

**Tompkins County Council of Governments**  
**October 28, 2010**  
**3 p.m.**  
**Scott Heyman Conference Room**

**APPROVED 11-28-10**

Members Present: (14 municipalities)

T/Caroline – D. Barber	T/Groton – G. Morey
T/Danby – R. Dietrich, L. Shawley	C/Ithaca – C. Peterson
T/Enfield – R. Barriere	Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson
T/Ulysses – E. Thomas, R. Marino	T/Newfield – R. Driscoll
T/Dryden – M. Sumner	V/Groton – B. Conger
V/Lansing – D. Hartill	V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke
T/Ithaca – H. Engman	V/Cayuga Heights – K. Supron

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (3 municipalities) V/Dryden, T/Lansing, V/Freeville

Guests: N. Zahler, Director of Youth Services; K. Schlather, Executive Director of Cooperative Extension; L. Lawyer, Ithaca Journal; J. Carey, WHCU; M. Kirchgessner, Town of Ithaca; D. Kiley, Planning Department

County staff: M. Lynch, J. Mareane, County Administration; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

**Call to Order**

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 3:23 p.m.

**Changes to the Agenda**

There were no changes made to the agenda.

**Minutes Approval – September 23, 2010**

It was MOVED by Ms. Peterson, seconded by Mr. Hartill, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of September 23, 2010 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

**Discussion of Youth Services Funding**

At this time members provided an update on the status of making up the 50% loss in County funding to the Municipal Youth Services Program. Mr. Barber said the Caroline Town Board discussed how to proceed with this and has come up with a plan based on what the County currently has in its budget. He noted, however, that there will need to be a lot of fundraising and grant-writing to make up the difference because the Town is unable to cover it all.

Mr. Driscoll said at this time the Town of Newfield intends to make up the shortfall in funding. Ms. Marino said the Town of Ulysses will make up the difference. Ms. Peterson said after some adjustments were made in Youth Bureau budget lines there was still a difference of \$5,000. Last night the City's Budget Committee voted to approve the shortfall in order to meet the usual number in summer employment.

Mr. Engman reported the Town of Ithaca will be holding a budget meeting next week. He said the Town places a high enough priority on youth programs and that it is very likely this funding will be made up. However, as he stated before, his recommendation will be to make up the difference of approximately \$15,000 by reducing another allocation within the budget and not by raising property taxes.

Mr. Barriere said the Enfield Town Board is willing to add to the current contract with the Enfield Community Council. However, this is likely to happen in the same way Mr. Engman is proposing for the Town of Ithaca, to reduce another area of the budget.

Mr. Hartill said the Village of Lansing intends to make up the difference.

Ms. Sumner said the Town of Dryden will not be able to make up the difference but will contribute at least what they did last year. She also said they have not had an opportunity to talk to the Youth Services Department about what the program impact will be.

Ms. Zahler reported at the County's Expanded Budget Committee meeting last night a motion was made by Legislator Dooley Kiefer asking the County to provide one-time funding to help bridge some of the gap between \$147,000 that has been recommended as target funding and the amount that is needed to keep to try to programs at a viable level for 2011. This motion was offered with the hope it would give municipalities more time to adjust and that would allow 2011 to be a planning and transition year. Ms. Kiefer withdrew the motion; however, this may be reintroduced at a later date. Ms. Zahler said there has been cases in the past where one-time funding has been appropriated where there has been decommissioning of programs or restructuring and she hopes the County will approve the funding and provide this option for those municipalities that are unable to close the gap.

Ms. Zahler said Youth Services staff will be looking at refining the programs and having conversations with municipalities about fundraising options that may be available to help close the funding gap. She said the Youth Services Department stands ready to help municipalities with this process and to follow through on their commitment to be engaged in the short term planning for 2011 and beyond.

Mr. Schlather said Cooperative Extension recognizes that each of the towns has a different arrangement but they are prepared to work with each municipality to figure out strategies to make programs whole.

