification Law, ICLEI milestones. He speculated we could get support to vacate the municipal seats for a longer period than one year, and offer longer-term appointments for the default assignments. We could also approach other groups and acknowledge we want them to join on a trial basis. And/or try to draw new members to focus on a particular project, such as a State of the Environment report, which has not been done in many years.

Jim McGarry said he would like to make sure new members will participate on projects, which is a bigger contribution than attending a meeting once a month. Approach organizations that have a secondary level interest in the environment. He agrees with Roger that we should have a mix of opinions – not all like-minded, not all unanimous votes. Filling seats requires outreach. Brian proposed the Executive Committee review suggestions and fine tune their proposal, or set up a small ad-hoc committee. It was agreed Exec will meet again, and Jim, Brian, Dooley and Spring volunteered to help them formulate a specific proposal to come back for council vote in July and then move on to PDEQ.

The Executive Committee also talked about changing meeting dates/times and conducted another Doodle poll on that. Steve said there were 10 of the 11 respondents who could meet at 4 PM on the second Thursday of the month. This is not in the Bylaws or establishing resolution, so could be accomplished by majority vote at a council meeting attended by a quorum. Someone mentioned that Water Resources Council has good attendance, and they meet at 4PM. Kathy Wilsea pointed out that there is good participation on some other advisory boards, but because the mission matches that of the stakeholder organizations, many members attend WRC or the Strategic Tourism Planning Board as paid time for their jobs.

Adopt-A-Highway – Steve Nicholson asked if EMC wants to continue our agreement with this program through 2011. Following discussion, Roger Yonkin moved to drop out now and notify the program, which was seconded by

Jim McGarry. Vote was 3 yes, 7 no. Some members said Saturday mornings are hard for them to schedule. Steve said the only program rule is a person can't work on it alone. Steve will get the tools from Roger Segelken and coordinate cleanup events.

Committee Reports – Environmental Review: Jim reported they met concerning dredging Cayuga Inlet. They want consideration of other dewatering sites in the environmental impact statement. Brian is examining old documents about the area, governing agencies, and prior dredging. Jim also had site plan review materials with him for Ithaca Beer and asked if anyone else wished to examine them. He noted the neighboring pond has fill on two sides, and Brian said the whole area was built on fill from road construction projects. Kristine will get the Town of Ithaca's comments to Jim. Jim said the committee will be reviewing the site plan documents for Cornell means restriction nets under bridges over the gorges. UNA: Dan reported they met twice and need to stay on track. They have reviewed the protocol for amendments and find it stringent for UNAs that would have minor changes. They will send a proposal for streamlining the protocol and it will be on the July council agenda. The existing protocol is obstructive for the minor changes that might occur for 38 UNAs. Energy: Brian reported they had a discussion about the County's contract with Integris through MEGA. They met with Ed Marx and talked about the County using more renewables. They will follow up on the November 2010 wind energy resolution and visit PDEQ again. They are consulting with the Public Works Commissioner re shaded solar panels and weeds on the roof of the Library. TCCPI is working on a case statement for a South Hill Energy District, and hope to raise money for a feasibility study. Concerning dredging, the committee is interested in the cost of energy to transport spoils to South West Park and then away from there after dewatering. The new disposal process at the CU veterinary school saves 97% of natural gas from the previous process. Gas Drilling: Martha Feger reported they met and are drafting a letter to DEC Commissioner Marten re need for a database of gas drilling violations and spills. Committee member Lucia Tyler has mentioned at committee meetings that she feels Darby Kiley's work with municipalities on gas drilling needs to continue. They are discussing this with Don Barber, chair of TCCOG. Scott requested they also send a letter to TCPD on that need. Communication: Spring reported the invasive species list is being updated with data provided by Cornell Plantations. The committee hosted a recycle fair during Ithaca Festival. There were several displays. It was poorly attended due to location at the Library when other activities were occurring on The Commons.

Municipal Report – Caroline: Steve Nicholson reported the Town got a grant for energy efficiency upgrades at the Town Hall and Town Barn. Tompkins Community Action is implementing them. Energy Independent Caroline held a potluck dinner with 60 attendees.

Reports – Chair: Steve attended DEC Update Day in Albany. The DEC Assistant Director said the comment period on the dGEIS on gas drilling will be more than 30 days. Emerald Ash Borer has been detected in Chemung County, and the Schuyler/Tompkins county line is the quarantine line. According to the Climate Change office, NYS residents spend \$2,000 per person per year on fossil fuels. Since implementation of the statewaide ban on burn barrels, forest fires have been reduced by 33%. A grant allowed each participant to be paid \$25 for attending the conference this year. Steve noted that an environmental justice Community Impact grant is available. The Conference on the Environment will be held October 21-22 near Albany. Staff: Scott reported TCPD has a new Tourism Planner and a part time Senior Planner.

Member Items – Dooley announced she reviewed the Executive Summary of the annual report for Cornell radiation and chemical disposal sites at the County Airport. Test results for a stream on the property remain a concern. Wisconsin is the first state to pass a law banning coal tar in highway and driveway sealants. Since our state has no policy on coal tar in sealants, Dooley is interested in EMC following up on this with ITCTC or NYSDOT.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on July 13, 2011