

**Tompkins County Council of Governments**  
 Regular Meeting Minutes - Adopted  
**Thursday, April 23, 2015 3:00 PM**  
 Scott Heyman Conference Room

**Attendance**

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>
Michael Lane	Member, Tompkins County	Present
Fredric Dietrich	Member, Town of Danby	Present
Herb Engman	Member - Town of Ithaca	Present
Kate Supron	Member - Village of Cayuga Heights	Present
Irene Weiser	Member - Town of Caroline	Present
Bill Goodman	Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca	Present
J.R. Clairborne	Vice Chair, City of Ithaca	Present
Nancy Zahler	Member - Town of Ulysses	Present
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present
Joe Mareane	Tompkins County Administrator	Present
Karen Fuller	Minute-Taker, Legislature Office	Present
Kelly Smith	Member, Town of Groton	Present
Betty Conger	Member, Village of Groton	Present
Donald Hartill	Member, Village of Lansing	Present

Guests: Keri Blakinger; Melissa Kemp and Jonathan Comstock, Solar Tompkins  
 Municipalities Not In Attendance: Village of Freeville, Dryden, Trumansburg, Towns of Enfield,  
 Newfield, Lansing

**Call to Order**

Mr. Clairborne, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda**

Mr. Clairborne announced there will be a presentation at 4:00 p.m. on Solar Options for  
 Municipalities and the regular business of the Committee would end at that time.

**Minutes Approval**

Thursday, March 26, 2015

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED [9 TO 0]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Fredric Dietrich, Member, Town of Danby
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Donald Hartill, Member, Village of Lansing
<b>AYES:</b>	Lane, Dietrich, Engman, Weiser, Clairborne, Zahler, Smith, Conger, Hartill
<b>ABSTAIN:</b>	Kate Supron

**Shared Services Update**

Mr. Mareane explained that following a review of potential mergers, consolidations, and shared  
 services the Committee found little evidence of any qualifying initiatives that could generate the level of  
 savings the State is seeking. He spoke of the County's consolidation of services and forethought that has

taken place for many years as demonstrated by Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Health Consortium, and Tompkins-Cortland Community College. However, it is possible to demonstrate that some new health benefit initiatives have saved taxpayers more than the required one percent of the combined tax levies of all local governments in the County and filing a consolidated Government Efficiency Plan with savings based on operating efficiencies also follows the State's desire for a countywide report.

Mr. Mareane clarified that it is the combined savings that would exceed the requirement and if a municipality does not meet the one percent required it would not be penalized due to the aggregate savings. He also explained that although the State's documents include the category of "operating efficiencies", the approach that is proposed is different than what the Governor envisioned. If the State does not accept the approach, or makes a determination that reductions in taxpayer-supported cost of health benefits is not allowed, none of the participants could qualify for the 2016 rebate.

In addition to the development of the required plan, Mr. Mareane said that a report to the community and State representatives is being prepared to show the impact of what Tompkins County governments have accomplished long before the "shared service" concept the State is now encouraging. Members of the Committee said there are also potential additional savings due to local initiatives.

It was MOVED by Ms. Supron, seconded by Mr. Dietrich, to add to the agenda and approve the resolution entitled "Endorsing the Development and Submission of a Single, Countywide Government Efficiency Plan, Establishing Tompkins County as Lead Entity in the Development of the Plan, and Encouraging All Local Governments Within Tompkins County to be Signatories to the Countywide Plan". A voice vote on the motion resulted as follows: Ayes - 10; Noes - 0. RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Discussion followed and it was noted there will be continuing efforts to find additional savings through centralized services, tax collection, etc. The Committee acknowledged the tremendous effort made by Mr. Mareane and others to develop a plan that would benefit the residents of Tompkins County. Mr. Mareane said the community report will include the grid of shared services and efficiencies made by each municipality and how the municipalities and the County have continually been committed to providing savings through consolidations and shared services.

