

## Draft Minutes of the EMC

**Date:** January 14, 2016  
**Time:** 4:00pm  
**Location:** Old Jail Conference Room, 125 E. Court St.

*Attendees:*

Name		Representation
Steve Bissen	P	Town of Dryden
Kenny Christianson	E	At-Large
John Dennis	E	Village of Lansing
Brian Eden	P	Village of Cayuga Heights
Bill Evans	P	Town of Danby
Pegi Ficken	E	Town of Groton
John Hertzler	P	Town of Ulysses
Jim McGarry	P	At-Large
Vladimir Micic	E	Town of Ithaca
Steve Nicholson	E	Town of Caroline
Carolyn Peterson	P	At-Large

Name		Representation
Susan Riley	P	At-Large
Tom Shelley	P	Ithaca CAC
Linda Spielman	P	Village of Dryden
Ron Szymanski	A	Village of Freeville
Roger Yonkin	A	At-Large
<i>Karen Edelstein</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Dooley Kiefer</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Dan Klein</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Legislature Liaison</i>
<i>Jose Lozano</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Scott Doyle</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>EMC Coordinator</i>
<i>Jennifer Turner</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>

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**Guests in attendance:** Caleb Scott, Owner, Scott Land & Yard Farm; Sarah Zemanick, Director of Campus Sustainability, Cornell University; Roy Luft, local citizen; Darby Kiley, Planner, Town of Ulysses

**Call to Order**– The meeting was called to order by Brian Eden at 4:04pm.

**Introduction** – Brian Eden opened the meeting by introducing Sarah Zemanick, Director of Cornell Sustainability, and Caleb Scott, formerly of Iberdrola USA, and present Owner of Scott Land & Yard Farm. He went on to provide background on the presentation, in particular discussing the EMC’s Environmental Review Committee had in the review of Cornell’s Solar Farm specifically noting concerns over how the site would be managed in close proximity to area wetlands.

**Cornell Solar Farm Vegetation Management Program**– Sarah Zemanick opened the presentation, reporting that the Cornell University - Snyder Road 2 mega-watt solar farm opened in September 2014. She indicated that it is one of the first solar projects that started operating in NYSEG’s territory. She went on to report on the favorable rulings from the Public Service Commission that made it possible for interconnectivity with NYSEG and also the savings that the University realized in both energy costs and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. She noted that sheep were found to be a successful way of managing the vegetation on the solar farm, and Cornell University is in the process of implementing a similar solar farm in Geneva with plans to introduce sheep there as well. Two additional solar projects are also being planned for outside of Tompkins County and are expected to be online later this year.

Discussions centered on the 2 mega-watt limit per project, and concerns over the future of these projects with the changes being made by the Public Service Commission to phase out net-metering.

1  
2 Caleb Scott introduced himself as the owner of Scott Land Yard Farm as well as Scott Land &  
3 Yard Landscaping Services. He went on to report that he was hired by the firm managing the  
4 solar farm to mow and maintain the site. Caleb noted the range of problems his landscaping firm  
5 endured in maintaining the site. He specifically noted the tight turning radiuses and hard to reach  
6 spaces under the panels which required special mowing and weed whacking that totaled 147  
7 man-hours in maintaining the site.  
8

9 Caleb advocated trying a different approach in managing the site. Specifically, Caleb wanted to  
10 introduce sheep from Scott Land & Yard Farm to help manage the vegetation on the site. He  
11 outlined how he took framed this practice as well as the many benefits using sheep to manage the  
12 vegetation on the solar farm including, easier maintenance, reduction to the carbon footprint and  
13 maintenance costs, the elimination for the need to mow or weed-whack, and increased health in  
14 the sheep herd. For the complete presentation,  
15 visit: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/emc/documents/presentations>  
16

17 **Approval of Minutes** – December meeting minutes were **approved** by unanimous vote, with  
18 corrections. Final minutes are posted on the EMC webpage: [www.tompkins-co.org/emc](http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc).  
19

