

Tompkins County Council of Governments
Regular Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
Thursday, October 25, 2012 3:00 PM
Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Members Present: (9 municipalities)

T/Danby – L. Shawley	Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson
T/Enfield – A. Rider	T/Ithaca - H. Engman, B. Goodman
C/Ithaca – J. Clairborne	V/Groton – E. Conger
T/Ulysses – E. Thomas	T/Caroline – I. Weiser
V/Cayuga Heights – K. Supron	

County Staff: J. Mareane, M. Lynch, County Administration; E. Marx; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Guests: Hillary Lambert, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network; Sue Poelvoorde, New York State Parks, Roxy Johnston, Hydrilla Task Force; Joe Wilson, Task Force on Gas Drilling

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (7 municipalities: Town of Dryden, Town of Newfield, Town of Groton, Village of Freeville, Village of Lansing, Village of Trumansburg, Village of Dryden)

Call to Order

Mr. Engman called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Tompkins County Planning Department

Update on Work Plan Items Involving Open Space and Development (ID # 3618)

Mr. Marx said it has been an active year in the Planning Department and there are many activities currently going on. He highlighted items that were identified at the beginning of the year as things the Department wanted to accomplish in 2012 and are now coming to fruition as the year is coming to an end:

- ❖ The Department has been working on three strategic documents:
 - a) Conservation Strategy that looks at agricultural and energy conservation areas and identifies key strategies that can be worked on;
 - b) Development Focus Area Strategy (looks at nodal development and where there is potential for future development to happen in the most positive way for the community. A particular look is taken at the City, villages, other parts of the urbanized area, rural centers, and working collaboratively with municipalities; Mr. Marx said a notice was just on the Development Focus Area Strategy concerning communities that may want to implement some of the concepts in the Strategy but may need some help on next steps. There is a small amount of funding available for communities that could be used to hire graduate students or consultants to perform work. Mr. Marx said they will be looking for these applications by an established deadline in November.
 - c) Five-year Tourism Strategy. Over the last two years the Planning Department has been involved in supporting and administering the Program. Once the Budget is adopted there will be a special fund to try to implement those key actions that are identified in the Strategy. There will be an opportunity for larger projects that other tourism programs support.

Mr. Marx said these three strategies compliment other strategies the County has already

established that relate to affordable housing and energy. With regard to energy, the Department has been doing a lot of work and is trying to develop an “Energy Road Map” that would outline a vision for what type of renewable energy future is feasible in Tompkins County. They are trying to quantify the resources that are available and what share of the County’s energy needs they will be able to use. They have been working with graduate student interns who have been looking at solar, wind, energy, and bio-mass. This Fall an intern will be looking at geothermal energy potential and will expand on the bio-mass work that was done previously. At that point he believes they will have a good information on the major renewable energy source potentials.

The Planning Department is currently administering several grant programs: 1) EPA Climate Showcase project which is trying to demonstrate how to build more energy efficient housing and communities; 2) Update of Hazard Mitigation Plan for the County; and 3) Working with seven other Southern Tier counties on the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Plan funded by NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research Development Authority) www.cleanergreenersoutherntier.org.

Mr. Marx reported on a cost savings project and said today the County is installing solar panels on seven County buildings through a lease arrangement with Solar Liberty from Buffalo, New York. He also reported the Planning Department looks at properties going through the tax foreclosure process to identify any environmentally sensitive or other issues that should be brought to the Legislature’s attention before they are sold. In the last round there were two properties identified that were located near an agricultural resources focus area with high-quality agricultural soils or a natural resource focus area where there is high natural values. In these instances the properties were sold with deed restrictions so they would not be developed to the extent that negated the potential resources to the community.

The Community Housing Fund is a joint effort in the County between the County, City of Ithaca, and Cornell University to support the development of affordable housing in the County. The current funding requests are due tomorrow and the Planning Department is expecting the largest response since the program has been in existence. The Program provides either pre-development loan funds to help people get through the process of developing a project without having to put out a lot of money or it provides housing plus money to underwrite the cost if it is going to be maintained permanently as affordable.

Mr. Marx commented that the Department is currently working with several different municipalities on various projects.

Ms. Thomas said in an attempt to improve communication with residents, the Town of Ulysses recently completed its first newsletter and questioned how the Planning Department communicates with the public. Mr. Marx said the Department's website is a great resource but its continuing to be worked on and welcomed other suggestions. Ms. Thomas suggested information could be included in these municipal newsletters.

Ms. Robertson spoke of the list of properties that risk being foreclosed upon that is prepared by David Squires, Finance Director, and questioned whether town supervisors receive the information. She said it might be helpful if the list was reviewed by municipalities to see if there are any properties that might be of interest to the town. Mr. Marx said the Planning Department contacts a municipality when they see something that involves them but will check how the list is distributed.

Ms. Thomas said the stairs at Buttermilk Park is in desperate need of repair and questioned how the condition could be improved. Mr. Marx said this would be a good conversation to have and suggested including Tim Joseph, Director of the New York State Parks Finger Lakes Region.

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Minutes
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Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda

A report from the Nominating Committee was deferred to the next meeting.

Minutes Approval - September 27, 2012

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Ms. Conger, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of August 25, 2012 as corrected. MINUTES APPROVED.

Update on Gas Drilling

Ms. Thomas reported the Task Force met last week and talked about meeting with Cornell University representatives that would be in charge of leasing Cornell land. Although they did discuss the brine issue and roads the focus of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the future of the Task Force. A lot of the communities now have their own citizen groups that are working for their municipalities and there are some other parallel groups that span the entire County that are not official municipal and citizen groups. She said the Task Force is now in a "wait and see" mode; however, if there is a specific need or issue that arises they will respond.

