

Minutes

Planning, Development & Environmental Quality Committee Tompkins County Legislature

Regular Meeting

March 12, 2007 3:30 PM Legislature Chambers

Members Present: Martha Robertson (Chair), Jim Dennis, Frank Proto

Members Excused: Pam Mackesey, Tyke Randall

Other Legislator Present: Kathy Luz Herrera

Staff: Kate Hackett, TC Planning
Jackie Kippola, T C Administration
Joan Jurkovich, TCPD
Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning & PW
Cheryl Nelson, Public Works
Kathy Wilsea, TCPD

Visitors: Martha Armstrong, Tompkins County Area Development
Ken Miller
Gay Nicholson, Cooperative Extension
Steve Nicholson, EMC
Stu Stein, STPB
Debbie Teeter, Cooperative Extension

1) **Call to Order & Agenda Changes** --The meeting was called to order at 3:34.

2) **Tompkins County Planning Department**

a) Report on Sustainability Team Activities and ICLEI Program – Kate Hackett started with a summary of the history of Tompkins County’s participation in the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives Program. The County joined ICLEI’s Cities for Climate Protection Program in 2001. CCP participants identify, inventory, and work to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through use of the program framework. Tompkins County performed an inventory of 1998 baseline data, developed a Local Action Plan, and identified a goal of 20% reduction of emissions from 1998 to 2008. This summer an intern will be hired to do an inventory update, assess the status of progress, and make recommendations for reaching the goal. In answer to a question, Ed said the department’s budget includes the amount of \$10-12 an hour for 300 hours maximum to do this work. He stressed we need to do this update now if we are to achieve the 2008 goal. The County’s efforts to increase energy efficiency in buildings will probably be the biggest part of achieving the goal.

Ed Marx reported that the Sustainability Team has formed subcommittees that are focusing on segments of the Action Plan. They are working with Johnson Controls, and developing County policies that will include an Energy Star purchasing policy and biodiesel purchasing agreement. Cheryl Nelson serves as chair, with approximately 20 County staff members and some outside people participating. This will continue to evolve, and Ed sees much enthusiasm among the participants.

b) Indicators Report – Ed Marx pointed out this doesn’t show much data yet but, long term, will show trends and effectiveness of changes in the community. He said a lot of the information is based on assessment data. Committee members expressed appreciation for the document and interest in particular measurements.

c) Commissioner's Report – Ed reported that several grants have been announced recently, totaling more than \$900,000. They include projects to address Ludlowville flooding, stream corridor management, a Six Mile Creek project, and Highway Department equipment for post-storm cleanup. Tompkins County is among the top grant recipients in NYS. He will send copies of the press release on water quality grants. Ed has been working with the Village of Lansing and the Finger Lakes Land Trust to protect part of the lakefront cliff property in the Crossmore subdivision. The City of Ithaca and towns of Ulysses and Ithaca are working toward a corridor study of Route 96. A new staff member, replacing Heather Filiberto, will start April 2nd.

3) **Environmental Management Council, Cooperative Extension**

a) Environmental Quality and Sustainability – Gay Nicholson began with energy efficiency. She commented that the County is in pretty good shape, through individual and intermunicipal efforts. She cited the American Solar Energy Association, which feels the goal of reducing emissions 60-80% by 2050 can be met, but 57% of the reductions need to come from energy efficiency; only 43% of the gains can be achieved through renewable energies. While the County doesn't have authority to enact controls, it can lead and educate. Gay would like to see an energy code for existing buildings, as landlords can pass expenses on to tenants and don't have incentive to improve efficiency. Most efforts should go into insulation and air sealing, with certified contractors or inspections required. Moves from single- to double-pane windows would be a later step. Improved efficiencies in appliances will happen as old ones fail and people replace them over time with more efficient units. Ken Schlather, Executive Director of Cooperative Extension, is interested in having Tompkins County create a low-interest revolving loan program for upgrades, to go along with NYSERDA loans. She suggested that DSS work with HEAP clients to identify which homes are most in need of repairs and energy improvements. Gay feels word of mouth is powerful, and legislators should do their own "carbon diet" and lead by example. Marcia Lynch could publish personal testimonials to get lots of attention and help to shift community norms.

Steve Nicholson provided a couple handouts. He agreed with Gay that conservation is the best approach and should get the most attention. Steve said Tim Fahey of Cornell thinks 70% of carbon dioxide emissions can be cut in Tompkins County. The Rocky Mountain Institute has a website with free calculations based on conservation. Tim Fahey also advocates management of timber lands as "sustainable carbon sink forestry"; Steve pointed out that the Emerald Necklace in the Southern Tier comprises about 50,000 acres of land that functions to sequester carbon. Use of compact fluorescent light bulbs can have major benefits environmentally, and each one can save \$96 in electricity costs over the life of the bulb. Home Depot has promised the Town of Caroline to donate one bulb for each home in the town. Frank Proto suggested finding a way to coordinate distribution of bulbs through Department of Social Services programs. Steve mentioned the other points on his handout, which were the emerging jobs for sustainability directors, a purchasing policy for local foods, and the ten-point plan of the Apollo Alliance. Steve also had some information on sustainable cities from a conference he recently attended, which he gave to Ed Marx.

