

Tompkins County Council of Governments

Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved

Thursday, July 23, 2015 3:00 PM

Scott Heyman Conference Room

Attendance

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
|-----------------|---|---------|---------|
| Michael Lane | Member, Tompkins County | Present | 3:12 PM |
| Herb Engman | Member - Town of Ithaca | Present | |
| Kate Supron | Member - Village of Cayuga Heights | Present | |
| Laura Shawley | Member - Alternate, Town of Danby | Present | |
| Betty Conger | Member, Village of Groton | Present | |
| Irene Weiser | Member - Town of Caroline | Present | |
| Bill Goodman | Member - Alternate, Town of Ithaca | Present | |
| J.R. Clairborne | Co-Chair, City of Ithaca | Present | 3:10 PM |
| Ann Rider | Co-Chair, Town of Enfield | Present | |
| Linda Lavine | Alternate - Town of Dryden | Present | |
| Ruth Hopkins | Alternate, Town of Lansing | Present | 3:11 PM |
| Nancy Zahler | Member, Town of Ulysses | Present | |
| Donald Hartill | Member, Village of Lansing | Present | |
| Marcia Lynch | Public Info. Officer, County Administration | Present | |
| Joe Mareane | Tompkins County Administrator | Present | |

Call to Order

Ms. Rider, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

Greeting/Sign In/Review Agenda

The agenda was reordered to allow the report on solar opportunities for residents to be the final agenda topic.

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|------------------|--|
| RESULT: | ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS] |
| MOVER: | Herb Engman, Member - Town of Ithaca |
| SECONDER: | Betty Conger, Member, Village of Groton |
| AYES: | Lane, Engman, Supron, Shawley, Conger, Weiser, Clairborne, Rider, Lavine, Hopkins, Zahler, Hartill |

Report from Cable Committee

The following were appointed to serve on the Cable Negotiating Committee:

Ari Lavine, Chair
Rich DePaelo, Town of Ithaca
Jason Liefer, Town of Dryden
Ric Dietrich, Town of Danby
Peter Salton, Village of Cayuga Heights

Mr. Clairborne, Ms. Hopkins, and Mr. Lane arrived at this time.

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Mr. Engman said at this time all municipalities have expressed interest in participating except the Village of Lansing. Tompkins County is participating but does not have a franchise agreement.

The following is a vote result on the motion to appoint a Cable Negotiating Committee Chair and Reaffirm membership of the Committee:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| RESULT: | ADOPTED [11 TO 0] |
| MOVER: | Herb Engman, Member - Town of Ithaca |
| SECONDER: | Kate Supron, Member - Village of Cayuga Heights |
| AYES: | Lane, Engman, Supron, Shawley, Conger, Weiser, Clairborne, Rider, Hopkins, Zahler, Hartill |
| ABSTAIN: | Linda Lavine |

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Monika Roth of Cooperative Extension provided members with a presentation on the 2015 Agriculture (Ag) and Farmland Protection Plan. The Ag Plan development process had six theme areas: Ag Economic Development; local foods, future farmers, land use policy/regulations, environment, and agriculture awareness. She reviewed the number of farms in Tompkins County, stating there were 558 in 2012 compared to 598 in 1978. The number of farm acreage has declined as well, going from 123,210 in 1978 to 90,774 in 2012. She noted the growing number of CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture) and said there are now 44 that serve a large number of Tompkins County households.

In addition to statistics relating to the number and type of farms in Tompkins County, the presentation contained maps of the Agricultural Districts in Tompkins County and the Agriculturally assessed land. Other information contained in the presentation included:

State requirements for Plans

- Location of areas or land to be protected;
- Assessment of economic and open space value of lands to be protected, consequences of conversion, and the level of development pressure on County farms;
- A description of programs and strategies to be used to promote continued agricultural use; and
- Economic Development Strategies.

Vision

- The Vision for Tompkins County Agriculture is a diverse and viable farming sector that contributes local food and agricultural product sales resulting in employment and economic activity;
- Established farmers plan for the future and new farmers can access land and other resources to grow their businesses;
- Farmers follow sound Ag practices that protect the environment and contribute to rural quality of life and scenic landscapes;
- Consumers and policy makers value the contributions of agriculture and support policies that allow for the continuation and expansion of farming enterprises.

Priority Initiatives

- Agriculture Economic Development
 - Linking farmers with biz and marketing info.; and
 - Linking farmers to resources, funding;
 - Agri-tourism capacity building.

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- Vibrant Local Food System
 - Expand marketing options & infrastructure; and
 - Promote local purchasing by consumers/buyers.
- Farmland protection, land use policy
 - Training officials on Ag District Law implications;
 - Farmer involvement/input on local land use policy;
 - Town Ag Plans; and
 - Farmland protection thru PDR (state funding).
- Environmental Protection
 - Sustainable farming practices/BMP's;
 - Prepare for invasive species/climate change;
 - Energy conservation/renewable energy on farms; and
 - Regional planning linkages/goals.