Ms. Robertson said she is very glad to see towns taking this seriously; the County knows this is a difficult situation for everyone and is struggling with some very serious and compelling needs. At last evening's Expanded Budget Committee meeting some funding was added back to programs that serve youth and families. Many of those programs deal with children who are in foster care, institutional care, or are on the verge of entering intense and needed services. Ms. Robertson said Legislators have struggled on funding decisions, noting money was not reinstated for all of the programs. She said the Legislature still needs eight votes to pass a final budget which is currently at a six percent tax levy increase. She noted that increased Medicaid and pension costs alone raise the levy by five percent.

Ms. Conger said the Village of Groton budget will not be put together until June, 2012. The Town of Groton has approved an additional \$5,000 for youth services. They have also approved an additional \$3,000 for youth employment and the Village is considering \$5,000.

Ms. Peterson said the City transferred \$5,000 from within another area of the City's budget.

Mr. Dietrich said the Town of Danby has approved an additional \$5,000 and the Town Board has given permission to increase that amount if additional compensation is needed.

Mr. Barber spoke of one-time funding and noted this does not solve issues for 2012 budgets. He hopes members will take youth program funding as a serious issue and will work with the County as a partner on funding for future years.

### **Report on Emergency Services**

Mr. Dietrich said Ms. Thomas has provided members with an overview of what the issues are; Mr. Dietrich asked members to let them know if there are any questions. Mr. Mareane will be holding a meeting next week and he hopes to report more at the next meeting.

### **Update from the Gas Drilling Task Force**

Ms. Thomas reported efforts are still being made to coordinate a tour of Bradford County; anyone who is interested in going should let her know.

Road Protection – Mr. Barber is working on this; there are still conflicts with some laws at the State level. Various laws that have been adopted are now on the website. With regard to laws on evaluating road services, the Towns of Danby, Newfield, and Dryden have contracted with Delta Engineers; Ulysses and Caroline have been working on putting this out to bid.

Land Use – They have placed critical environmental areas on the back burner for the time being as they don't believe they are able to direct where drilling activities would go at this time. They are focusing on noise and light ordinances and industrial use permitting. The next meeting will be November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Darby Kiley attended a regional meeting of task forces and reported back on a cooperative survey that was done between Penn State and Cornell University of 6,000 residents and said the responses between Pennsylvania and New York were different in many ways. Ms. Thomas said this is available as a webinar if anyone is interested.

Mapping – Mr. Barber is still working on the idea of mapping to give municipalities a way of visualizing what impact a drilled area would have on the landscape. He has made contacts with students and other experts in GIS and is collecting ideas on how maps could be created that would show various different things, such as landscape at full or partial build out; 40 acre versus 640 acre layout; impact over time; pad size in comparison to landscape; and gas lines. The next meeting will be November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

There is new legislation on the TCCOG website - one from Danby on State forest land and the County's resolution banning the leasing of County lands.

Ms. Thomas said the Task Force is now internally being referred to as T.A.N.G. (Tompkins Addresses Natural Gas). She introduced Darby Kiley, Planner, who will be coordinating gas drilling issues.

Helen Slottje attended a summit that was sponsored in part by the gas drilling industry in Pennsylvania and she has highlighted some areas the Task Force should pay attention to:

- Bridges may be as important, or more, than roads since replacement costs are so high.
- The high school dropout rate is increasing in drilling areas. Jobs that pay higher than average wages are the suspected reason;
- Increasing rents are driving out teachers and other professionals who can no longer afford the high rents;
- The housing shortage is severe and hitting low-income groups heavily;
- Fluid migration – researchers are trying to establish how gas is migrating into water sources.

- Gathering pipelines – interstate commerce rules don't govern pipelines but FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) does take Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs) into consideration when deciding pipeline routes.

Ms. Marino said there are a couple of people from Tompkins County who will be speaking at the summit and suggested they could be asked to report back to TANG.

Tony Ingraffea will be speaking at the next meeting which needs to be rescheduled due to a conflict with the next regular meeting of TCCOG. Ms. Thomas will let everyone know when a date is set.

#### **Update from Subcommittee on TCCOG Resources**

Mr. Barber said at the last meeting the Committee proposed having each municipality contribute to a pool of funds for expenses the group deems to be important and members were asked to discuss this with their municipal boards. Ms. Peterson clarified the amount of the contribution agreed upon was \$250. Mr. Mareane will see that an account is established. Ms. Sumner suggested at least a conceptual framework be developed for what expenses this body anticipates in the coming year and volunteered to work on this. Ms. Robertson clarified that in order to issue invoices, municipalities will need to adopt a resolution approving a contribution and forward to Ms. Pottorff. Ms. Thomas and Ms. Sumner said by the next meeting they will work on drafting language for the resolution and/or framework.