Ms. Weiser said she spoke at the meeting about what the Town of Caroline is doing with regard to aquifer protection and road agreements. She invited other municipalities to participate with the Town of Caroline in meetings about either of these issues. She suggested other municipalities also consider extending an invitation to others to attend meetings as issues move forward. Ms. Thomas also asked members to let the Task Force know if there are any topics they would like to have addressed at a forum.

Ms. Robertson provided an update on the "Elected Officials to Protect New York" and reported there are now 465 people signed onto the letter asking Governor Cuomo to delay decision on drilling in New York State until three studies are completed: a comprehensive health impact study, a cost benefit analysis, and socio-economic analysis that looks at costs and not just benefits and cumulative impacts. She said she is trying to set a meeting in Albany with State representatives and also with Joe Martens, Director of the Department of Environmental Conservation. She also noted that the 465 signatures represent 61 of New York's 62 counties.

Report from Cable Committee

Mr. Engman reported the public meeting on the Time Warner Cable issue will be held November 1st at 7 p.m. at the Ithaca Town Hall. Marcia Lynch has sent out notices and there has been good coverage. An e-mail account has been established for the public to submit comments as well. After the meeting the Committee will review the information and will schedule the first meeting with Time Warner to begin negotiations.

Ms. Robertson praised the collaborative efforts of the Cable Committee. Mr. Engman said it is very good news that the City of Ithaca has joined the group and said it provides added strength. He noted one reason TCCOG works so well is that there are "coalitions of the willing" as not everyone has to do everything but can join an effort when it impacts a particular municipality.

Update from Hydrilla Task Force

Ms. Johnston reviewed the activities that have taken place since Hydrilla was first discovered in the Inlet:

- Hydrilla was discovered on August 4, 2011 and by September 3rd outreach had begun and has continued;
- Greenhouse studies, surveys in the Inlet and Lake;
- The lower Inlet was treated in October, 2011 and the upper Inlet was treated in November, 2011;
- During the winter the Hydrilla Task Force was formed and within that there are State and Federal Officials; a local Task Force meets every two to three weeks that includes an outreach group and a management group that makes decisions;
- Through reaching out to national experts a monitoring plan and a management plan was developed;
- In the Spring they contracted with applicators, chemical companies; coordinated with the Department of Environmental Conservation, USGS (United States Geological Service) and a local company for implementation details and preparing permits; coordinated with the City of Ithaca and the Health Department;
- In April and May the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network organized a Hydrilla identification trainings;
- In July and August Lake monitoring occurred;
- The main education partners are the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, the Floating Classroom, and Cooperative Extension;
- The website is routinely updated by Cooperative Extension: www.stophydrilla.org; and
- A research meeting was held in Syracuse in September and was attended by most of the hydrilla experts in the nation.

Ms. Johnston reported on funding and stated last year the State announced there was \$800,000 for this effort; however, only \$25,000 has been received and was earmarked for education. They intend to pursue this funding from the State in 2013 and look for grant opportunities. They would also like municipalities to be aware there may be a need to request funding in 2013 for specific needs.

Ms. Lambert said the Network has been working on doing the education and outreach effort and letting the community know about hydrilla, what the threat of it is, and what is being done about it. They are now working with the Task Force and are looking at possible funding sources in order to continue their work into 2013. On November 7th a public meeting will be held to thank volunteers and there will be an update on Hydrilla and an overview of plans for the future. On November 8th a similar event will be held in Seneca Falls. She distributed a draft document containing a list of programs where funding is needed in the future.

Sue Poelvoorde, New York State Parks, spoke of the importance of funding for continuing outreach or this. She also spoke of the funding and the lack of solid funding from the State and urged municipalities to consider the possibility of being asked to contribute to these education and outreach efforts.

Ms. Johnston said the failure of hydrilla efforts is often caused by fatigue and stressed the importance of sticking with the eradication effort. She provided an example and stated that if a break is taken in the eradication effort in the sixth year the plant grows so fast it can grow almost immediately back to where it started when the eradication effort began. Ms. Thomas asked if it would help for TCCOG to write a letter to the State acknowledging the State's allocation of funding to hydrilla eradication efforts. Ms. Johnston said she believes this would help and will provide TCCOG with a draft letter.

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Next Meeting Agenda Items

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

- Report from the Cable Subcommittee
- Update on Gas Drilling
- Update from the Health Insurance Consortium
- Report from the Nominating Committee
- Follow-up on Hydrilla Letter

Safety Training

Mr. Mareane provided the following document for members:

**TO: TCCOG MEMBERS
FROM: JOE MAREANE
DATE: OCTOBER 25, 2012
RE: SAFETY TRAINING**

At your last meeting, I discussed the prospect of the County providing certain safety-related training for town and village employees.

In exploring this further with Frank Croteau, the County's Employee Health and Safety Coordinator, the County would be willing to assist you with the following items:

- Hearing tests
- Hearing training
- Fit tests
- Respirator training
- Safety Committee member
- Annual PESH training requirements
- New employee (safety) training
- Setup MSDS System
- Setup annual chemical exposure records
- Setup PPE assessments
- Setup safety audits
- Setup Workplace Violence program
- Setup access to Tompkins County Health and Safety Homepage
- Ergonomic assessments and training
- Defensive driving course
- Welding safety
- Arc flash safety
- Electrical safety
- Lockout/tagout safety
- DOSH recordkeeping training and assistance

If you or your staff have an interest in discussing any or all of these items more fully, please contact Frank Croteau at the Tompkins County Health Department. Frank's email is fcroteau@tompkins-co.org; his phone number is 274-6704.

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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Informal Discussion Following Meeting Communications (including newsletters, e-mail lists, media releases); Future Topics: Information technology policies, ethics, communication strategies, budgets, property tax cap and override

This was moved to the next meeting date.