Priority Actions

- Agriculture Awareness/Education
 - Farm tours, media, events, raise general public awareness;
 - Educating youth and teachers about farms and food production
- Future Farmers/Workforce
 - Farm transfer/transition;
 - Beginning farmers;
 - Educating youth-farmer training; and
 - Farm employment training.
- Farmland protection, land use policy
 - Training officials on Ag District Law implications;
 - Farmer involvement/input on local land use policy;
 - Town Ag Plans; and
 - Farmland protection thru PDR (state funding).
- Environmental Protection
 - Sustainable farming practices/BMP's;
 - Prepare for invasive species/climate change;
 - Energy conservation/renewable energy on farms; and
 - Regional planning linkages/goals.

Steps to Completion of Plan

- Input/editing;
- Public information meeting - June 10;
- Final edits based on input;
- Public Hearing - July 7, County Legislature;
- Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board approval;
- Legislature adoption; and
- NYS Ag & Markets approval.

Ms. Zahler commented that the Town of Ulysses has an Ag Plan and in discussions at the Board meetings one of the "hot button" topics discussed was the issue of farmers seeming to have virtually no control over what a farmer does in terms of water quality. It was stated that the Department of Ag and Markets will work with municipalities on this. Ms. Lavine said two areas of concern are growing Hops and medical marijuana.

Update of Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration Program Plan

Tee Ann Hunter, Chair, Intermunicipal Watershed Commission, provided members with an update on the Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration Program. She stated the Cayuga Lake Watershed Plan has not been updated since it was first completed in 2001 and many things have changed. A new planning effort is underway to update the Plan in 2015-16. An updated plan will help lake municipalities improve water quality and will also assist them in applying for funding to repair and upgrade water projects in towns and villages around the lake. Ms. Hunter distributed copies of press releases that have been issued and also a newsletter. In addition to public meetings that will be held on July 30th and August 13th they are also scheduling meetings with stakeholders and local government officials to engage the 45 municipalities in the Cayuga Lake Watershed.

Ms. Hunter said a letter was recently sent to all mayors and supervisors in the Watershed explaining what they are about and asking that a representative be appointed to the Commission. They will also be sending out invoices for annual dues for the Committee which were originally intended to support administrative staff but the fund has not generated enough to hire for a position. She urged representatives to encourage municipalities to put funds in the budget to fund paying these dues. Since 2008 the dues have been going to support the floating classroom.

Ms. Lambert said there will be an online survey tool and explained how groups will be helping to update various sections of the plan and noted many of the issues that exist now were not an issue back in 2001 when the Plan was first created. The Plan will also have a visionary statement for the future which will allow them to access more funding. She also said Ms. Hunter will be working with municipalities to develop a list of projects they would like to see.

All members were invited to the next meeting that will be hosted by Grace Bates in the Town of Aurora on August 26th. They will be talking about the update of the Plan, State regulations, priorities, and the Economic Development Council.

Update on Shared Services

Mr. Mareane reported the TC3 Biz survey was conducted and approximately seven responses were received. He will be meeting with Martha Hubbard at TC3 and will report back at the next meeting. He also provided an update on the Municipal Courts Task Force and said the group has met three times. They now have a webpage that is linked off the TCCOG site and includes a suggestion box. Over the next several months the Task Force will be pulling together several stakeholders, law enforcement, court officials, and State officials. He expects a report to be presented to TCCOG in June 2016.

Mr. Mareane reported the first two consecutive quarters of 2015 sales tax collections have been below last year's. In response to this the County has initiated a soft hiring freeze. He said there is a disproportionate impact relative to town collections and asked members to look at their municipality's numbers to see how they are doing and if adjustments need to be made.

Mr. Mareane reported on the Government Efficiency Plan and said the State is asking that the Plan be broken down into component parts and are taking the position that it will impact the way the savings is presented for health benefits. He continues to push back on the State about this but said he doesn't feel confident about the outcome which could impact the checks that are to be issued by the State.

Various solar opportunities for residents

Ms. Cail distributed information on the Community Net Metering Proceeding. She reported on July 15, 2015, the Public Service Commission issued an order in its Community Net Metering Proceeding

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approving the implementation of Community Net Metering in New York. Across the State, New Yorkers are reaping benefits from plugging into clean energy. She explained Phases I and II of the project and reported that households that put solar on their roof are saving money on their utility bill, increasing their reliability of their energy, and creating local clean energy jobs and investment in their communities. Unfortunately, too many New Yorkers cannot currently access clean energy because they do not own their home, it is not suitable for solar due to the condition of the roof or shading from trees and other buildings, or because they live in a multi-family building. Renters, for instance, make up over 45% of the State's population and an even greater proportion of the population of color.

Community net metering, or shared renewables is a policy to increase access to renewable energy by allowing community members to come together to develop shared renewable energy systems and then receive credit on their utility bills for the clean energy the systems produce. Shared renewable energy programs have already been implemented in 11 states.

In its Order, the Commission signaled its commitment to ensuring that low-income people will have access to shared renewable projects, but the details will be worked out in an upcoming low-income Collaborative. Ms. Cail said the Public Service Commission is opening up a lot of opportunities to help bring people to renewables who previously weren't able to.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

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

Municipal Role in Supporting College and Career Readiness for Youth in their Communities - Kirby Edmonds; and
Home Energy Rating Project Implementation - Emelie Cuppernell

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.