

**Minutes of the EMC General Meeting
September 9, 2009**

Voting Members Present (17): Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Roberta Dixon, Martha Ferger, Dan Lamb, Katie Kelly, Stan Marcus, Jim McGarry, Michael Miles, Tony Nekut, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Mark Whitmore, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (1): Andrea Turner

Voting Members Absent (2): Steve Nicholson, Larry Sharpsteen

Non-Voting Members Present (1): Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Jordan Lesser, Murray McBride

Staff Present: Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Amy Risen at 7:08 p.m. Agenda items were taken out of order.

Presentation of the Transportation Initiative of the Year Award: Mike Miles said this is the first year for the Transportation Committee, and one of their ideas was this award. They gathered nominations for the award and selected Ithaca Car Share. Ithaca Car Share has about a dozen vehicles for occasional use by their members. An article was in the Ithaca Journal about the award. The Committee hopes to continue with the award in future years. Unfortunately, Jennifer Dotson was not able to attend tonight's meeting. The plaque will be delivered to her.

Privilege of the Floor – Guest Jordan Lesser was welcomed.

EMC Public Education Tie-In with Bioneer Conference – Amy said she got some ideas for interacting with the public at DEC in Albany and shared them with Roberta Dixon. Roberta said she starting working on a downtown informational table for the Bioneer Conference, but decided EMC might be better served by waiting for other opportunities. The Education Committee will plan other presentations in the future. Amy expressed interest in learning about funding programs for citizens. Kenny Christianson provided some information on the solar panels at the public library and the capacity of photovoltaic systems in our zip code, and these will be copied and used for handouts from the biomass information table Tony Nekut will have at the Bioneer Conference. Tony is also making a presentation on biomass at the conference.

Water Testing for Gas Drilling – Murray McBride, Professor in the Crops & Soil Department at Cornell, was present. He shared information from a meeting held about six months ago among DEC staff, US Geological Survey staff, and Cornell University scientists. His PowerPoint presentation was entitled, "Environmental Concerns with Waste Fluids from Deep Gas Well Drilling." He noted most of the drilling will occur south of Ithaca. By its nature, there are some toxics present in all black shale, which is the composition of the Marcellus Shale deposit. Gas exploration involves deep drilling for about one mile, then lateral drilling, then hydrofracing to break up the shale and release the natural gas. There is a risk of breaking the natural seal between the deep saline aquifers and drinking water aquifers. There is potential for drying up local water wells and streams. Area aquifers are not large, so drilling is risky. Flowback wastewater can be disposed of by deep injection or by sewage treatment plants, which are not capable of removing all of the components. Flowback can be stored on site in pits or tanks, but a plan is still needed for removal when drilling is complete. Fracing involves several million gallons of water, with additives that can include chemicals, bacterial controls, acids, sand, salt, gums for viscosity, friction reducers, and pipe corrosion reducers. Recipes are proprietary, and protected by the industry. With unidentified additives, wastewater treatment facilities are unclear on what they have to treat.

Wells won't release natural gas until the fluid is removed. In some places, the salty brine has been used for road deicers. Brine water can't be completely treated. Reverse osmosis yields some that is desalinated, but leaves another portion that is extremely saline. Potential problematic contaminants in frac fluid include surfactants/soaps, salts (including strontium and

barium), gel agents, trace metals, and those unidentified proprietary chemicals. A process known as well stimulation can include nitric acid to dissolve carbonates in the well. Heavy metal can be separated in instances when the brine is acidic. Some non-polymer agents are reacted away. DEC claims they will gather information on the proprietary chemicals and keep it “in house” to protect industry secrets.

Wastewater treatment facilities cannot adequately treat or remove high salts and heavy metals. Salts and metals that remain in the water cycle are a potential risk to agriculture lands. Sludge is trucked to waste disposal sites. Information on the Marcellus Shale is not available yet, but flowback fluids in the Medina formation have included strontium, barium, lead, copper, zinc, nickel, boron, cadmium, and chromium. Current wastewater treatment processes are not designed for these metals.

Roberta Dixon commented that Danby is recommending citizens obtain baseline water well testing, which costs around \$500. Amy Risen asked about the well stimulation process. Murray said it dissolves carbonates after the fracturing is completed. Amy asked if the acid used damages pipes and/or the cement casing. Roger Yonkin said the acid is diluted over huge areas, and some neutralizes in the process. Mark Whitmore asked if the metals precipitate. Murray said they do to some extent, and might sink to the bottom of the pit or tank used for flowback. Kenny Christianson asked if the list of chemicals includes those that are in the proprietary solutions. Murray said that is not clear, and the chart he used is from Chemical and Engineering News, 8/17/2009 edition.