#### **Health and Insurance Consortium (comments attached)**

Mr. Barber thanked everyone for attending the press conference this afternoon. He said they are moving forward working out small issues. A number of meetings are scheduled with employees to answer questions and new insurance cards should be issued December 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Update on Cell Towers**

Ms. Robertson reported seven municipalities have agreed to participate and this is the number that was needed to bring the contribution to \$1,500. Dan Hoffman, City of Ithaca attorney, is ready to schedule a meeting with the consulting attorney.

#### **Next Agenda Items**

The following items were suggested for the next agenda:

Nominating Committee for leadership in 2011  
Youth Budgets

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office

**Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium**  
**News Conference**  
**Ithaca Town Hall**  
**October 28, 2010 – 2:30 p.m.**

**Draft**

**Comments by Don Barber, Chair, TCCOG**

“Good Afternoon. Welcome to our press conference announcing the official start of the Greater Tompkins County Intermunicipal Municipal Health Insurance Consortium. I’m Don Barber, Chair of Tompkins County Council of Governments, and Chair of the Greater Tompkins County Intermunicipal Municipal Health Insurance Consortium Board of Directors, and Supervisor of the Town of Caroline.

“It is with great pride that we gather today to announce that the Greater Tompkins County Intermunicipal Municipal Health Insurance Consortium has received its Certificate of Authority to provide health insurance to over 2,000 municipal employees, retirees, and their families.

“To be clear, this is no small accomplishment. It required more than a casual collaboration of local government officials and staff, State legislators, and the New York State Insurance Department. This event recognizes intermunicipal cooperation of the highest order. This achievement only occurred due to the courage, collaboration, and tenacity of this group of local governments.

“But more importantly, this certificate begins an opportunity for Tompkins County local governments and their employees to manage costs and benefits to serve our needs.

“Recently there has been much fanfare about consolidation of local governments and providing services at lower costs. This Certificate is testimony that by pulling together, we can provide services at lower costs.

“This Consortium is the first to form under Article 47 since it became law in the mid 1990’s. We have demonstrated that it can be done. We have blazed a pathway for other local governments to reduce health insurance costs to their taxpayers and employees. Forming under Article 47 is significant because it is the only way small local governments (under 50) can reap the cost savings and customized health benefit plans previously only available to larger entities.

“And Article 47 requires a meaningful role for labor in the decision making process. I am proud of the collaboration and hard work that went into creating a Joint Committee on Benefits and voting seats on the Board of Directors for labor.

“I want to recognize a few people and organizations that have been instrumental in getting us to this point--Steve Whicher (former County Administrator) and the Department of State. Four years ago at the start of the Tompkins County Council of Governments, Steve Whicher and Administration staff played a key role in quantifying the cost savings opportunity to all local governments and finding a pathway in Article 47 to achieve those savings. His staff, particularly Jackie Kippola, created and submitted a Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) grant application to the Department of State who had the vision to see the opportunity it could create for all governments and Steve Whicher was able to convince them that Tompkins County local governments had the will to see it to fruition. Joe Mareane (current County Administrator) has been just as committed and supportive of his predecessor when taking the position.

“The Consortium hired Steve Locey of Locey & Cahill Consultants to help with two major tasks:

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1. Create a Municipal Cooperative Agreement, which included a creative weighted voting model;
2. Find a pathway to overcome the hurdles of Article 47 compliance.

“Although the Certification process has been a longer process than we had expected, I want to recognize and thank the New York State Insurance Department for listening to us and working with us to get over the Article 47 hurdles.

“I want to recognize the help of both Senator Seward and Assemblywoman Lifton to run interference with New York State Insurance Department to raise this application to the top of the pile. I especially want to thank Barbara Lifton for making our application a priority through key meetings with Joe Morelle, Assembly Insurance Committee Chair and daily calls.

