

Tompkins County Council of Governments
Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 28, 2011 3:00 PM
Scott Heyman Conference Room

Approved 5-26-11

Members Present: (12 municipalities)

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

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (5 municipalities) V/Dryden, V/Freeville, T/Lansing, V/Lansing, V/Trumansburg

County Staff: J. Mareane, M. Lynch, County Administration; E. Marx, D. Kiley, K. Borgella, S. Doyle, County Planning Department; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Guests: B. Vittamo, NY Power Authority; C. Chock, Tompkins County Legislator; L. Lawyer, Ithaca Journal; R. Sovocool, Groton Central School District; K. Crawford, NYMIR (New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal); D. Patterson, The Partner's Insurance; S. Anderson, Cooperative Extension

Special Presentation by Brian Vittamo, Senior Business Development Specialist for the New York Power Authority (New York Power Authority)

Ms. Anderson introduced Mr. Vittamo who promotes the NYPA Energy Conservation Programs to municipalities and schools that are currently not NYPA power customers. The following is a brief summary of the presentation provided by Brian Vittamo prior to the meeting. A copy of the Power Point [presentation](#) is available on the TCCOG website.

100 MW Solar Initiative

It is very difficult for a municipality or school to bring in solar energy right now because of the high cost. This initiative was launched in September 2009 with the main purpose to come up with a way to make solar a much easier method of generating power for municipalities and schools. It is currently the largest public solar initiative in the country.

Mr. Vittamo explained this program is designed for municipalities and school districts that want to be a community leader and show citizens that solar is a technology that will be less expensive for the next generation and is the way to achieve clean, green power. The program will cost nothing to those who want to participate and can meet the criteria.

Installation and maintenance of the solar equipment are part of the program. The power that would be generated would be owned by NYPA and purchased back by the municipality or school district in a twenty-year "solar purchase" contract. The contract would state that any power generated would be sold at a cost of three percent less than its current cost for a five-year period. For the remaining 15 years a municipality or school district would never pay more than it would have through the local provider. NYPA would like to put the meter inside and at locations where people can watch it work. They have found through research that learning about solar power and being able to watch the meter work helps people learn about solar; this is particularly helpful in schools. After 20 years a municipality or school would have options, including having the contractor remove all of the equipment. Mr. Vittamo believes having the equipment removed would be the best option as the equipment is likely to be obsolete by then. Specific information on NYPA's 100 MW Solar Initiative is available at www.nypa.gov.

Energy Efficiency/Clean Energy Initiatives

NYPA's mission is to provide clean, economical and reliable energy consistent with their commitment to safety, while promoting energy efficiency and innovation for the benefit of their customers and all New Yorkers.

The Energy Conservation program offered by NYPA is not much different than a performance contract that the private sector offers. The difference with their program is that NYPA does not run energy efficiency programs to make a profit, their revenue is generated by distributing and generating power in New York State. Energy conservation is a secondary program they operate because they are a public benefit corporation and it is their responsibility to help with energy issues. The concept behind the program is to use the savings from electric bills to pay for the work and is based upon an energy audit and where NYPA determines they can cut energy use and costs and to trade the savings to pay for the equipment. NYPA also pays for the financing for the work and currently has an interest rate of .51% which is paid back over a period of three to five years. Anyone interested in the program should contact Mr. Vittamo and he will send an energy checklist that would need to be completed along with a request for information on energy costs and square footage.

The annual NYPA investment is more than \$100 million. There has been a total of \$1.3 billion invested in projects that have been completed at 3,490 public facilities Statewide; 440 projects current are in progress at 1,100 facilities; there is \$126 million in annual recurring energy savings; and 790,000 tons of green house gases are avoided annually.

When asked what areas savings is achieved, Mr. Vittamo said lighting involves the least amount of work but can save the most money; windows are the most expensive and save the least on electric bills. Upgrades to HVAC equipment is also recommended. They also work with NYSERDA to try to find funding to bring costs down as well as complete all of the paperwork. There is no cost or obligation to take part in the program, the checklist can be completed in only a few minutes. He invited anyone to contact him for further information or to discuss any other clean energy ideas.

Call to Order

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

NYMIR (New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal)

Mr. Crawford said NYMIR is primarily an upstate program with members from 638 towns, villages, and counties, including many in Tompkins County. NYMIR has been around for 18 years doing the type of cooperative work that is now being done through the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium. It is an example of how both sides of government work together and be successful.

