

Tompkins County Council of Governments
 Regular Meeting Minutes – APPROVED 1-22-2014
Thursday, October 23, 2014 3:00 PM
 Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Michael Lane	Member, Tompkins County	Present	
Herb Engman	Member - Town of Ithaca	Present	
Ruth Hopkins	Alternate, Town of Lansing	Present	
Ric Dietrich	Member, Town of Danby	Present	
Marty Petrovic	Member, Village of Trumansburg	Present	
Ann Rider	Co-Chair, Town of Enfield	Present	
Kate Supron	Co-Chair, Village of Cayuga Heights	Present	
Kelly Smith	Member, Town of Groton	Present	
J.R. Clairborne	Vice Chair, City of Ithaca	Present	
Elizabeth Thomas	Member - Town of Ulysses	Present	3:10 PM
Chuck Rankin	Member - Alternate, Village of Groton	Present	
Svante Myrick	Member, City of Ithaca	Present	
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca	Present	
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	
Michelle Pottorff	Minute Taker, Legislature Office	Present	
Joan Jurkowich	Planning Administrator	Present	
Thomas Knipe	Tourism Coordinator	Present	
Seth Murtagh	TCAT Board Member	Present	
Frank Proto	TCAT Board Member	Present	
Julie Holcomb	City of Ithaca Clerk	Present	
Krys Cail	Sustainability Committee	Present	
Richard Adie	Chair, Strategic Tourism Planning Board	Present	
Donald Hartill	Member, Village of Lansing	Present	4:00 PM
Daniel Klein	Legislator	Remote	

Media: K. Blakinger

Municipalities not Present: Village of Freeville, Village of Dryden, Town of Dryden, Town of Caroline, Town of Newfield, Village of Lansing

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

9/25/2014 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Ric Dietrich, Member, Town of Danby
SECONDER:	Kate Supron, Co-Chair, Village of Cayuga Heights
AYES:	Lane, Engman, Hopkins, Dietrich, Petrovic, Rider, Supron, Smith, Thomas, Rankin, Myrick

Report from TCAT Executive Committee

Mr. Clairborne said based on discussion at the last meeting TCAT Board members were invited to update members on TCAT and to address concerns that have been raised.

Mr. Proto said TCAT has not yet adopted a budget for the coming year. He explained the City, County and Cornell contribution to TCAT and said each equally contributes \$830,000 to sustain the public transportation system. Other funding sources are the State and Federal governments and the riders. In addition, Cornell pays a bulk rate for passes for staff and students and what they hope will now be based on a formula. They are getting 71% of the service and for the last several years have not been paying a comparable amount and have been approximately \$500,000 short. He said TCAT has been successful in negotiating with Cornell leadership; they agreed with the numbers and have agreed to a new formula. Because of the way their budget cycle runs, each July beginning in 2015 Cornell will be paying an incremental increase until they cover the shortfall which will take until 2018. This will provide TCAT with an additional \$1 million and the effect of the increase will be an amount going from \$2.6 million up to \$3.6 million. Mr. Proto said Cornell has been very cooperative and they will also be working on developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to avoid this from happening in the future. It was noted this does not include their equal share they contribute along with the City and the County.

Ms. Thomas arrived at this time.

Mr. Proto spoke of the condition of the older fleet of busses and the high cost of maintenance and replacement. He said it costs \$440,000 to replace a bus. They will also be approaching federal representatives to assist with funding because over the years federal transportation monies have gone away. They will be putting a team together and will be asking Mayor Myrick to participate in this as well.

In the last four years Tompkins County has reached 4 million riders which shows efforts to get people to ride the bus have been successful but those busses need to be maintained and replaced.

Mr. Murtagh stated the MOU with Cornell will be a critical piece because the problem that existed before was that as ridership increases there was nothing tying the fiscal payment. They hope to come up with a formula that will tie ridership directly to Cornell's payment. Ms. Supron asked if there has been an increase in the non-Cornell ridership which is 30% of the ridership. Mr. Proto said there has been an increase but you have to be careful that you don't reach a point with the fares that will cause ridership will decline.

Mr. Proto said the budget for TCAT is \$14 million of which \$4 million is from ridership. Another funding stream comes from STOA (State Transit Operating Assistant) and is based on a formula that combines the number of miles traveled times the ridership. For the next fiscal year the State may be changing the STOA formula and it is unknown at this time what the effect of that will be.

Mr. Lane questioned how TCAT plans to address the loss of bus service in adjoining counties. Mr. Proto explained the State no longer supports public transportation through Medicaid funds and Tioga and Cortland Counties do not contribute to the public bus systems. He said they are looking at funding

options for an additional van but stated the cost of that is very high. There have been discussions of developing a regional transportation system; they have explored setting up park and ride programs; however, in the past people felt that as long as they were in their cars they would just continue to Cornell. In many cases one parking space was purchased and people ended up carpooling. This is an issue that will continue to be discussed by the TCAT Board. Mr. Lane said the County is willing to work on this as well.

