



EMC News

September 5, 2001

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Environmental Review Committee

The committee's August 28, 2001 meeting began with a report from Mikel Shakarjian on the proposed obstruction removal project at the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. The need for a Long EAF was discussed; Dooley Kiefer reported that the Public Works Committee of the Board of Representatives has requested a new EAF on the project. Also questioned was whether this obstruction removal project was part of the Master Plan for the airport. Mikel pointed out that, although the project has no timeline, a request for proposals was being circulated. Dooley indicated that the Public Works Committee had not approved any bids for this airport project. More information is being compiled, particularly about the exact location of the proposed work.

The committee received a reply to its August letter to Bob Nicholas at Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport concerning the composition of the de-icing chemicals. Nicholas responded that the airport currently uses Propylene Glycol, which he did not believe contained paradioxane. About eight years ago the airport used Ethylene Glycol, but switched to the less "toxic" anti-icing agent. No information was provided about Ethylene Glycol. The committee decided to ask Liz Cameron and/or Donna Connery where they had heard that the airport might be the source for "hits" of paradioxane downstream from the airport (and the Cornell RDS site).

Barbara Ebert reported on the meeting organized by Peter Penniman to discuss the issues surrounding the EMC's Finger Lakes National Forest Oil and Gas Drilling DEIS comments. Representatives of the Finger Lakes Forest Watch Congress (FLFWC) also attended the meeting and opinions were aired. The FLFWC remains concerned that the Forest Service cannot be trusted and that roads and other surface occupancy will be allowed without adequate environmental review. Ebert explained the review procedure for Special Use Permits, as she understood it, and stressed the need for continued vigilance under all possible scenarios.

Herb Engman reported on the Dog Park issue. (See separate report in the EMC News). Under New Business, the committee began preliminary discussion of the Tompkins County drilling requests. However, since only half of the members in attendance had had a chance to review the materials, major discussion was postponed until September 25th.

The next item of business was the draft scoping document for the EIS on the Ithaca Area Municipal Wastewater

Collection System Improvements & Intermunicipal Agreements. Larry Sharpsteen provided some background information on this project; several UNAs are along the project route. Since the packet was received on the meeting date and there was no time for advance distribution, Ebert will mail out copies of the scoping document to committee members. Everyone has until September 20th to provide comments/concerns to Ebert, who will compile these in a letter if necessary. Comments are due by September 21st.

Three Environmental Notice Bulletin announcements were made: a reissuing of a SPDES permit for Taughannock Falls State Park, a proposed Town of Ulysses water district along Route 96 (Jacksonville), and a permit to the DEC for work in Cayuga Inlet.

Under Other Business, Ebert indicated that she is entering the PhD program in historic preservation planning at Cornell and will no longer be able to serve as chair of this committee. After some discussion, Walter Buble nominated Steve Uzmans to serve as chair. This nomination was seconded by Joyce Gerbasi, and Steve accepted the nomination. All were in favor. Congratulations to Steve Uzmans, the new chair of the Environmental Review Committee.

Submitted by Barbara Ebert

Update on Dog Park at Treman

Finger Lakes State Parks Commissioner, Jack Clancy, called a meeting on August 9, 2001 to discuss the proposed dog park at Treman Marina. Present were six staff members of Finger Lakes Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, three members of Tompkins County DOG, Pat Pryor, Alderperson for the City of Ithaca, Bill Gray, director of the Department of Public Works of the City of Ithaca, and Barbara Ebert and Herb Engman of the EMC. Tom Lyons of the NYS OPRHP, Environmental Management Division, facilitated the meeting. Pat Pryor clarified that the city of Ithaca's approval of the change to its lease ordinance for the dog park is contingent on the state's approval of the dog park. Some park patrons thought the park was already a reality and were letting dogs run loose on City as well as State land. Chief Adams of OPRHP reported that enforcement of the current state parks leash law was difficult for the same reason. Tom Lyons clarified that there would be a SEQR process for the dog park, as this is a pilot program and the state must change its leash regulations.

Jeff McDonald clarified that the OPRHP had considered other possible sites for a dog park, but the Marina was the only one with access to water. The big news from Albany, via Tom Lyons, is that Bernadette Castro, the OPRHP

Commissioner, is insisting on a fenced-in area. Jeff McDonald indicated the area to be proposed might be 2 and one-half acres. The TCDOG representatives thought that it might be difficult to get dog owners to use only the fenced-in area for unleashed dogs. Tom Lyons also indicated that there is some concern in Albany that the parks would be considered the epicenter for all future dog parks. He believes that other bodies must share responsibility and make land available also. The next step is for the state to draw up plans and begin a SEQR review. All were invited to submit names of organizations which might want to be notified of the process to Jack Clancy.