When NYMIR first began its goal was to bring some stability to a very volatile property and casualty insurance market. They have been successful for three years in bringing rates down while at the same time generating enough capital surplus so that they can continue to grow if the market should turn again. Mr. Crawford said he believes NYMIR has been successful because of its focus on risk management and have lower frequency and severity of claims than anywhere else. They are at a point where they have \$7.5 million in the current program and will be voting. NYMIR has several online colleges that result in reducing the frequency and severity of claims which lend to higher premiums. Course topics included: law enforcement, land use/zoning, employment practice, public officials, parks and recreation, and a defensive driving course. Mr. Crawford said this approach has been working for 18 years and encouraged others to look at joining the NYMIR program.

Mr. Patterson said The Partners has been providing municipal insurance for over 50 years and has been associated with NYMIR since it first began. He said this the best municipal insurance program that can be found within the State and spoke highly of NYMIR's claims service. He spoke of the positive feedback he has heard about NYMIR's convenient online education program. Mr. Patterson said The Partners insures 32 municipalities and would welcome anyone to contact him to discuss the NYMIR program further.

Approval of Minutes – February 24, 2011 and March 24, 2011

It was MOVED by Ms. Conger, seconded by Ms. Robertson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of February 24, 2011. MINUTES APPROVED.

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Supron, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of March 24, 2011. MINUTES APPROVED.

Changes to the Agenda

The report from Kevin McCabe of the Governor's Office was postponed to the next meeting due to yesterday's storm damage.

County Comprehensive Plan

It was MOVED by Mr. Engman, seconded by Mr. Dietrich, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to authorize Don Barber, Co-Chair to sign a letter to Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability, concerning Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Five-Year Implementation Plan Update. The letter commits the Council of Governments to act as the lead agency, along with Tompkins County Area Development, for the following element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan's new Five-Year Implementation Plan:

- Maintain an inventory of the location and capacity of existing water and sewer facilities and utilize the information to maximize the benefit of public investments and efficiency of facility operations.

Mr. Marx said Planning Department staff will be back to talk about the process for collecting this information.

Census Report

Mr. Marx distributed a one-page document table that summarizes the population and housing occupancy status from the 2010 census. He cautioned using some of the data and said there may be a few anomalies that need to be fixed. Mr. Marx said the County grew at a rate that was within the range that was being used for planning purposes. The range used was one-half percent year and growth was slightly higher than that. With regard to housing unit numbers there may have been some miscounting in 2000 of certain senior units as to whether they should have been housing units or senior quarters; staff is looking closer that these numbers. It was also noted that Trumansburg had a population annexation during this period and the population increase partly reflects this. The towns of Caroline and Danby had higher than average increases in population; most of the other towns had small increases while the Village of Cayuga Heights had a small decline; the Town of Groton had a decline in population, however, Mr. Marx said he would like to look into this further. He said it is important to note there is block level data but it is not yet in a tabular formula; this information is important for redistricting purposes. He also reported the census this time was done different than before. All of the household characteristics that was

gathered in prior census's through a sampling of the total was not done in the decennial census and is now being done on a rotating annual basis by the Census. The information will be posted on the Planning Department's website.

There was a brief discussion of the student population; Mr. Marx said he feels confident the information gathered in the 2010 Census is much more accurate than the 2000 Census.

Ms. Robertson asked what the advantage is to reaching the population goal of 100,000. Mr. Marx said one advantage would be that there are some federal grants that have population limits of 100,000.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Mr. Doyle and Ms. Borgella provided members with an update on the planning process for the All Hazards Mitigation Plan update that many jurisdictions participated in in the past. Mitigation planning is action that reduces risk to both people and property prior to an event and is seen as wise investment. Research has shown that for every dollar invested in mitigation planning at least \$4 in benefits are realized; it also makes jurisdictions eligible for various pots of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) monies. He also noted there are many non-economic benefits.

Mr. Doyle spoke of FEMA requirements and said the Plan needs to be updated every five years and said they have secured a grant to coordinate the update. One of the grant requirements is that all of the County's municipalities be engaged in the plan update process and contact will be made throughout the summer. They will be asking for municipal information related to hazard events and vulnerabilities since the previous plan was developed.

