

**Minutes of the EMC General Meeting
September 15, 2010**

Voting Members Present (16): Sarah Adams, Eric Banford, Clement Chow, Brian Eden, Martha Ferger, Anthony Guarneri, Katie Kelly, Dan Lamb, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Roger Segelken, Helen Slottje, Gary Stewart, Lucia Tyler, Eric VanEvery, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (4): Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Stan Marcus, Kristine Shaw

Non-Voting Members Present (3): Karen Edelstein, Joyce Gerbasi, Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Katie Borgella, Herb Engman

Staff Present: Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Roger Segelken at 7:05 p.m. He welcomed members to our new meeting location at 395 Pine Tree Road. This space has access by bus and is unlocked, as EMC meetings are open to the public.

Changes to the Agenda – The segment on Unique Natural Areas will begin with information from Herb Engman, Supervisor of the Town of Ithaca, on how the UNA Inventory is used by municipalities.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of July 14, 2010 were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Unique Natural Areas: Past and Future – Herb Engman, former EMC member who served as chair for two periods, brought along the EMC report on the first twenty years, noting it is almost time for a report on the second twenty years. The UNA Inventory began as a masters thesis by Craig Tufts in 1975, and has been updated twice to include more details and additional sites. Much of the field work was done by Nancy Ostman and Robert Wesley, who both worked for Cornell Plantations. During the 2000 update, one issue raised by the Tompkins County Board of Representatives was infringement on property rights. So EMC conducted an extensive notification process, establishing a special committee to address responses. EMC found much public support for the UNAs, and felt the caution of the BOR was not necessary. The Inventory is very useful to developers and municipal staff. The most recent resurgence of interest in UNAs is based on hydrofracing, and some municipalities are examining how they can employ UNA information as beginning steps to establishment of Critical Environmental Areas. CEAs can be established by a municipality after designating boundaries and holding public hearings. DEC would need to notify a municipality of a natural gas drilling permit being issued within a CEA. The Town of Ithaca has established conservation zones, and is proceeding with CEA designation based on those conservation zones. Herb said he feels an update of the UNA Inventory can be unobtrusive and publicly supported, and it would not be necessary to do a total rewrite. The amendment process (adopted in 2007) would be considered for individual requests. Martha Ferger noted that most of the existing site data concerns flora, and there was interest a few years ago in expanding site data to include reptiles, but the grant application was not funded.

Katie Borgella, Principal Planner at Tompkins County Planning Department, said she was EMC Coordinator for six years, including during much of the 2000 update process. She provided some overall information, such as there are currently 192 sites encompassing 38,000 acres. The largest percentage is in the Town of Ithaca, followed by the Town of Dryden. Before the formation of EMC, there were four reports on special characteristic, beginning with Cayuga Flora in 1886. The 2000 Inventory was a comprehensive look with major time and money invested to form GIS maps and an Access database. Past budgets were \$6,500 for the professional services in 1989-1990, contracted with Cornell Plantation; and \$16,000 for professional services from 1995-1999 for the 2000 update, plus staff time estimated at \$42,000, plus printing/supply costs of \$4,100. UNAs have always been promoted as planning tools. CEAs are a municipal designation and are regulatory. Roger Yonkin stressed that extensive EMC volunteer hours were also needed to produce the 2000 update. Herb Engman said he was reminded as he reviewed the EMC twenty-year history that EMC did most of the original wetlands mapping in Tompkins County before NYS started such mapping.

Karen Edelstein said she joined EMC in 1999 and, as an educator, felt much more public outreach was needed. For example, people were unaware they had regulated wetlands on their properties. There was fear that UNAs would be regulatory. Lots of concern went into the notification of landowners during the 2000 update, and a voicemail system was established for landowners to make contact with EMC. Several callers wanted to preserve their UNAs and learn about land trusts. Many didn't understand and simply sought information. Only three were upset, and two of those callers were no longer upset after learning more about UNAs. Karen later did a follow-up survey, which had a 70% return rate, and most responded that they were happy to learn about UNAs.

