

Tompkins County Council of Governments

Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved 4/24/2014

Thursday, March 27, 2014 3:00 PM

Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Betty Conger	Member, Village of Groton representative	Present	
Mary Ann Sumner	Member, Town of Dryden representative	Present	3:15 PM
Irene Weiser	Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline representativ	Present	
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca representative	Present	
J.R. Clairborne	Vice Chair, City of Ithaca representative	Present	
Ann Rider	Co-Chair, Town of Enfield	Present	
Ric Dietrich	Member, Town of Danby	Present	
Kelly Smith	Member, Town of Groton	Present	
Jason Liefer	Alternate Representative, Town of Dryden	Present	
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present	
Thomas Knipe	Tourism Coordinator	Present	
Herb Engman	Member - Town of Ithaca	Present	
Don Barber	Alternate, Town of Caroline	Present	
Ruth Hopkins	Alternate, Town of Lansing representative	Present	
Michael Lane	Member, Tompkins County	Present	
Jim Zimmer	Member, Village of Dryden	Present	
Casey Powers	Member, Town of Newfield	Present	
Nancy Zahler	Alternate, Town of Ulysses	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	
Michelle Pottorff	Legislature Office	Present	

Municipalities Not Present: V/Lansing, V/Freeville, V/Trumansburg, V/Cayuga Heights

Guests: Jeff Smith, Tompkins County Highway Director; Victoria Armstrong, Human Services Coalition

Call to Order

Ms. Rider called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Minutes Approval

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It was MOVED by Mr. Barber, seconded by Mr. Engman, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of February 27, 2014 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Exploring Structure to Share Information Among Municipalities about Large Projects

Mr. Barber said many towns have adopted or are working on road preservation laws that typically deal with knowing the haul routes and the loads that are being taken on those routes. Some times this does not work well because there may be village, town, and State roads within a municipality, leaving a number jurisdictions to work with. Projects can also go outside a town with haul routes. He said as these laws are implemented it would be helpful to know what the haul routes are for larger projects but at this

time there is no mechanism for that. He suggested using the building permit process as a way for municipalities to communicate about projects, haul routes, and loads to be carried.

Mr. Smith agreed said he agreed that awareness of any project coming in would be in the way a of a code or building permit. He recommended that a process be as easy as possible but meaningful and there be a way to communicate with others about a permit being issued on a certain size project. Mr. Barber suggested sitting down to work with code officers to see what information should be shared.

Mr. Engman said it may be the code officer or a highway superintendent and each municipality has its own triggers for its road preservation law. He suggested whatever triggers a town's road preservation law go to the County so they could notify those municipalities that might be affected. One suggestion was to use the lowest threshold that currently exists since there are varied threshold levels in the laws. Mr. Barber said one issue is that at this time haul route or load information is not collected as part of the building permit process.

Ms. Sumner arrived at this time.

Members supported Mr. Barber moving forward on setting up a meeting of representatives of municipalities to discuss this further.

Health Insurance Consortium Update

Mr. Barber reported he will be working setting up a retreat to help individuals learn about the health provider and health insurance industry in a way to set the framework to deal with issues such as the Affordable Care Act and the myriad of mandates that are coming down from the State and federal government. He welcomed all members to attend that retreat once it is scheduled.

Report on Tompkins County Priority Trails Strategy

Ms. Armstrong said the paper they have created is what they believe will be strategy to move trail-building forward in all of Tompkins County. It is very detailed and details five key areas and when they are connected they will form a powerful trail network across the County. It is a way to share information among municipal planners, politicians, trail advocates, and decision-makers and a way to provide context in support and possible shared funding for trial building in municipalities, and is a vision for a trail network that is much greater for the sum of its parts. It will provide extensive transportation, recreation, and economic benefit cross the County. She said out of the Finger Lakes Trails and Greenways conference that took place in 2011 conversations continued. Ms. Armstrong said the Creating Healthy Place Project believes in bringing people together to discuss how to move projects forward and agreed to move this forward.

The five trails are the northern and middle sections of the Black Diamond Trail, the Ithaca-Dryden Trail from the East Hill Recreation Way to Varna, the extension of South Hill Recreation Way to Brooktondale, the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, Gateway Trail, and additional Urban Connectors, and the Finger Lakes Trail. When completed this network will form more than 120 miles of continuously connected trail in Tompkins County, with 51 miles on connected multi-use paths and 69 miles on pedestrian-only Finger Lakes Trail.

