

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting June 14, 2012

Voting Members Present (12): Spring Buck, Brian Eden, Kate Engler, Darrick Evensen, Pegi Ficken, Bill Halton, Emily Hamilton, Katie Kelly, Steve Nicholson, Carolyn Peterson, Ed Wilson, Roger Yonkin

Voting Member Excused (6): Kenny Christianson, Martha Ferger, Dan Lamb, Jim McGarry, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler

Voting Member Absent (2): Poney Carpenter, Kristine Shaw

Non-Voting Member Present (1): Dooley Kiefer

Staff Present: Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nicholson at 4:05 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 – There were no changes to the agenda. The draft minutes were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Committee Reports –

- **Energy:** Brian Eden reported on committee activities concerning AES Cayuga bankruptcy and permits;
 - ✓ committee members spoke during the County Legislature’s public hearing on opting out of a real property tax law that would apply to Black Oak Wind Farm;
 - ✓ a district heat/power project for the Commons may be located next to the Ithaca Journal;
 - ✓ Ithaca College Energy Day will be October 1 and more information will be shared on that as the date gets closer;
 - ✓ the website for the regional sustainability plan is active and members were encouraged to check it out and provide comments on the proposed goals and suggest projects.
- **Environmental Review:** In Jim McGarry’s absence, Brian reported they received a note from a citizen concerning the proposed Newfield solid waste transfer station, and expect to keep abreast of that;
 - ✓ they provided review of the proposed local law on aquatic invasive species;
 - ✓ they reviewed a Taber Street project; they reviewed a project in the Village of Lansing near a stream, and chose not to comment;
 - ✓ the final Environmental Impact Statement on Cayuga Inlet dredging has been approved by DEC.
- **Unique Natural Areas:** Steve Nicholson reported the committee is revising 42 maps using current technology. Only a few of the changes are significant changes in size. They will be adding some new information, like the ebird data base and mammal info. Two new sites are proposed. The committee hopes to provide final draft changes for Council approval in September and hold a public meeting in October.
- **Gas Drilling Task Force:** In Martha Ferger’s absence, Brian reported this subcommittee of ERC has been reactivated because of reports that drilling may be allowed in the Southern Tier. The lawsuit against the Town of Dryden concerning their zoning amendment is drawing support from other municipalities. The State Legislature will close soon for the summer, so there is a push on for passage of a bill concerning flowback water being required to be treated as hazardous waste if it contains dangerous chemicals and metals. Steve explained for new members that EMC could choose to provide comments to DEC and/or NYS legislators through the entire Council or the subcommittee. He said the Town of Caroline is considering a ban on hydrofracturing, and Speedsville is threatening to secede from Tompkins and become part of Tioga County.

Staff Reports – Scott Doyle commented it is nice to have new members, and reviewed the remaining vacancies (towns of Dryden and Newfield; villages of Groton, Freeville, Trumansburg; and two at-large). He encouraged members to

check out the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Sustainability Plan website and provide comments by 6/29. Tompkins County Planning will be holding a series of public meetings 6/18-19-20 on the Development Focus Areas Strategy and the Conservation Strategy. He received a contract from DOT to extend the EMC's commitment to Adopt-A-Highway. After discussion, Katie Kelley moved to step aside and allow another group to participate. Seconded by Spring Buck. Vote to allow the contract to expire: Yes 8, No 3. Scott will notify DOT.

NYS EMC Meeting Report – Carolyn Peterson and Steve Nicholson attended this event to interact with DEC staff. Carolyn pointed out there were only 22 attendees, so it was a good opportunity to interact. Hydrofracturing was not on the agenda, but news was released that day about the possibility of drilling beginning in the Southern Tier, and Carolyn attended a news conference showcasing nearly 200 elected official signatures on a letter to Governor Cuomo requesting additional studies on gas drilling. Environmental Justice was barely touched on. DEC staff seeks ideas for best ways for interaction between environmental groups and staff during these financial times (their staff has been cut 40%). New Environmental Assessment Forms will go into effect in October. The redesign is to strengthen links between the short form EAF and municipal comprehensive plans. Statewide, only six stakeholder meetings were held. More projects will be classified as Type II, including minor subdivisions and transfer of land from a municipality to a not-for-profit organization. She thought some of the draft changes allude to the future work of the Regional Development Councils, and pointed out municipalities can enact SEQR regulations that are stricter than those of the State. Commissioner Martens allowed emergency actions following the severe storms last fall, and some streams in the Eastern part of the State were altered by bulldozing. The emergency plan of Delaware County is considered to be a good model, and DEC will be posting that. There was some information on invasive insects and feral swine, also water resources management concerning phosphorus and nitrogen. She provided the Commissioner's Priorities for 2012, which will be scanned and sent to members. Steve pointed out there is only one person at the State level of DEC working on SEQR, and feral swine are showing up in the northern part of our county.

State of the Environment Report Discussion – Kate Engler said she, Brian, and John Dennis reviewed the last report by EMC, which was published in 1991. Climate change and gas drilling are some of the timely topics they expect to include in a new report. They hope to have an interactive web version as well as a published .pdf version. She invited members to send her ideas for topics. Brian pointed out 2012 is the 50th anniversary of the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which was considered the beginning of the environmental movement.

All Hazard Mitigation Planning – Scott Doyle provided a slide show on the efforts at TCPD to update the existing 2006 plan for hazard risk reduction in our communities. Having a plan in place qualifies the municipalities for FEMA funding to respond to emergencies. He reviewed the components of the existing plan:

severe winter storm (including ice storm),	utility failure,
major transportation accident (including HazMat release [in transit]),	
epidemic (agricultural),	water supply contamination,
terrorism,	epidemic (human),
fire (urban and wild),	civil unrest.

and the expected additions:

infestation,	tornado,
ice jam,	drought,
lake flood/flash flood,	earthquake,
landslide,	fuel shortage.

New components will include climate change and heavy industry (gas drilling). He sees overlap with existing conservation efforts, too. Members suggested gas storage, dam safety and emergency evacuation. Dooley Kiefer asked if Scott expects flood maps to be updated, and Scott responded that is a high priority issue for all participants.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department
Approved by Council on July 12, 2012