20 **Energy** – Brian Eden reported on the efforts of Fossil Free Tompkins related to the need for  
21 increased local government actions to mitigate climate change, noting the 80 individuals that  
22 went before the Tompkins County Legislature to discuss possible climate change initiatives. He  
23 went on to report on the comments submitted on January 6 on behalf of the Energy Committee,  
24 to Common Council regarding sustainable building performance, and also the energy rally that  
25 he attended in Albany. Brian expressed his concerns with the lack of local action on climate  
26 change and suggested a meeting between TCCOG and municipal officials to go over focus areas  
27 and the proposed initiatives derived from the efforts of the Energy Roadmap. A massive build-  
28 out of renewable energy and heavy increase in energy efficiency was discussed as being an  
29 essential component in reducing greenhouse gas emissions of 80% by 2050. Challenges with the  
30 Black Oak Wind Farm were also discussed, and included issues related to the contracting for the  
31 location of the wind turbine and sub-station, as well as opposition from residents in the area. He  
32 indicated that health concerns have prompted their group to gather information in order to create  
33 a factsheet on the effects of wind turbines. Brian went on to suggest the need for building science  
34 advisors at the municipal level for direction in energy efficient building. He went on to report  
35 that FERC has approved the Cayuga Power Plant sale pending the PSC approval, and that  
36 HeatSmart is hosting Statewide Climate Science Community webinar on February 11. He further  
37 noted that Iberdrola has merged and created a new company, Avangrid. Members questioned  
38 whether the Public Service Commission will approve the Auburn transmission line upgrades that  
39 the Administrative Law Judge has previously recommended.  
40

41 **Environmental Review** – Brian Eden reported that the Planning, Energy, and Environmental  
42 Quality Committee invited the Department of Environmental Conservation to the meeting on  
43 January 20, to answer questions about the Cayuga Power Plant and coal combustion residuals  
44 from the landfill.  
45

1 **Unique Natural Areas** – Scott Doyle reported that approximately 600 UNA landowner  
2 notification postcards were mailed in early December which included the link to the interactive  
3 website that provided maps and information on the changes, noting the favorable responses  
4 received by landowners thus far. Brian then indicated that the Environmental Management  
5 Council has funding available to work on further Unique Natural Area updates this year. Roy  
6 Luft reported on the presentation he gave on the Indian Creek property, and discussed the  
7 possibility developing a senior housing development on his property in exchange for protection  
8 of the Indian Creek property.. Discussions centered on the challenges of the high infrastructure  
9 costs associated with such a development.

10  
11 **Staff Report** - Scott Doyle reported on the great potential for further solar projects in the area,  
12 noting the multiple benefits to the rural economy. He went on to note the phone call that he  
13 received from Erie County regarding the previous efforts with banning plastic bags in Tompkins  
14 County. He lastly reported on the Housing Needs Assessment survey which will be distributed  
15 shortly.

16  
17 Member discussed their concerns with the Elmira Savings Bank purchase of 8 parcels on Route  
18 13, and State Street, and the evictions of current tenants.

19  
20 **Nominating Committee** - Tom Shelley reported that are 3 candidates for 3 seats open for Vice-  
21 chair of the Executive Committee. The 4 standing members of the Executive Committee are  
22 Steve Nicholson (Chair) and (Vice-Chair's) Thomas Shelley, Carolyn Peterson and Brian Eden.  
23 With Carolyn Peterson's resignation there will be 1 vacancy on the Executive Committee. The 3  
24 interested members are Thomas Shelley, Bill Evans, and Brian Eden. Carolyn Peterson made the  
25 **motion** to move the slate, **seconded** by Steve Bissen, and approved by unanimous vote of all  
26 present members.

27  
28 **Evaluation of 2015 Activities/ Membership Satisfaction** – Brian Eden reported on the 2015  
29 efforts of the Council, noting the many presentations, three resolutions in support of the  
30 geothermal tax credit, pest insecticide use reduction, and on contamination at the Cayuga Power  
31 Plant that were submitted, and the NYS Conference on the Environment that was hosted.  
32 Members discussed their satisfaction with the meetings and presentations, and suggested efforts  
33 related to increasing attendance of the public and comparing efforts with areas unlike Tompkins  
34 County. Discussions centered on alternate locations for meetings; further discussions are set for  
35 the February meeting.

36  
37 **Identification and Prioritization of Environmental Issues** – Members discussed committees  
38 aimed at banning plastic bags, and microbeads. Media and outreach, or communications  
39 committee were suggested as another way to conduct outreach.

40  
41 **Formation of Core and Special Committees** – Brian passed around committee sign-up sheet  
42 for the core committees, and discussed the importance of all members committing to at least one  
43 committee. Members were also encouraged to list a new committee of interest.

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45 **Adjournment** -- The meeting adjourned at 5:52 PM.

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47 Respectfully submitted,

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2 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant  
3 Tompkins County Planning Department  
4 Approved by Council on