

Tompkins County Council of Governments
 Regular Meeting Minutes – Approved 1-23-2014
Thursday, December 19, 2013 3:00 PM
 Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Martha Robertson	Member, Tompkins County	Present	3:20 PM
Richard Driscoll	Co-Chair, Town of Newfield	Present	3:26 PM
Fredric Dietrich	Member, Town of Danby	Present	
Elizabeth Thomas	Member - Town of Ulysses	Present	
Kate Supron	Co-Chair, Village of Cayuga Heights	Present	
Laura Shawley	Member - Alternate, Town of Danby	Present	
Betty Conger	Member, Village of Groton	Present	
Irene Weiser	Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline	Present	
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca	Present	
Ann Rider	Vice Chair, Town of Enfield	Present	
J.R. Clairborne	Member - Alternate, City of Ithaca	Present	
Don Barber	Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline	Present	
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer	Present	
Jay Franklin	Tompkins County Director of Assessment	Present	
Pat Pryor	Legislator	Present	
Donald Hartill	Member, Village of Lansing	Present	
Bernd Blossey, Professor of Natural Resources at Cornell University		Present	

Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Minutes Approval

10/24/2013 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Betty Conger, Member, Village of Groton representative
SECONDER:	Donald Hartill, Member, Village of Lansing
AYES:	Robertson, Driscoll, Dietrich, Thomas, Supron, Conger, Weiser, Goodman, Rider, Clairborne, Hartill

Deer Management

Ms. Supron introduced Bernd Blossey, Chair of the Deer Management Committee at Cornell and said he has also been involved with the program in Lansing. She spoke of the luncheon that was held in October where there was discussion of ways to have a more coordinated regional effort to bring down the deer population to a more sustainable level.

Mr. Blossey provided members with a PowerPoint presentation on the subject of deer management. He said New York is not the only State that has problems with deer. He said when he first came to Ithaca in 1993 there were four people allowed on a deer permit and the numbers were close to what they are now. The State has been very reluctant to ease the restrictions.

Ms. Robertson arrived at this time.

Mr. Blossey spoke of an experiment done in the Alleghany Forest where deer were contained in an area for ten years to look at the impact on the environment which are still seen today. He said it is not uncommon to have 60 deer per square mile; this number is how many are in most areas of Tompkins County with the exception of the Village of Cayuga Heights which has 125 per square mile. He spoke of the Cornell program and said while they cannot cage on the inside they have excluded deer in a number of different locations around New York State.

Mr. Bossey said he is not interested in the deer numbers. He spoke of the sterilization effort that was undertaken by Cornell and said despite the sterilization efforts of which there was a 90-95% sterilization rate, the deer population remained the same over the last six years. He said the damage being done remains the same and it is unacceptable. He explained the Cornell experiment had three zones: hunting zone, sterilization zone, and a control zone, and the oak survival rate was much the same in each. He spoke of Cornell property where they have started to implement nuisance permits. He said they are not satisfied at Cornell with what is happening and just started a program outlining a pilot project near campus to try to keep deer from migrating from the outskirts of the campus.

Mr. Driscoll arrived at this time.

Mr. Blossey stressed that taking deer off the landscape is not the answer. He said it is not clear how much better it needs to be done in terms of deer removal and stated they have started to develop an oak sentinel index and will do other things as well. He chairs a committee that is developing different metrics that they can utilize to understand whether it does work or not.

Mr. Blossey suggested the following plan moving forward:

1. Collaborate deer impact management within the entire County
 - a. Develop committee to set "rules"
 - b. Set goals to measure effectiveness
 - c. Work with the Department of Environmental Conservation to implement
- 2 Petition political leaders to reduce bow discharge distance to 150 ft. or less.

He said what is being proposed is unprecedented but noted many entities, including municipalities, school districts, and property owners, within the County are struggling with this individually.

Ms. Supron suggested funding may be available through the Department of Environmental Conservation because it is something that would be a collaborative effort and has not been done before. The goal would be reducing the number of deer on the landscape without reducing the impact.

Mr. Blossey said one of the big impediments is that bows are considered firearms in New York and the regulations for firearms are not to discharge in the vicinity of a building that is 500 ft. from the discharge location unless permission has been given by the landowner.

Ms. Supron suggested a working group be formed to come up with a statement of support in terms of deer damage control and then come up with some actions that could be taken. Mr. Blossey said the group should include more than TCCOG members and suggested landowners and organizations like the Finger Lakes Land Trust, Cornell, and sportsman's groups. He said he would like to see a process that may result in an implementation down the road. The first step is to acknowledge where there is a

similar problem and then to ask whether there is a desire to explore this collaboratively.

The following individuals agreed to serve on the working group: Kate Supron, Elizabeth Thomas, and Don Hartill. Ms. Supron will send an e-mail in January to set up the first meeting.