Ms. Borgella said there is also an action step contained within the County's Comprehensive Plan to look at climate adaptation and mitigation and to look at what scientists are saying with regard to flooding, high winds and other events. She spoke of the advantages of building this into the All Hazard Mitigation Plan and said this will be an exciting way to look at this in a holistic manner.

Public Information Announcement

Mr. Dietrich, on behalf of Marcia Lynch, announced a training session for public information officers will be held on May 4th at 1 p.m. at the Ithaca-Tompkins Regional Airport. He encouraged members to send a representative to this session.

Report from the Gas Drilling Task Force

It was MOVED by Ms. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Morey, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to authorize Don Barber, to sign a letter to authorize Don Barber, Co-Chair, to sign the a letter to Commissioner Joe Martens, NYSDEC, regarding public comment period for the revised draft SGEIS on the Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Regulatory Program for the Marcellus Shale Gas Drilling.

Ms. Kiley reported Tompkins and Schuyler counties are clients in Susan Christopherson's workshop on economic impacts of Marcellus shale development on tourism, housing, and agriculture. They will be presenting their final results in the form of a Webinar on May 9 at 2 p.m. at a location to be determined on the Cornell Campus. TCCOG is invited to attend in person or via the Webinar link. When it is finalized she will circulate information to TCCOG.

With the timing of her employment is coming to an end in October, the Task Force has been talking about final products. Using Tioga County's resource binder as a resource document, there have

been discussions of producing a prioritization checklist that would include tools and recommendations with a focus on critical things that can be passed by local boards.

Ms. Kiley reported the Mapping Focus Group met today. Zack Patten, the student working with the group, has done a build-out analysis based on Bradford County's numbers and presented some very good visuals of what could happen. He will be finalizing his work by the end of May. Ms. Kiley said she plans to visit municipalities in June and July to give the presentation and provide municipalities with the prioritization checklist.

Ms. Sumner said she sent out an article today about firefighters in Towanda, Pennsylvania, with regard to regulating the impact on road use and said if a developer is having a disproportionate impact on emergency services they may be required to contribute to the cost.

Ms. Robertson said she would like the County Legislature to also see the mapping presentation. She asked about the impact on towns where trucks would pass through although when there is no project in the town. Mr. Barber stressed the importance of intermunicipal cooperation so that if a project is identified in a municipality the involved municipalities should be identified through a road use policy or law. Ms. Robertson spoke of the importance of having cooperation from the highway superintendents.

Mr. Driscoll stressed that in order to arrive at cooperative intermunicipal posture everyone needs to take time to catch up on the issue of gas drilling. He also mentioned the Park Foundation quarterly funding cycle and suggested a funding request to continue Ms. Kiley's position past October be initiated soon. Mr. Barber, Mr. Marx, Ms. Thomas, and Ms. Robertson will be meeting in the next couple of weeks to discuss this to develop a plan.

Ms. Kiley announced upcoming events:

May 2 – Panel discussion at the Public Library

June 23 – Susan Christopherson will be present after to the June TCCOG meeting

Mr. Driscoll suggested hosting a meeting for engaging Chamber of Commerce members in this issue. Ms. Robertson spoke of efforts Jean McPheeters, Chamber of Commerce President, made to organize a series of workshops last year. The workshops did not take place because it was felt there was already a lot going on relating to gas drilling. Ms. Robertson noted John Neuman, Chair of the Chamber's Government Affairs Committee, has been attending a lot of the events.

Ms. Chock provided a brief update on the work of the Assessment and Land Values Focus Group. They are looking at the tax base and the issues that relate to properties that have gas leases when people are trying to obtain a mortgage, measuring gas and verifying output, and agricultural exemptions. Real estate lenders have attended meetings and expressed concerns about their continued ability to see mortgage loans they originate. The Ithaca Board of Realtors has also been participating in meetings. Information is being posted on the TCCOG Gas Drilling website.

Next Agenda Items

The following items were suggested for inclusion on the next agenda:

Solid Waste Management

TCAT funding

Update on 2012 County Budget

School District participation

Redistricting report

Minutes
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Announcement(s)

Ms. Supron said there is a tremendous amount of misinformation in the public about the deer management situation in the Village of Cayuga Heights. She will provide members with a letter about this and directed people to the Village website for information.

Mr. Dietrich encouraged everyone to attend the Youth Services Conference with a discussion of all of the youth programs to be held on May 4th at 9 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office