

Minutes of the EMC General Meeting October 14, 2009

Voting Members Present (15): Spring Buck, Kenny Christianson, Roberta Dixon, Martha Ferger, Dan Lamb, Stan Marcus, Jim McGarry, Steve Nicholson, Amy Risen, Roger Segelken, Larry Sharpsteen, Kristine Shaw, Gary Stewart, Mark Whitmore, Roger Yonkin

Voting Members Excused (2): Katie Kelly, Andrea Turner

Voting Members Absent (2): Tony Nekut, Lucia Tyler

Non-Voting Members Present (3): Carol Chock, Peter Harriott, Dooley Kiefer

Guests Present: Karen Edelstein, Dan Roth, Tom Shelley

Staff Present: Scott Doyle, Kathy Wilsea

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Amy Risen at 7:05 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor/Announcements – There were no guests who wished to speak. Peter Harriott provided a copy of a short article he authored for the mail folder: Average Lifetime of Carbon Dioxide in the Atmosphere. A copy of Cornell Engineering Magazine was also placed in the mail folder. It has an article about EMC member Toy Nekut and the Biomass Energy Project.

Changes to the Agenda – There were no changes to the agenda.

Cornell Climate Action Plan – Dan Roth was present from Cornell University. He reported that President Skorton signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment two years ago, pledging to work toward carbon neutrality. An inventory was completed last year, and on September 15th the Action Plan was kicked off to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the mission of the Climate Commitment. Cornell's goal is to involve the community as they maintain and build on past sustainability efforts; change planning and development expectations; and support missions linked to community actions. The five process steps of the Action Plan are discovery, ideation, analysis, plan creation, and execution. Dan explained the five wedges that will work toward carbon neutrality: green development, energy conservation, transportation, fuel mix and renewable actions, and offsetting actions. Green development involves attaining 50% more efficient building standards; space planning and management; and improved land use for a compact, efficient campus. Energy conservation involves lighting retrofits, fume hoods in labs, HVAC improvements, and weatherization. Energy conservation steps will include outreach, steam line upgrade, and making the campus a model smart grid. Transportation involves business travel options, commuter travel, and the campus fleet. Fuel mix and renewable energy actions include enhanced geothermal heat, wind energy, biomass (CURBI), enhancing existing hydropower, wood co-firing, and replacements of turbine generators. Offsetting actions will initiate mission-linked offset actions through reforestation and biochar production, exploring community-based offset, and exploring future offsetting actions beyond our region. More information is available at the website for the Climate Action Plan: <http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/climate/index.cfm>

In response to questions from members, Dan said the original inventory was just the campus. Upgrade plans are prioritized by biggest users, so will begin with labs. Due to financial constraints, the Master Plan was examined to see how Cornell could build more efficiently, and LEED Silver is the minimum standard for campus. Staff commuting represents 9% of transportation (nationwide average is 20%), and prior efforts have produced reductions in this area. Cornell is doing as much infrastructure and behavior change as possible, then will examine offsetting actions rather than purchase credits. A site has not been selected for a potential wind project. Wind is one of the most cost effective possibilities, and was one of the most supported in the community survey. While it is ideal to become carbon negative and sell carbon offsets in the future, it is not expected. Perhaps rapid advances in geothermal technology would make it possible, though. Geothermal technology is not developed yet for the scale needed on campus. The technology is different from the horizontal hydraulic fracturing methods used for gas drilling. The results of the community survey will be published.

Restructuring the EMC: Part 1, Defining our Goals – Amy said the Executive Committee met with committee chairs last week to begin discussion of goals, attendance, and member participation. November discussion will be how to organize EMC

to meet our goals. Scott Doyle facilitated discussion to seek broad goals. He provided history and highlights of some EMC projects. He asked members to write down three things that will shape EMC over the next years, and the results were passed to the left for another member to circle the highest priority item, then passed again for a third member to circle the highest priority item (could be same selection). Concepts on which members concurred included impacts of budget reductions (including County), member participation (including commitment), climate change (including County and college action plans, and carbon emissions), water supply (including stream buffers), leadership of Tompkins County Legislature, EMC relevance as a group, and politics. Some of the concepts respond to external factors, and some to internal factors (like membership). Dooley Kiefer cautioned that EMC has been "restructured", and use of the term might be a red flag to legislators, but is okay for internal discussion.

Next, personal ideas for change were sought. Scott asked what's great about EMC? Response included supportive staff, respect, importance, opportunity to bring together a broad range of people and ideas (but this opportunity is not fulfilled), potential for impacting change, and respected platform for issues. Ideas of what to change included increase participation level and equal split among members, make a more positive stance, interact with other groups doing similar work, a more tangible link with the Legislature, more focus on issues we can impact, providing info to the Legislature on new trends and bigger picture items. Larry Sharpsteen commented we don't know each other on EMC, and he doesn't think we have a cross-section of county residents. Members felt the ideas for change could yield better recognition of EMC, a stronger group, satisfaction in participation, and functioning as a team.

Scott moved on to the mission of EMC, providing copies of a 1996 document. He asked if the listed EMC tasks were still relevant. Amy felt the list is so broad it is difficult to face. Larry said because it's a volunteer board, it shouldn't be limited in any way. Dooley asked what was going on when this mission document was written, and there was brief discussion on the issues of that time. Carol Chock said, as a legislator, she relies on EMC for focus. She feels the County has defined what they need of EMC, and the council needs to review the enabling legislation and structure. Dan Lamb asked who should start discussion on issues – EMC or the Legislature? Amy wondered if we need to choose a primary focus – research, public outreach, networking? Steve Nicholson pointed out the four tasks in the 1996 document match EMC bylaws, and we can't actually limit ourselves without changing the bylaws. Scott pointed out tonight's interaction and future discussion on committees will be part of a larger discussion. Spring Buck questioned what is lacking among the many organizations in the County that we can fill. What are we needed for? Amy agreed, saying we need to know what all the other groups do so we can enhance our actions. Larry said EMC responds to a County mandate, but are we productive? He feels EMC has been very successful. For example, he serves on a town planning board, and they use the Unique Natural Areas inventory all the time. But we need to find a focus at this time. He thinks EMC should not spend time on national and international politics. Scott said comments and thoughts about the mission portion of tonight's discussion will transition to November discussion.

Approval of Minutes -- The minutes of September 9, 2009 were accepted without change. Final minutes are available on the EMC webpage: www.tompkins-co.org/emc.

Reports – Gas Drilling Committee: Amy Risen reported they are drafting comments to respond to the DEC's draft supplemental GEIS on gas drilling. These comments will be distributed prior to the November EMC meeting, and decision will be made whether they go to DEC as an EMC or subcommittee letter. Anyone wanting to contribute to the bulk of the comments can attend committee meetings, and background is on the EMC website. Draft comments will also be exchanged with other local groups that are preparing comments. **Chair:** Amy pointed out there is information in the mail folder on the statewide ban on open burning, which goes into effect today, and its impact on agriculture waste. Enforcement is not clear yet, since Tompkins County has a pre-existing ban, but the DEC website has a phone number for reporting burning violations. Tompkins County is fortunate to have the Recycle Agriculture Plastics Program, and Amy encouraged members to share that information. **Staff:** Kathy Wilsea announced a highway cleanup for 10/24. She will circulate info by email. She will send post card reminders to members whose appointment to at-large seats expire at the end of 2009, so they can submit applications for reappointment by the October 23 deadline.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by Council on November 18, 2009