Budget Cuts, Reorganization Proposals, and Formation of Nominating Committee – Amy Risen announced the County and the Planning Department continue to work on the budget. Right now EMC is looking at reduction of the Secretary’s time from 160 to 70 hours per year. This will start with reduction to minutes at ten meetings per year plus information distribution. Some tasks will go to committees, and this will be an opportunity to take ownership. Information will be shared with all members when available. The Executive Committee met tonight and discussed goals and interaction in terms of reorganizing the Council. Gary Stewart will organize a questionnaire, and feedback will be sought from all members so we can create good goals. Amy is working on her doctoral thesis, so will not serve as EMC chair next year. She asked for volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee. Martha Ferger and Spring Buck are willing. According to the bylaws, the Nominating Committee must have at least three members, a majority of whom cannot be members of the Executive Committee. Other member(s) will be solicited by email.

Municipal Report – Village of Cayuga Heights: Roger Segelken reported that the Village still has a moratorium on treatment of fracturing fluid at the wastewater treatment facility. The phosphorus reduction construction phase is complete. So far, phosphorus emissions meet or exceed DEC requirements, and certification is expected by December. A Planning Board has been formed (functions previously were handled by the trustees) and they are charged with development of a comprehensive plan. Two Bolton Point directors from Cayuga Heights worked toward getting an offer of membership to the City of Ithaca in order to move forward with the possibility of the City obtaining drinking water from Bolton Point. The deer remediation project is going to a SEQR review. It is a combination of sterilization and culling, with venison going to the Southern Tier Food Bank. Sterilization, although more expensive, keeps the deer population steady, preventing an influx of new deer. Sterilization for does cost is approximately \$1,000 per doe, performed by Cornell University veterinarians. Culling for does and bucks is about \$400 per deer.

Committee Reports – Gas Drilling: Amy Risen reported they are watching for DEC’s release of the draft supplemental GEIS on gas drilling, and hoping for a 60 or 90-day comment period. Lake Source Cooling: Jim McGarry has attended some of the Water Resources Council/Cornell University partnership meetings on the monitoring plan for the southern basin of Cayuga Lake. Discussion seems to be moving to uncoupling the monitoring plan from the Lake Source Cooling permit process. Upstate Freshwater Institute and other entities have performed studies, but do not find one clear source of phosphorus. Jose Lozano made a pitch for more LSC monitoring, but the amount of “before” data cannot change, so it is unclear if any further comparisons would be of benefit. The monitoring plan seeks more extensive testing, but also seeks to stop redundancy of test sites. Jim supports this drift. The monitoring plan and LSC are two different topics. There appear to be several other pollution sources that contribute more phosphorus than does LSC. Amy asked if it is appropriate for EMC to support Jose’s letter. Jim said Cornell is aware they probably won’t be relieved of any LSC monitoring. But he thinks the information can dovetail with the monitoring plan. Amy expects Jose to visit EMC next month, and individuals might want to review his proposal and decide if EMC should set up an ad hoc committee. Dooley Kiefer said she would be happy to work with a team. Roger Yonkin reminded members that EMC is on record as supporting the same level of LSC testing, with no site reductions. Joyce Gerbasi commented, if there is no baseline for comparison, why race around trying to

determine if there is a tiny or significant change? Scott Doyle recommended continuing reports from Jim, and encouraged others to discuss their questions with Jim.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of July 8, 2009 were accepted with two changes: Amy Risen and Steve Nicholson both attended the DEC program day mentioned in the chair's report. Katie Kelly was added to members present. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Chair's Report – Amy Risen reported that we are in the annual recruiting phase for new and reapplying members. She invited members to inform their friends and acquaintances of this. Basic letters were distributed, and can be printed from the EMC website. The letter mentions some specific experience we welcome for at-large members, like climate change, agriculture, environmental review, and toxic sites. Municipalities will also be contacted again.

Staff Report – Kathy Wilsea distributed updated membership lists. Scott Doyle announced the Planning Department is receiving an award from the Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association for the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Department has also been notified it will receive a new interdepartment hybrid carshare award. He will bring more info next month. Kathy announced the resignations of Marissa Weiss, Mike Miles, and Kiwi Mackie-Cunningham.

Legislature Liaison's Report – Carol Chock was excused.

Member Items – Kenny Christianson announced Katie Borgella is applying for a national award on best practices in alternative energy, and seeks project photos.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on October 14, 2009