Submitted by Herb Engman

Pesticide Committee

Members of the Pesticide Committee are meeting with Kendal-at-Ithaca residents who are concerned about the cosmetic application of 2,4,D, Triclopyr and Clopyralid, on the lawns there. We hope to facilitate increased notification for residents of impending applications, and provide an educational seminar on alternatives to lawn pesticide applications. Kendal at Ithaca already does not use pesticides near the on-campus daycare facility. We hope to convince the resident's advisory group to expand this policy to the entire campus. Certainly if these pesticides pose a health risk to children, the elderly are also vulnerable.

Submitted by Steve Nicholson

Don't Forget!
September 12, 2001
EMC Meeting

Special Guest: Dave Forness
DEC Region 7, Supervising Forester

Announcements

Letter to the Editor of the Ithaca Journal: August 24, 2001

A recent *Journal* article (August 11) described changes in land use in Tompkins County based on a recently re-released National Resources Inventory study. Titled, "Land vanishes beneath the burbs", the article went on to note that County developed land rose 35 percent over 1992-97 while population increased only 1.5 percent. While Tompkins has only 9.4 percent developed land, according to the article, the rate of reported increase in developed land is indeed shocking. The issue is all the more topical now with anti-sprawl a major platform issue for a number of candidates for the November elections. How voters perceive the sprawl issue could affect local government actions for years to come. Martha Robertson in a Letter to the Editor on the 21st for example confirmed for herself that the perceived traffic congestion in Ithaca is indeed actual based on the NRI reported increase in developed areas. Our concern is that the situation described by the NRI study may overstate the problem, leading to inappropriate responses.

The underlying problem is the statistical sampling procedure used. An impressive-sounding 300,000 sampling locations are selected for analysis, including every county in the country (excluding Alaska). Multiple points in each

location are then selected for a total of 800,000 data points. Impressive indeed, until one considers that on average only 95 locations (250 points) are analyzed per county. Here is the way the NRI web site describes the results, "The information is statistically reliable for national, statewide, and multi-county use." That is, these figures are **not statistically valid for individual counties**. Just consider what kind of view of Tompkins County you could get by examining every five years 250 points initially selected at random. Depending on which areas were drawn, you would get very different perspectives on how land use is changing.

It is disappointing to us that the *Ithaca Journal* and its parent, Gannett, turned NRI data to a purpose they cannot accurately be used for. Nor is this the only problem with the NRI figures. The same numbers were reassessed following their initial release in 1999, leading to a 30 percent reduction in estimated developed areas. For N.Y. State overall, the readjustment was 55 percent. Just possibly, a second review is needed.

Other sources must be used to give a better view of what is happening in Tompkins County. In the Town of Ithaca, building permits were examined for the 1992-97 period. Of approximately 4,300 tax parcels, 156 (3.6 %, or below 1% annually) were granted residential housing permits over the 1992-97 period. While building permit data are not complete measures of development or land use change, this figure is significantly below the 39 percent estimated by NRI and closer to observed development patterns. The two data sources are not strictly comparable for NRI is in terms of acreage while the Town identifies land by ownership units, which vary slightly from year to year and are generally smaller than an acre. Yet the basic message is clear – only 156 previously 'open' parcels in the Town had residential construction over the five-year period – a modest pace by most standards.

Yet limited development is nothing to be taken for granted. For that reason, the Town has set aside funds, to be augmented by State and private grants, for the purchase of development rights for farmland. We have also created the Six Mile Creek and are completing plans for a South Hill Conservation Zone. The pending Zoning Ordinance, presently under review, proposes to provide additional incentives for focusing development away from open land. And the NEST group is in the process of examining means for increasing the use of public transportation in key areas of the County.

These are not the only steps the Town and other municipalities should take to control development and its effects. Hopefully though we can all operate from correct data.

Bill Lesser, Town of Ithaca
Nelson Bills, Town of Lansing



No Reports Submitted

Coordinator's Report

Environmental Review Committee

Pesticide Committee Report

Education Committee Report

Executive Committee Report

Water Resources Committee Report