Mr. Clairborne asked if a municipality were to contribute to TCAT if that would provide an opportunity for input on where a bus stop would go, have input on the process for altering a fixed schedule, or have a seat on the TCAT Board. Ms. Supron said members have felt that there has been a barrier and haven't had a way to productively communicate and interact with TCAT.

Mr. Proto said if anyone has a suggestion they can contact Joe Turcotte, Doug Swartz, or Nancy Oltz at TCAT. Mr. Murtagh said TCAT has a Transit Committee that addresses concerns that come in from municipalities; this Committee is Chaired by David Howe.

Ms. Thomas questioned if towns and other municipalities contributed to TCAT funding TCCOG would be provided a with a seat on the TCAT Board. Mr. Myrick said if more funders came to the table it would make sense to him to change the composition of the TCAT Board; he cautioned; however, that the City although it has three seats on the Board does not always get what they want as decisions are made based on what is best on the system or the routes and this can sometimes be frustrating. Ms. Supron said one vote doesn't change anything but brings a different perspective to the table.

Mr. Proto said TCAT also has a Citizens Advisory Committee that is comprised of 20-22 members. Patty Poist is the contact person for that Committee.

It was suggested that a meeting be set up between TCAT Board members and TCCOG members. Mr. Clairborne will work with Ms. Pottorff to solicit interest by TCCOG members to meet with TCAT.

Reports from the Tompkins County Planning Department

Presentation of Comprehensive Plan (ID # 5151)

Ms. Jurkowich provided members with an update on the public outreach efforts for the draft Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan and asked that members provide comments and feedback to her on the Plan. She said comments that have been received to date have been incorporated into the draft Plan. The Legislature will take action to approve the Plan in February 2015.

Ms. Rider spoke highly of the presentation given to the Town of Enfield and said although there was very little public comment the Board members were very appreciative.

Ms. Jurkowich said there was not a large number of public who attended the individual outreach sessions; there will be about 50 in total throughout the County and many of the participants she hasn't seen before which means they are not hearing from the same people and this may be attributed to the drop-in format of the sessions.

Mr. Dietrich said there is cross fertilization with water issues and storm water regulations and asked if at some point there would be an opportunity to have a meeting among municipalities to discuss getting an understanding of how some of the groundwater protection laws might be able to be worked on collectively as opposed to individually and how that might affect the overall interaction with stormwater regulations.

Ms. Jurkowich said the Plan identified three important things to do in the water resources area: to address where land and water meet in a way that affects water quality and that includes aquifer recharge areas, stream corridors to create a buffer to help strain water before it hits the creeks, and wetlands. She thinks it would be a good idea for municipalities to get together to address these things and water quality in the County.

Mr. Engman said he appreciates the addition of the Sustainability section and attention the Plan gives to Climate Protection. He was surprised by the projection for new jobs in the area and the lack of a workforce to fill those jobs. He said in the future there may be an influx of people looking for those jobs which could lead to housing, transportation, and traffic problems. Ms. Jurkowich noted the Healthy Communities section is also a new addition to the Plan.

* * * * *

Report on Airbnb (ID # 5190)

Mr. Knipe provided a presentation on Air BnB's which is a new nationwide phenomenon. He said there are over 200 Tompkins County residents who are Air BnB hosts and this is the equivalent of a new 50-room unregulated hotel. Last year an analysis was done for Tompkins County and showed a revenue estimate of \$1.5 million. It is big in Tompkins County because there is a high room rate here and a high weekend demand. He spoke of Room Tax funds and the programs that are used to support and although there are lost Room Tax funds the larger issue is a fairness and compliance issue.

Mr. Knipe outlined areas that are being focused on to address the issue: information, direct outreach, education, and enforcement. They are making it easier for people to learn about what is required with regard to Room Tax and are working with the Assessment Department and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau. He said the Greater Bed and Breakfast Association of Ithaca has approached them and asked what is going to be done about this by local governments. They have also agreed to help provide information to the community and they will be working with them. Ms. Supron said in addition to the revenue issue there is also a zoning issue. He said New York State Travel and Hospitality and Tourism Association has issued a statement that this issue will be on their State Legislative Policy Agenda for 2015. They have said they want all applicable taxes, code enforcement, and necessary insurance coverage to be enforced.

Mayor Myrick said although he shares some of the concerns, particularly with regard to regulations that in the right neighborhood this is a form of grassroots economic development and can be a good thing.

* * * * *

Update on Shared Services

Mr. Mareane reported the workgroup met yesterday. There were functional areas that were agreed to look at: Public Safety, collaborative buying, law enforcement, municipal courts (he shared information with TCCOG yesterday on findings and recommendations on this area), and shared administrative services. A few areas were identified on shared administrative services to focus on and the first meeting will be November 5th and the topic will be information technology.