“I want to recognize the City and County for their commitment. They have the bulk of employees and premium and were patient with the rest. Then I want to thank the towns and villages who came up with the needed capital reserve funds that were too much of a lift for the City or County.

“Before I step away, I want to reaffirm that earning this Certificate of Authority – this is a BIG DEAL. It’s a win for taxpayers, employees, retirees, and for all local governments in New York State.”

#### **Comments by Joe Mareane, County Administrator**

Mr. Mareane gave credit to Don Barber and said he was “the most important element of this effort over the last couple of years”. He stated Don “carried this on his shoulders for a long time when many of us almost gave up. He not only worked hard with our partners in Albany but kept our morale up locally and kept us with the confidence that we needed to hang together as a group so that we could celebrate a day like today”.

Mr. Mareane said “this has been a four-year effort to achieve a very simple goal to reduce the soaring costs of employee and retiree health benefits by pooling buying power. This is not a new idea, school districts have been doing this for years; however, as Don has said, we are the first to do this since the law changed that governed consortiums in the mid 1990’s. It is because it is the first, we have been the guinea pig and have faced challenges that many didn’t expect when we first entered the effort. It did take longer to get through the process than anyone expected; however, we have now chartered a path that we think others across the State of New York will want to follow.

“On January 1<sup>st</sup>, a Consortium of 13 municipalities within Tompkins County will begin providing benefits to local government employees and retirees through a self-insured plan that will lower our costs by nearly \$900,000 a year. The savings are the result of economies of scale by all of us coming together. Larger governments like the City and the County will benefit by reduced administrative costs, but the most significant savings will be realized by smaller governments who until now have had no choice but to get their insurance through high-cost community rated insurance plans. Importantly, this is happening without diminishing the benefits we provide to our employees and retirees. In fact, by lowering the costs of this program it lowers their costs too; it’s a win-win.

“The Consortium Board which consists of representatives of each of the thirteen participating municipalities, as well as two labor representatives, has selected Blue Cross to administer the plan. That means that employees and retirees will remain within the extended Excellus network of healthcare providers. The development is not only good news for taxpayers, employees, and retirees, its also an important demonstration of how local governments within Tompkins County came together, putting parochial interests aside, and found intelligent ways to solve our common problems. As much as in the Consortium plan itself, this example of government cooperation that places the interests of the taxpayer first should be a beacon for all of New York State.

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0“Again, on behalf of the County, Don and to all the members of the Consortium, thank you very much for bringing us to this important point”.

**Troy Oechsner, New York State Insurance Department**

Mr. Oechsner thanked Mr. Mareane and stated “this is a big freakin deal”. He said at the Insurance Department, Government Paterson and his boss are really proud of this; its one piece of many initiatives that have been worked on over the last several years. Other efforts range from extending Cobra benefits to the extending unemployed from 18 to 36 months, the new age 29 bill that gives people more access to family coverage, and many other projects.

“The high cost of health care is a big problem for small businesses that are the engines of growth and is a big problem for governments, school districts, and municipalities. We had a Governor’s Task Force that was looking at ways we could try to help towns and cities reduce health care costs because they are employers as well and one of the idea was why not use Article 47; it’s on the books, hasn’t really been used, and can create these community co-ops. There were definitely some difficulties in the language that they had to work with. There was also the Insurance Department’s concern that they make sure that insurers or self-insurers are solvent and that claims can get paid.”

He congratulated Don Barber, members of the Consortium, and Senator Seward, Assemblywoman Lifton, for pushing really hard to make this happen. He said everyone worked together and compromised, but said credit goes to Don Barber for continuing to press the Insurance Department for something he thinks will “be a model for a lot of towns and municipalities going forward.”

**Hon. Barbara Lifton, Member of the New York State Assembly, 125<sup>th</sup> District**

Assemblywoman Lifton said one of the most important parts of her job as a Legislator is to not only listen to other local officials when they come and say they have a problem but when they are also proposing a solution to make things better at the local level. She was pleased when Don Barber and others came to her with a request to set up a meeting with Joe Morelle, Chair of the Assembly Insurance Committee. She said she was told by the Insurance Department that Mr. Barber had the data and done the studies and this is a case where they wanted to look at the real experience of municipalities and make a State law work. She said they wanted to make this the first in the State. She offered congratulations to everyone who participated in the process and particularly to Don Barber.