Mr. Knipe said this was one of the items that came up as a top priority for the tourism program and is part of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan that was developed in 2004. The 2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Goal to expand outdoor recreation and other tourism related to our outstanding natural amenities: Cayuga Lake, gorges and waterfalls, trails, parks and natural areas. Included in the 37 critical action items is to support the completion of priority multi-use trails and

connections between these and existing path systems, and support tourism-enhancing feature for priority trails. Mr. Knipe also stated the Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council has expressed its support and priority for the aggressive and effective implementation of the trail network described in the Trail/Corridor Study.

Mr. Knipe provided members with a PowerPoint presentation on the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy that was developed by the Tompkins County Parks and Trails Network, Human Services Coalition, and the Tompkins County Planning Department.

During the presentation it was noted that once the trail network is completed 58% of Tompkins County households would live within a mile of the trail. Mr. Knipe spoke to whether Room Tax funds could be used for this and said the Strategic Tourism Planning Board has endorsed the strategy tourism enhancing amenities for the trail system is something that would be appropriate. He said communities that have a similar network of quality multi-use trails do see an economic development boost in their communities.

Mr. Knipe was asked to provide TCCOG with an update next year on the progress. Ms. Weiser also asked that a report be put together on benefits and also crime statistics, including some of what has been feared and to pull together some of the property owners who were initially resistant and who now would give testimonials to the benefits. Mr. Goodman said the Town did a survey of residents along existing trails and can provide information from that. He said there was a good response to the survey and by far most of the people loved being near the trail even if they had initially been skeptical.

Report from Tompkins County Mandate Relief Group

Mr. Mareane spoke of his concern regarding the Governor's proposed tax freeze. At the February meeting there was consensus this is more than a County issue and that a small group should be formed that would allow all stakeholders to have a voice. The group met and recognized that time was short and wanted to do something that would have an impact and decided to have a white paper and an op-ed piece. Ms. Thomas put together a white paper articulating concerns and alternatives, followed by a concise op-ed piece to let decision-makers know there are legitimate concerns held by every level of municipal government and schools.

Mr. Mareane said following the white paper/op-ed piece a press conference was held and was headed by Ms. Supron, with Mr. Lane, Ms. Thomas, Mr. Clairborne, and Mr. Ohearn of Schuyler County. Mr. Mareane complimented Ms. Lynch for the work done in preparation of the press conference. He believes it did have an impact and coverage was included in newspapers in Syracuse, Elmira, and Binghamton. In addition, another conference was held in western New York and Franklin County also put out a similar press conference. He believes it was effective, however, he believes the tax freeze will still go through.

Ms. Sumner said that it appears the goal is to divide constituents from local governments and she said the State is not recognizing that Tompkins County has strived to develop shared services that already meet the goals the Governor is setting. Mr. Mareane believes the Governor is targeting the suburbs of New York City such as Long Island, Westchester, and Putnam Counties, that have extremely high taxes. He said there are some counties with many municipalities that do not seek out ways to work together. Mr. Mareane believes what Tompkins County has done over the past months has been able to show Albany and local residents that the County is already doing everything it can to keep the taxes low. He said the message will need to be reiterated when the tax freeze is put into place. Mr. Mareane noted he has had a conversation with Senator Seward about the concerns. Ms. Supron noted that Senator O'Mara spoke out against the Governor's proposal the day following the press conference.

Mr. Lane spoke of the problems school districts are facing as a result of the proposal and noted one school district was going to attempt to override the tax cap, which requires sixty percent in favor of this.

Mr. Engman said a lot of what the Governor is saying is not true and spoke of a book entitled "Shared Services and Municipal Consolidation", which looks at studies and said consolidation of governments does not save money, but shared services may.

Follow-up to Report on TC3.Biz Supervisory Training

Mr. Mareane reported on the mandated training for Supervisors and those moving into a position to become a Supervisor. He said it is a high-level two-part program to help individuals to be strong, well-rounded supervisors. He had suggested opening up the program to other municipalities to allow their staff to also receive the training and at the last meeting it was agreed that it would be beneficial. Mr. Mareane went to Tompkins Cortland Community College to discuss the logistics of doing so and the cost and distributed an information sheet. A small work group was formed to discuss the topic further to include Mr. Zimmer, Ms. Sumner, Mr. Dietrich, and Mr. Mareane.