Mr. Mareane said if anyone has input on the TC3 Supervisory Training it would be welcome.

Sustainability Committee Food Systems

Ms. Cail reported on a group that has been meeting to discuss an idea that has been popular that is circulating around the country on ways to look at the food system in a more holistic way. She said they are exploring whether having a food council would be good to have in this community. The basic idea is implemented differently in different places but is typically organized as an advisory committee. She

stated that although it may be too late for inclusion in to the County's Comprehensive Plan the City is working on revising its Plan and it may be an opportunity for that. This is an opportunity to look at how food pantries has to do with how our local idea of how people are organized in terms of transportation.

Ms. Cail reviewed a list of values the group developed: foster helpfulness for all, be environmentally sound, sustainable, and more locally based, promote cooperation and interconnections, be inclusive at all levels, encourage empowerment and self determination, and emphasize fairness, equitable access, and the common food. A food policy organization itself should be inclusive, diverse and representative, be transparent and accountable, seek engagement and cooperation and interconnections, and be well-organized, practical, and effective.

She said Jeanne Lecese who previously worked for the Planning Department is now in a new position at the University of Buffalo doing nationwide research and is putting together information about food policy councils across the United States and advised them to go to government early on and let them know what is happening.

Members expressed support for this. It was suggested Ms. Cail reach out to the Community Foundation for possible grant opportunities. They will continue to use the Sustainability Committee as a point of contact.

Discussion of Taxi Cab Legislation

Ms. Holcomb said she attended a TCCOG meeting last year and said the City of Ithaca has a taxicab ordinance that is out of date and in need of being revised. At that time they thought it made more sense to reach out and take a regional approach because residents of other municipalities are experiencing problems as well. There was initial interest expressed at that time and a couple of meetings were held to talk about what is being done in other communities and they decided to hold a meeting with law enforcement personnel to find out what taxicab licensing entails and what enforcement is required before anyone commits any resources.

A meeting was held with the City Police and Sheriff Lansing and they learned about what current practices are and what frustrations exist with law enforcement and taxicab companies in terms of licensing. She noted the Sheriff has not had any involvement in the past with taxicab licensing. The Ithaca Police Department volunteered to take the lead on this if groups decided to join forces in terms of licensing and administration. She asked members if there is still interest in pursuing this by TCCOG. She said this needs to move forward because there are regulatory concerns and taxicab companies for the City of Ithaca have not had a rate increase in eight years but noted a surcharge was put in place so that they could add a charge for increased fuel costs. Ms. Holcomb said this will continue to become more important as bus service is reduced.

Ms. Supron asked if it is possible to have legislation that would cross municipal lines. Ms. Holcomb said this can be done with special New York State Legislation but the County that would need to apply and take the lead on it. If the County did not do this each municipality would have to adopt the same legislation and there would need to be coordination to ensure as amendments are adopted that they are adopted by all municipalities. She said she is hoping to have a Countywide map and a rate structure that is based on that. Ms. Thomas asked if the County would be willing to do this. Mr. Lane said the County referred this issue to TCCOG. He is not certain that a master regulation adopted by all municipalities would be too cumbersome and noted the current regulations haven't been changed in eight years. He said he cannot speak for the full Legislature but the County has never been involved in taxicab legislation and to move in this direction would be a major change, expense, and liability to the County. Ms. Holcomb said the City is willing to take on all of the licensing components; where she thinks they are falling short is in the area of enforcement and this would require assistance by the Sheriff.

Ms. Supron was excused at this time.

Members expressed interest in continuing to pursue this issue on a regional basis. Ms. Holcomb said she or Council Member Murtagh would be willing to meet with County Legislators.

Gas Drilling

Spread of Fracking Waste on Roads in the County (ID # 5191)

Mr. Klein said he would like members to consider support of a resolution that would ban the spread of fracking waste on all roads in Tompkins County and also ban wastewater treatment facilities in Tompkins County from accepting fracking waste. There have been 14 counties in New York State that have banned or the other and nine counties that have banned both. He provided a copy of the Onondaga County Legislature as a template. He said he has had discussions with the Westchester County attorney and the Tompkins County Attorney and neither have expressed concern with the resolution. He asked that members take the resolution back to municipal boards and highway departments and speak with them to see if there are any concerns.

Mr. Engman said he spoke previously with the Department of Environmental Conservation about this and they had no concerns and was told there was no fracking waste being spread on roads in Tompkins County. Mr. Lane questioned if this ban would apply to the deep injection wells. Mr. Klein said he would have to look into this.

* * * * *

Report from Cable Committee

Mr. Engman had no report.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

The TCCOG/CDRC training on “Facilitating Effective Participation in Public Meetings” will take place at 3:30 p.m. following a brief TCCOG meeting in November.

Adjournment

On motion the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.