Ms. Supron announced there will be a presentation by the Cornell students that worked with the Shared Services Committee on May 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

**Resolution(ID # 5558)(ID #5558): ENDORSING THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION OF A SINGLE, COUNTYWIDE GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY PLAN, ESTABLISHING TOMPKINS COUNTY AS LEAD ENTITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN, AND ENCOURAGING ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WITHIN TOMPKINS COUNTY TO BE SIGNATORIES TO THE COUNTYWIDE PLAN**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Kate Supron, Member - Village of Cayuga Heights
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Fredric Dietrich, Member, Town of Danby
<b>AYES:</b>	Lane, Dietrich, Engman, Supron, Weiser, Clairborne, Zahler, Smith, Conger, Hartill

WHEREAS, the State of New York enacted legislation creating a Property Tax Freeze Credit as a part of the 2015 State Budget, and

WHEREAS, the new law encouraged local governments to generate long-term property tax relief by sharing services, consolidating or merging, and implementing operational efficiencies, and

WHEREAS, the law provides a “freeze credit” to qualified homeowners that is equal to the increase in property taxes levied by a taxing jurisdiction that limits any increase in its tax levy to a property tax cap set by State law and develops and implements a Government Efficiency Plan (“Plan”) determined to be compliant by the New York State Division of Budget, and

WHEREAS, to be determined compliant by the State, a Government Efficiency Plan must document actions that have been, or will be, taken that will result in a sustained three-year savings, beginning in 2017, that are equivalent to at least 1% of the combined 2014 property tax levies of all signatories to the Plan, and

WHEREAS, in year one of the program, homeowners received a Freeze Credit if their local government stayed within the property tax cap, and

WHEREAS, in year two of the program, homeowners will receive the Freeze Credit for taxes from any taxing jurisdiction that stays within the property tax cap and that also puts forward a compliant Government Efficiency Plan, and

WHEREAS, while allowing local governments to submit individual Plans, the State has encouraged local governments to submit a single, countywide plan that achieves a savings of at least 1% of the combined property tax levies of all of the participants, and

WHEREAS, the State will recognize only savings associated with actions implemented prior to January 1, 2012, and

WHEREAS, prior to 2012, local governments in Tompkins County pioneered shared services, mergers, and consolidations including the centralization of the property tax assessment function, a fully consolidated public safety dispatch and interoperable communication system, a consolidated public transit system, a two-county community college and, most recently, an inter-municipal health benefits consortium that continue to generate multiple millions of dollars in annual savings for taxpayers within Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, in response to the State’s directive, the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) formed a shared services committee that continues to explore a variety of prospective shared services, but recognizes that time and careful thought is required to ensure that any shared service initiative will result in lower costs and higher quality, and

WHEREAS, it is now estimated that savings well in excess of 1% of the \$88.4 million levied by all local government within Tompkins County in 2014, including the County itself, will be achieved and sustained during the period 2017-2019 by a combination of changes made by Tompkins County to the cost structure of its health benefit plan and a dependent eligibility certification process undertaken by every municipal member of the Health Benefits Consortium, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Council of Governments finds that a consolidated countywide Plan that documents savings in excess of 1% of the combined 2014 property tax levies of all local governments within the County is the most efficient and effective way to respond to the State’s directive, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Tompkins County Council of Governments endorses the development and presentation of a single countywide Government Efficiency Plan that includes all local governments within Tompkins County,

RESOLVED, further, That TCCOG endorses the designation of Tompkins County as lead entity in the development and submission of the Plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, further, That TCCOG encourages all local governments within Tompkins County to be signatories to the Plan developed by Tompkins County.

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**Reserve Fund - Establish Work Group**

Ms. Weiser said a working group was requested at the last meeting and she is seeking others to work with her on the topic. She would like Ms. Thomas to join, however, will have to contact her due to her absence at this meeting. She asked if others would be willing to serve and Ms. Supron offered to review the financials as well.

**Report from Cable Committee**

Mr. Engman said the Negotiation Committee has received a second response from Time Warner Cable, however, the Committee has not had the opportunity to review the full document, which appears to have many items struck through. He has been hopeful that the proposed merger with Comcast would encourage Time Warner to come to an agreement since it is normally better for a seller to have all contractual obligations completed prior to a sale. Mr. Dietrich also noted that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) also has to provide approval and there is a great deal of opposition to the merger with Comcast.