Report from Cable Committee

Mr. Engman said there has not been a response from Time Warner Cable about the franchise agreement that was sent to them and believes it may be due to a potential takeover by Comcast. Information was received from the Cohen Law Group offering to assist, for a fee, with the transfer of Time Warner to Comcast. He said it may be worthwhile to consider hiring a specialist for the negotiations due to the nature of this transaction and suggested looking into what firms may be available in the event the transfer takes place. Mr. Engman said he heard Comcast negotiations may be more difficult than dealing with Time Warner. He noted there are some funds that were carried over from the previous negotiations that could be used.

Mr. Engman said he had talked to a local attorney who felt it would be beneficial to have an experienced firm assist with negotiations and asked the Committee if consideration should be given to hiring representation. Ms. Sumner said she believes there is a sense of urgency and that the Cable Committee should be directed to determine what should be done. Mr. Engman said the Cable Committee could invite the firm to complete the free analysis and then make a determination of how to proceed. Ms. Zahler said because this is a consortium and there would not be fourteen separate sessions the firm may be willing to provide more. Ms. Sumner said each municipality has a separate contract at this time. Mr. Engman said the separate contracts allow specific negotiated terms that reflect their needs.

Mr. Lane said most of the franchise agreements have expired. He recommends moving forward slowly and noted the City of Ithaca hired a consultant for the last franchise agreement that was costly and did not benefit many municipalities. It was suggested that the firm wanting to be hired provide references to previous negotiations with the cable company. Mr. Engman also noted that if Comcast takes over Time Warner they will be required to drop thirty percent of their franchises to meet Federal requirements; it is unknown what franchises will be affected.

Report from Sustainability Subcommittee

Ms. Weiser said there is not an official committee or members at this time. She said last month TCCOG sponsored a forum on the Governor's Energy Plan that was well attended. Ms. Weiser said Mr. McConkey videotaped the forum and it will be made available online. She would like to have approval for a second forum April 23rd which relates to critiquing the Governor's Energy Plan. It is unknown at this time if Assemblywoman Lifton will be the moderator for the event. She asked if TCCOG would be

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willing to co-sponsor the event and to authorize payment of \$300 to Mr. McConkey for recording and posting the event on the YouTube TCCOG Channel. Ms. Weiser said she will forward the links to the written material from the previous forum to members of the Committee.

It was MOVED by Ms. Sumner, seconded by Mr. Zimmer, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, That TCCOG sponsor the April 23, 2014 Energy Plan Forum at the Unitarian Church and that the event be videotaped by Chris McConkey at a cost of \$300.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

The following items was suggested as a topic for the next agenda:

Discussion and brainstorming of potential areas where there could be shared services

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

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 Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Fredric Dietrich	Member, Town of Danby	Present	
Herb Engman	Member - Town of Ithaca	Present	
J.R. Clairborne	Member, City of Ithaca	Present	
Elizabeth Thomas	Member - Town of Ulysses	Present	
Kate Supron	Co-Chair, Village of Cayuga Heights	Present	
Irene Weiser	Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline	Present	
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca	Present	
Ann Rider	Co-Chair, Town of Enfield	Present	
Chuck Rankin	Member - Alternate, Village of Groton	Present	
Marty Petrovic	Member, Village of Trumansburg	Present	
Jim Zimmer	Member, Village of Dryden	Present	
Kelly Smith	Member, Town of Groton	Present	
Ruth Hopkins	Alternate, Town of Lansing	Present	
Jason Liefer	Alternate Representative, Town of Dryden	Present	
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	
Megan McDonald	Senior Planner	Present	
Michelle Pottorff	Minute Taker, Legislature Office	Present	

Guests: Jeff Shepardson, CDRC

Municipalities not in attendance: Village of Freeville, Village of Lansing, Tompkins County, Town of Newfield

Call to Order

Ms. Supron called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

A discussion of dog control and the Governor's budget proposal was added to the agenda. The report on a the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy was deferred to the next meeting.

Minutes Approval

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RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Ann Rider, Co-Chair, Town of Enfield
SECONDER:	Jim Zimmer, Member, Village of Dryden
AYES:	Dietrich, Engman, Thomas, Supron, Weiser, Goodman, Rider, Rankin, Petrovic, Zimmer, Smith, Hopkins, Liefer

Report from the Community Dispute Resolution Center

Mr. Shepardson, Executive Director, provided a follow-up to the training for TCCOG members that was held last Fall entitled "Effectively Facilitating Heated Meetings". He said he has been able to

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provide the same training at places across the State and has received very positive feedback. He said they had hoped to obtain money from funding sources to enable them to provide the training at no cost to participants in Tompkins County. He asked for feedback on establishing a date for 2014 for this training to be provided to elected officials but can also include planning board members, school board members, and any involved in public policy and managing an interaction with the public.

Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Engman both spoke highly of the workshop that was provided and how informative they found it. He encouraged members and other local officials to attend a session. Mr. Shepardson said the cost per participant would be \$75 for a full-day training.

Following a discussion related to the scheduling of a session it was suggested that Mr. Shepardson consider doing half-day sessions and begin with looking at Saturday, April 26 or Thursday, May 1.

It was MOVED by Mr. Engman, seconded by Ms. Weiser, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve TCCOG being a sponsor of the Effectively Facilitating Heated Meetings Workshop.

Resolution: Creation of Sustainability Subcommittee

Resolution (ID # 4750): Resolution in Support of Forming a County-Wide Task Force to Assist Municipalities in Researching, Prioritizing and Addressing Sustainability Issues (ID #4750)

Ms. Weiser encouraged members to find individuals who would be interested in participating on this Task Force and to have them contact Ms. Weiser who said this will function similarly to the Gas Drilling Task Force. Ms. Weiser questioned whether presentations by professionals be provided to the Task Force or whether they should be made to the full TCCOG membership. It was suggested that the Task Force decide which presentations would be the most appropriate for bringing to TCCOG.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Irene Weiser, Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline representativ
SECONDER:	Elizabeth Thomas, Member - Town of Ulysses representative
AYES:	Dietrich, Engman, Thomas, Supron, Weiser, Rider, Rankin, Petrovic, Zimmer, Smith, Hopkins, Liefer

WHEREAS economic development, environmental protection and quality of life are major concerns for local governments, and

WHEREAS, accelerating climate change increases the urgency of addressing energy use and sustainability, and

WHEREAS Tompkins County recently completed the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan which prioritized 22 projects that will improve the economic and environmental health of the area, and reduce energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and

WHEREAS, local governments have an important role to play in advancing sustainability efforts via policies, plans, codes in areas such as local land use, zoning, building, design, and energy codes; land acquisition, infrastructure development, and investment in transportation services, and

WHEREAS, constrained budgets and limited staff prevent many municipalities from moving forward with policies to enhance sustainability; and

WHEREAS, in order to protect the health, safety and well-being of our residents and to protect the natural environment, economic development and quality of life in our communities, municipalities in Tompkins County need to research, prioritize and act on sustainability concerns; and

WHEREAS, intermunicipal cooperation will be essential to the success of each municipality's sustainability efforts and the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Tompkins County Council of Governments hereby convenes a Sustainability Task Force with the purpose of assisting municipalities within Tompkins County by gathering and disseminating information for governing bodies to use in their considerations of sustainability policies,

RESOLVED, further That the Task Force shall be referred to as the TCCOG Sustainability Task Force and shall commence work immediately,

RESOLVED, further, That other organizations within Tompkins County with an interest in this topic such as the County Planning Department, Sustainable Tompkins, Environmental Management Council and individual municipal task forces may have representation on the Sustainability Task Force as well as representatives from the governing body of each interested municipality.

Other - Action Item: Request for Sponsorship and Funding - Educational Forum regarding the Governor's 2014 Energy Plan (ID # 4683)

Ms. Weiser said the Governor's draft 2014 New York Energy Plan sets some bold goals for clean energy and increased efficiency, however, it also predicts continued and accelerated expansion of natural gas infrastructure in New York State. An educational forum will be held on March 5th at the Public Library and will speak to the weaknesses in the plan, and how you can make effective comments to the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority. It will also be an opportunity to learn why everyone concerned about climate change and in favor of switching to renewable energy sources should make comments on this Plan.