4) **Committee Goals and Calendar** – This item was postponed to April, when more members are expected to be present.

5) **Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board**

a) **Resolution:** Adding Parcels to Agricultural District No. 1 (East Side of Cayuga Lake) – Resolution moved by Frank, seconded by Jim. Debbie Teeter explained that Agricultural Districts are NYS designations which serve as a tool for protection. They require disclosure at time of title transfer for neighboring properties. The owner must commit to five years of active agriculture in order to receive the County's ag assessment rate. Ag designation also provides protection against municipal laws that would be restrictive to agriculture practices. (Farmers who receive an ag assessment but are not in an ag district must commit to eight years of agricultural production.) Martha Robertson asked about the sites in the Town of Lansing and Town of Dryden, and members had no questions.

Martha said the Planning Advisory Board raised the issue of Village of Dryden comments on the Miller properties in the Village. The Village's planning board and trustees are opposed to the two parcels in the Village being included in the ag district. Debbie said Ag & Market law does not require municipal contact, but it is done in Tompkins County as part of the review process. Ed Marx said the applications also must go to PAB by law in Tompkins County, for a recommendation to the Legislature. Frank said the AFPB

reviewed the application again after their contact with the Village, and felt satisfied it addressed their open space and trail concerns. AFPB felt the Village's concerns were minor, since the property is on the edge of the Village, and AFPB reaffirmed its support. Ken Miller, property owner, acknowledged the property was removed from the Ag District 8 years ago at his request. The Village was considering low income housing next door, and that property did not have an access road. Mr. Miller and Frank both felt the Ag District designation would help the Village and County attain open space and trails goals.

Martha moved to amend the resolution by removing the Village parcels. Debbie Teeter said the process is for AFPB to make a recommendation to the Legislature, and asked if Martha was making her own recommendation. She answered that she hoped the motion out of committee would recognize the Village's opposition by removing those two parcels from its recommendation to the full Legislature. Motion to amend was not seconded. Martha said the Village has concerns about livestock within its borders. Ag & Markets can overrule the Village on land use and other regulations or codes, if property is in an ag district. Having been present for PAB discussion, she feels PAB will not approve once they review comments from the Village. Vote was 3:0 in order to pass the resolution on to the full Legislature. The public hearing is already scheduled for the beginning of the Legislature meeting on 3/20, PAB will review Village comments on 3/28, and then the resolution will be on the Legislature agenda for 4/4.

6) Industrial Development Agency

a) **Resolution:** Recommending that the Tompkins County Legislature Approve the Issuance by the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency of up to \$32,000,000 Civic Facility Revenue Bonds (Ithaca College Project), Series 2007 – Resolution moved by Frank, seconded by Jim. Martha Armstrong was present, and said IDA is merely the conduit. Ithaca College must pay back the bonds. Bond counsel removed one line on page 2: “Muller chapel, consisting of approximately 6,000 square feet of space”. Martha Armstrong also provided minutes of the public hearing that was held this morning, at which Brian Noteboom and Mike Talarski spoke. Bond counsel will be at the Legislature meeting next week to address any questions. Public hearing notes will be distributed to the full Legislature. Amended resolution passed by vote of 3:0.

7) **Public Transportation** – These items were pulled from the agenda.

8) Strategic Tourism Planning Board

a) Appointments: Seat Change of Katy Pearce and new appointments of Elizabeth Prentice and Pam Gruelder were moved by Jim, seconded by Frank and passed 3:0.

c) **Resolution:** Funding of Community Celebrations Grants – Moved by Jim, seconded by Frank. Amended to add a whereas clause referring to total amount available this year. Passed 3:0.

b) **Resolution:** Funding of Community Celebrations Grant (Groton Winterfest) – Moved by Jim, seconded by Frank. Jim brought this forward as a member item because there was a tie vote at STPB. He said the project is worthy, but Groton was slow in applying because, due to staff turnover, they were unfamiliar with the grants. Kathy Luz Herrera serves on the Celebrations committee for STPB, and she said STPB didn't want to set a precedent of making exceptions to the guidelines. Frank asked that the resolution be amended to add an explanation at the end about the exception to the guidelines being due to staff turnover. Passed 3:0.

d) **Resolution:** Funding of Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants – Moved by Jim, seconded by Frank. Amended to add whereas clause referring to total amount available this year. Passed 3:0.

e) **Resolution:** Funding of Tourism Project Grants – Moved by Jim, seconded by Frank. Amended to add whereas clause referring to total amount available this year. Passed 3:0.

f) Tourism Recognition Awards – Moved by Jim, seconded by Frank and passed 3:0.

9) Committee Administration

- a) Approval of minutes from 2/12/2007 – Moved by Frank, seconded by Jim and passed 3:0
- b) Appointment of liaison -- Appointment of Greg Stevenson to the board of directors of the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District was moved by Frank, seconded by Jim and passed 3:0.

10) The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Dept.