Report from Tompkins County Director of Assessment

Mr. Franklin, Director of Assessment, brought members up to date with legislation that affects real property. The STAR re-registration program requires all basic star recipients to re-register. In Tompkins County there were 16,400 who had to re-register and as of December 16th 2,826 people had not registered. The deadline is December 31st. The State of New York mailed out the initial notice, a follow-up letter, and are now making phone calls. If someone does not re-register by the deadline they will have a final deadline that it will be in one-year. He said the County provided staffing to contact those people who have not registered.

Mr. Franklin said other legislation that was adopted was on the agricultural ceiling assessments. The Start-up New York program provides an exemption for Real Property taxes but only for space that is leased under the program; however, that space had to already be exempt from Real Property taxes. He has looked at this and doesn't think any Cornell property will be affected and therefore, does not see an impact on the local property taxes. He said if Cornell were to construct a new building it would be eligible for income and sales tax exemptions but it would not be eligible for property tax exemptions. If the building was not there by June 2013 it would not be exempt. He reported there are now a couple of local option exemptions such as the green building exemption; and an exemption to benefit veterans. The County will be looking at these in January. If any town would like help with this they should contact Mr. Franklin.

Road Preservation

Convening Ad Hoc Road Preservation Committee

Mr. Driscoll spoke of a conversation that took place at TCCOG months ago about the desirability of working together to achieve the administration of road preservation laws with mutual intersections for the purposes of enforcement across boundaries. He asked if there was interest in having a group come together to meet with a few supervisors and highway superintendents to begin to examine a template for permitting fees, forms, and a discussion of the administration of the permitting activity. Ms. Robertson said Jeffrey Smith, Tompkins County Highway Manager, attended a meeting earlier this year and raised the issue of communication of projects among municipalities and the County. Mr. Barber said the Town of Caroline has already been impacted by a City project they did not know about. He said he would like to be part of the group that would be looking at this. Mr. Hartill noted the heaviest axle loading in the County are TCAT busses. Mr. Mareane volunteered Jeff Smith. Mr. Driscoll will look for someone in Newfield and will send Mr. Mareane an e-mail outlining what he would like accomplished and who will then set the initial meeting.

Right to Practice Forestry/Timber Theft Bill

Mr. Driscoll said he learned that the Department of Environmental Conservation is going to put a 45-day stay on the law the Town of Newfield was about to adopt. He said some municipalities have adopted road preservation laws that may impact forestry and that this could impact them. He said Attorney Guy Krogh has advised that if a municipality is going to do something that has a potential to restrict the practice of forestry that the proposed legislation must be sent to the Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Division for a 45-day review and they will send it back with recommendations. He said this raises the question of whether there are consequences for laws that have been adopted that have not been sent. Mr. Barber said the Town of Caroline invited the DEC to their meetings about road preservation. They came to the first few meetings and then stopped coming but said they were fine with the approach being taken to protect the roads.

2014 Organization

Election of Officers

The election of officers was deferred to the next meeting.

Establish Meeting Schedule

Members agreed to continue meeting the fourth Thursday of each month with the exception of November and December when it would be the third Thursday.

Broadband

Update on Broadband (ID # 4439)

Ms. Pryor reported there has been work done and there are customers who are now getting broadband service, most of which are in the Town of Lansing. She said Chuck Bartosch is still waiting for a contract with the State and at this point he has gone as far as he is comfortable with until there is a signed contract. She said contacts are being made to see when that contract may come through. There are still trying to figure out how to extend broadband to the Towns of Caroline and Enfield. Both cases involve the possibility of needing more funding. There are still a couple of outstanding issues that need to be resolved that include whether a light needs to be installed on a tower in Enfield which would result in an additional cost. The Town of Caroline has done very well with fundraising and the County Legislature increased the allocation to the Town of Caroline in the amount of \$15,000. She spoke of the sentiments that were expressed that the Legislature would like to see this project completed with broadband service in the rural areas of the County. She noted that customers do not need to call Clarity Connect for service.

Ms. Pryor reported the Finger Lakes Technology Group from Trumansburg has been a partner in this project and the company that will be putting up the poles. They have had a change in management and that has slowed the process down.

Ms. Weiser thanked the municipalities for their contributions and said the Town of Caroline has \$48,000 yet to raise.

Ms. Supron said she believes each municipality will benefit from the grant that was applied for collectively and should contribute to cover the shortfall in funding in the Towns of Caroline and Enfield to make it possible for all municipalities that applied to be included.

Minutes
Tompkins County Council of Governments
Thursday, December 19, 2013

Ms. Pryor said although her term on the Legislature is coming to an end she will continue having a connection to the committee. There is going to be a subcommittee that will be working on education and outreach to make sure people who will now have access will have the skills to use the service. The Broadband Committee will not be disbanded until the project is complete which is expected to be the end of 2014.

* * * * *

Report from Cable Committee

There was no report from the Cable Committee.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

The following items were suggested for the next meeting:

- Start-Up New York
- Governor's proposal about taking over programs
- Update on TCAT finances and communication
- Wood burning and health concerns - Ms. Robertson noted this is covered under the Sanitary Code and the County had no authority on this.
- Update on the Cleaner Greener grant and a reminder about solar permitting

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.