**Senator James Seward**

Senator Seward said he is “very pleased to be joining with everyone in what is a very big deal for the municipalities of Tompkins County and the taxpayers of Tompkins County as well. I certainly want to add my congratulations to all the members of the Consortium and in particular to Chair Don Barber, for all their hard work and dedication to making this day possible. There was a vision and there needed to be a lot of hard work and persistence to make it happen so my hat is off to each and every one of you.”

Mr. Seward said he has been very pleased to work with members of the Consortium over the last year and said during the process he has had several conversations with Mr. Oeschner and others at the Insurance Department. As former Chair of the Insurance Committee in the Senate and the current ranking member of that Committee, Mr. Seward said he has had many interactions with the Insurance Department on different issues but noted that every conversation started with “Where is the Greater Ithaca Tompkins County Health Consortium?”

He said “the Insurance Department looked at local data, local circumstances and reduced reserve requirements by one million dollars which better-matches the actual claims experience of the involved municipalities. That was a big win, as well as clarifying the union representation in terms of the various

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committees associated with the Consortium. It has not been an easy task but it is very satisfying to see the project finally come to fruition and a Certificate of Authority granted.

“This Consortium is truly a groundbreaking force in the State of New York; it will be the first new municipal cooperative health benefit plan to be created since the law was enacted back in 1993 at a time when local governments are confronted with ever-increasing costs on every front, but particularly in the area of healthcare costs to employees.”

Senator Seward concluded his comments by stating “this will provide municipalities and their employees with some real and greatly needed cost savings. This is just one example of how sharing services between neighboring municipalities can be extremely beneficial. By banding together to collectively purchase health insurance you are able to keep rates reasonable and prevent the huge increases that we are seeing across the State. By achieving cost savings in the health insurance area you not only benefit municipalities and their employees but all of the property taxpayers. Saving \$900,000 for the taxpayers truly is a big deal.”

He hopes this will serve as a model for other areas of the State and has certainly paved the way. He congratulated everyone and extended best wishes for the Consortium’s future success. He said he is “pleased to support and advocate on behalf of this Consortium, but is even more pleased to be here today to see it become a reality”.

**Carolyn Peterson, City of Ithaca Mayor**

Ms. Peterson said she is very pleased to be here and noted both the County and the City never acted or felt like they were “the big people in the room”. She described the process as an entirely collaborative effort with large and small municipalities working together throughout the process. She stated she is not only proud of being the first in the State with this type of consortium but also showing how municipalities, large or small, cities, villages, towns, do and can work together. Ms. Peterson said it was not to long ago when people felt there were issues where municipalities could not get along or talk to each other but she does not think that was case during this process. She said she believes this will be a benefit to other municipalities in the future and stated she is proud of everyone for making it to this step. She noted “There is more work to do as we get everyone on board to have and everything explained to each and every employee, but the City is really happy to be here”.

**Mary Ann Sumner, Town of Dryden Supervisor**

Ms. Sumner said “it is truly a great day” and thinks “everyone across the country who may have lost faith in government should come and see how it works in Tompkins County”. She said she couldn’t be more proud of the group. Fifteen elected officials who have come together with a great deal of staff support, have worked on this project for four years and have trusted each other. “We took a few leaps of faith and a few chances; we saw an opportunity to save some money not only for our own municipality but for every town and village in the County”. She said the Town of Dryden is proud of the insurance coverage it provides but ten percent of the Town’s operating budget is spent on that health insurance coverage. With the Consortium in 2011 the Town expects to save more than \$700 per employee. This is a savings that can be shared with both the taxpayer and the employees. Ms. Sumner thanked Don Barber “for inspiring leadership and determination”.

At this time Mr. Barber recognized County Administration staff, Joe Mareane and Jackie Kippola; union representative Chantalise DeMarco, and the municipal members of the Consortium:

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Village of Cayuga Heights  
Village of Dryden  
Village of Groton  
Village of Trumansburg  
Town of Ithaca  
Town of Caroline  
Town of Danby  
Town of Dryden  
Town of Groton  
Town of Enfield  
Town of Ulysses