Speakers at the forum will be:

- Jackson Morris, Senior Energy & Climate Analyst with NRDC; former senior policy analyst with Pace Law School's Energy & Climate Center. He has worked to advance clean energy policies for many years.
- Dr. Brice Smith, Associate Professor and Chair of Physics at SUNY Cortland, former senior scientist at the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research. His work has focused on renewable and sustainable energy systems for over a decade.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Irene Weiser, Member - Alternate, Town of Caroline representativ
SECONDER:	Elizabeth Thomas, Member - Town of Ulysses representative
AYES:	Dietrich, Engman, Thomas, Supron, Weiser, Rider, Rankin, Petrovic, Zimmer, Smith, Hopkins, Liefer

The following is a vote result on the motion to approve funding for videotaping the Public Forum on the New York State Energy Plan to be held on March 5, 2014:

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Ann Rider, Co-Chair, Town of Enfield
SECONDER:	Kate Supron, Co-Chair, Village of Cayuga Heights representative
AYES:	Dietrich, Engman, Thomas, Supron, Weiser, Rider, Rankin, Petrovic, Zimmer, Smith, Hopkins, Liefer

Report on "Supervising for Success" Program (ID # 4682)

Mr. Mareane reported on a Supervising for Success program the County has been offering to employees over the last few years on a voluntary basis with 20 to 40 individuals who have participated. A second level was recently added that specifically applies to supervisory issues, practices, and skill sets and it was voluntary until last year when a decision was made that it would be mandatory for anyone who wanted to become a manager. The response from individuals who have participated in these sessions have been extremely positive. The County has worked through TC3.Biz for this and had a discussion with them last week to see if this is something Tompkins Cortland Community College might open up under the County's umbrella to other municipalities within the County who want to put their supervisors through this training. The cost would be on a per user basis. The training sessions are typically a half or full-day and are approximately \$500 per participant. In 2013 the County sent 115 people through both semesters of training and paid \$52,000. He asked that members not focus on the cost at this point. Mr. Mareane said he would expect that smaller municipalities cannot afford to develop a training program for the few supervisors that they have but it may be affordable to participate as part of a larger program. He asked if there is interest by members in the County continuing discussions about this with TC3.Biz and to include others in the discussion with a report back to TCCOG on the progress.

Members of TCCOG were very interested in exploring this further. Mr. Mareane will meet with TC3.Biz and will report back at the next meeting.

Discussion of How to Support the County's Efforts on Tax Relief

Mr. Engman said in order to effect this year's Legislation that will be determined by the budget cycle and adoption of the New York State budget this group will need to move quickly. He said work needs to be done to bring points together on how tax relief can be improved by ways other than what is being proposed by the Governor. In addition to mandate relief, there are other things such as how to deal with tax exempt property that can relieve the property tax burden. He thinks the only way local governments might influence this is to come up with good ideas that can attract interest.

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Mr. Mareane agreed and said he believes the focus should be on communicating with State Legislators. He suggested a small group of local officials meet with Senators O'Mara and Seward and Assemblywoman Lifton to explain the "trap doors" within this plan and to show why the numbers presented by the Governor do not apply to taxpayers owning an average-cost home. Mr. Mareane said they will be attempting to place something on the County website to show how much a homeowner will save by this proposal as well as how much they would save if the State were to take over paying the cost of services it mandates.

Members were in agreement to Mr. Mareane's suggested approach. Ms. Thomas said tried to present this to the Ulysses Town Board but need to have information showing what the shift has been from income tax to property tax.

Mr. Liefer said while he believes going to State representatives is important he also thinks it is very important to involve the media to the greatest extent possible to educate the public. He said the Governor's figures are not accurate for Tompkins County and relate more to counties downstate. Ms. Weiser said in addition to using the local media there should be efforts to get the Albany media, specifically the Legislative Gazette, to listen to local governments. Mr. Mareane said NYSAC released an article yesterday. Mr. Engman said another component to the public's support is the impact when services begin to get cut and until people start to feel the cuts they will not support these efforts.

It was suggested that a working group be established that would include a representative of the City, County, towns and villages. The following individuals agreed to serve on this working group: Ms. Thomas, Mr. Engman, Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Liefer, Mr. Clairborne, and Mr. Mareane.

Report from Cable Committee

Mr. Engman had no report.

Report on Animal Control

Mr. Engman reported the seven municipalities of TCCOG that have formed a group on dog control have been working well together and are now at the point of going out to bid on a request for proposals (RFP) for a consistent dog enumeration program. This would be a three-year program with one third of the involved municipalities being done each year. By the end of the third year there would be accurate dog enumeration information available. He said if any other municipality would like to join this coalition they can do so and should let him know. Mr. Engman was asked to provide members with a copy of the RFP.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

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

- Priority Trails Strategy
- Report from Cable Committee
- Report from the Tompkins County Mandate Relief Group
- Report from the Sustainability Task Force
- Discussion and brainstorming of potential areas where there could be shared services

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.