So, where to go? The committee met this week and talked with David Weinstein & Robert Wesley, former contributors. Committee discussion included mention that very rough sketches became UNA boundaries, and much more data is available to us today. This digital data is easy to use to update boundaries. A large concern is how to counterbalance the desire for the update against the small committee and funds. It could be scaled back to only do boundary updates, landowner notification, and small tweaks based on the amendment process. Gary Stewart asked if this is the only or biggest goal of EMC. Herb Engman responded, saying the NYS enabling legislation requires preparation of a plan for protection of lands, and EMC chose this project to fulfill that obligation. Dooley Kiefer said she feels UNAs and environmental reviews are the two major missions of EMC. There was further discussion on the possibility of participation in an update by graduate students, or undergrads. Not all counties have catalogued UNAs, and the 2000 Inventory received the project of the year award from NYSAEMCs. There were also requests from members for clarification of the scope of the work and which tasks require professional attention. Karen said we need people trained for field work, development of a list of sites to add and/or delist, and research of other information that can be matched and added. Katie Kelly said we may need to have every member participate on ERC or UNA, as both of these committees need more manpower. Roger Segelken asked any member (voting or associate) who is interested in serving on the UNA committee to contact Karen Edelstein, Sarah Adams or Stan Marcus.

Municipal Report – Roger Segelken announced that, starting next month, reports will be submitted by email to the Secretary, and published with the meeting agendas. The meeting will then have an opportunity for others to ask questions and the municipal member to provide updates. The Village of Dryden report was postponed to October.

Committee Reports – Communications: Katie Kelly reported for Spring Buck, who recently married and is on her honeymoon. Nominations are still sought for the Transportation Initiative of the Year award, which will be presented in October. Deadline for nominations is September 30th. **Energy:** Steve Nicholson reported that the Public Library solar panel system is coming up on production of its thousandth megawatt hour. Information is back on the Library website again, but difficult to find. The system has produced 868 megawatt hours since 1992. Anthony Guarneri has located the contract for that system so the manufacturer can be contacted to discuss degradation of several of the panels. Eric VanEvery asked what would be the breakeven point for the system, and Steve said in a normal system it would be 12 years, but it is impossible to tell in this instance. The committee also discussed the County's 2020 Energy Strategy. He noted legislation that would enable PACE is stalled. Eric Banford is examining models for community wind projects, and the Enfield Wind developer is open to dialog. Brian Eden said he thinks more should be done in Tompkins County on the emerging issue of climate change. He is working on a date for a meeting with CU Center for Sustainability. Some committee members plan to attend the energy forum at IC on Friday. The committee will arrange a speaker on wind energy for the October EMC meeting, draft a press release, and draft an EMC resolution. **Environmental Review:** Jim McGarry reported the committee sent comments on the draft scope for the wind farm project in Enfield. The final scope was received today, and language on bird studies was amended in response to the ERC comments.

Reports – Chair: Roger Segelken announced a highway cleanup will be held on Saturday, October 16th at 9:30 AM. He will not serve as chair in 2011, and will appoint a Nominating Committee next month to establish a slate for election of officers. Roger will apply to move to an at-large seat, and Brian Eden will apply for the Village of Cayuga Heights municipal seat. **Staff:** Kathy Wilsea announced new member lists are available. Scott Doyle's daughter had surgery today, and he will be out of the office for several weeks. EMC's 40th anniversary will be in the spring, and Kathy and Scott thought it would be a nice opportunity for a special meeting, inviting municipal officers from towns/villages that do not have EMC members. Kathy will send the agenda for the October meeting, then be on vacation until the day of the meeting, so she suggested any questions be directed to Roger Segelken.

Member Items – Martha Ferger and Dan Lamb attended the EPA gas drilling hearings in Binghamton today. They thought the hearings went smoothly, and Martha noted demonstrations by proponents and opponents were keeping apart outside the building.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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

Approved by Council on October 13, 2010