Mr. Lane said the FCC has stated it will hold public hearing on the merger, which some are believing could be due to a concern that the merger may not be in the public interest and this which will extend the process. Mr. Clairborne said the City of Ithaca resolution on the topic asked for the transfer of the franchise transfer and settle all other agreements; the resolution was to show support for all of Tompkins County Council of Government resolutions.

Mr. Dietrich said the negotiations are not looking positive for Pegasus. Mr. Clairborne said the City's access oversight committee has had many discussions regarding the facilities and what is lacking, including the poor quality of video going through to the public access station. He said there have been discussions regarding the change from analog to digital and that there should be more space provided.

A brief discussion took place regarding remote areas that do not have service and whether there are any changes planned to enable connection to cable services. Mr. Dietrich said there are specifications on how many homes within a specific distance, which makes it difficult in rural areas, particularly if there are areas utilized for farming or State lands. For those areas the Broadband project should help. Ms. Zahler asked when that project would be started and suggested an update would be useful. Mr. Dietrich said the State has not yet released the funds and since it has been three years since the project began the cost has tripled. Mr. Clairborne agreed it would be beneficial to receive an update.

**Solar Tompkins - Heat Smart Program**

Ms. Weiser introduced Ms. Kemp of Solar Tompkins, who provided a PowerPoint presentation on the latest initiative, Heat Smart. The Committee heard a brief history of the 2014 Countywide program that resulted in 400 families located throughout the County joining with over 3 MW of solar energy resulting from the installations. In addition, the program brought over \$7 million of incentive funds to the County and municipalities for the development of solar as well as saving homeowners \$3.2 million due to discounted pricing. She noted the average cost for a solar installation was \$7,000 to \$9,000 and produced between 7 KW and 7.5 KW.

Ms. Kemp said as a result of many requests by homeowners that were not able to install solar due to inability to obtain enough sunlight to make a solar option feasible, as well as requests to reduce the use of fossil fuels for heating and home envelope improvements, Solar Tompkins developed the Renewable Heating and Building Efficiency Program that will utilize the same Solarize model. The program will begin in the summer of 2015 and will focus on ground source and air source heat pumps, and building insulation and air-sealing. There will be multiple installer partners, community educational meetings and enrollment, a site visit to evaluate the building efficiency and heating systems, followed by a combined coordinated presentation of renewable heating and building efficiency/envelope options.

Discussion followed and it was noted that this program would be available to individuals renting property as well as owner-occupied properties. Mr. Dietrich said tours of homes that had installations by those interested in potential installations was very successful due to the comfort level of asking questions to someone who had already gone through the process.

Ms. Weiser called attention to the resolution entitled “Resolution to Provide Support to Solar Tompkins HeatSmart Program” and letter from Solar Tompkins requesting to take back to each municipality to consider contributing \$1,000 to the program. She noted that this year’s grant was reduced by \$15,000. The Committee was informed the improvements would increase the value of the housing stock and would also create additional jobs.

A brief discussion regarding whether municipalities could legally contribute took place and it was suggested that the question be directed to municipal attorneys for a decision. It was noted that Solar Tompkins is a not-for-profit business, although not a 501c3.

Ms. Supron asked if a document showing how many homes in each municipality participated in the Solarize Tompkins program would be helpful when discussing the request with the individual Boards.

Mr. Clairborne asked if there is a timeframe needed to make a decision. Mr. Comstock said the program will be moving forward and they will be making financial decisions, therefore, having a decision in the near future would be helpful. It was announced that within the next month would be helpful.

**Next Meeting Agenda Items**

Mr. Clairborne asked if there were any additional suggestions for agenda items. Ms. Supron said she has a contact that wanted to speak about Universal Health Care and was not certain if the discussion should take place at the Health Consortium or the Council of Governments. It was suggested by Mr. Dietrich that the Health Consortium would be more appropriate since it is a topic of discussion at the present time. Ms. Zahler asked for an update on Broadband. A presentation will also be included on the Stormwater Management Plan.

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**Adjournment**

On motion the meeting at 4:05 p.m.