

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023, 4:00-6:00PM
Draft Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Evan Hallas

Attendance

Member	Member	Staff
Andrea Aguirre	P Tony Ingraffea (associate)*	A Terry Carroll P
Sara Culotta	E Guillermo Metz	P Hailley Delisle P
Veronica Pillar*	P Alex Rakow (associate)*	A Kristin McCarthy P
Brian Eden	P Martha Robertson	P
Danielle Eiseman	E Sarah Schnabel	P
Rebecca Evans	P Irene Weiser	P
Evan Hallas	P	

*Non-voting member

Guests: Peter Bardaglio, Jaden Beck, Charles Benisch, Sara Hess, Annie Koreman, Pat Sewell

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Moderator Evan Hallas called the meeting to order at 4:03pm. No changes to the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft November 2023 minutes were approved (motion by Irene Weiser, second by Evan Hallas) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – Guests introduced themselves. Peter Bardaglio reported on Ithaca 2030 District and Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI) activities.

4. Member Updates – Brian Eden reported on Cayuga salt mine resolution and interactions with County Legislature. He also shared news about related state legislation, meetings with central NYS Department of Environmental Conservation staff, and Thermal Energy Networks. Sarah Schnabel referenced a Canary Media article Terry Carroll recently shared on service upgrades and home electrification, commenting that she could present on the topic at a future meeting. Anne Koreman thanked members for feedback on County Green Building Policy and talked about upcoming Facilities & Infrastructure legislative committee meeting. Rebecca Evans introduced the City’s new sustainability planner, Savannah Vega, and shared that the City and Town of Ithaca have landed on December 2024 as deadline for amendments to the local energy code.

5. Staff Report (as needed) – Terry Carroll
Terry provided updates on several green initiatives underway at the County. He highlighted the upcoming presentation of the County Green Policy to the legislative committees and his excitement about completing phase one of a County Green Facilities project involving electrification and weatherization. Specifically, the Public Works facility is nearly off natural gas, with only one remaining piece for heating hot water. Similarly, the Mental Health building and County Library are largely off natural gas. The County is tracking the performance of these units and plans to release a case study next year. Another exciting development is the potential to recover costs from geothermal installations through the Inflation Reduction Act’s tax credits for tax-exempt entities. Terry also mentioned other municipalities forming networks to share sustainability best practices and collaborate on policy changes. He noted the upcoming meeting of a new statewide group and the potential for local collaboration with

the City of Ithaca and others. The discussion included questions about specific buildings and backup systems, as well as praise for the County's leadership in sustainability efforts. Terry acknowledged the need for more public outreach about these initiatives and expressed gratitude to the County Legislature for their support. He concluded by mentioning plans for 2024, including the development of an electricity emergency response plan and engagement in the NYSEG gas long-term planning process. municipalities in the region.

6. Proposed CaSE Resolution on Green Building Policy – *Brian Eden, Evan Hallas, Martha Robertson*
Group discussed the draft resolution endorsing Tompkins County's Green Building Policy, which had been circulated via email before the meeting. Martha asked about the absence of "external experts" in the draft, which Terry explained was an oversight. Brian underscored the need for a robust approach to achieving emissions reduction targets, expressing doubts about the current 65% improvement being sufficient. Evan, while acknowledging the need to address upfront carbon emissions and backup systems, defended the policy's adequacy, highlighting its focus on electrification and overall efficiency. Brian proposed circulating Evan and Martha's revised resolution for further discussion. This revision removed the push for Platinum LEED standards and advocated for the policy with minor language tweaks. The discussion revolved around striking a balance between the policy's potency, practicality, and affordability, culminating in the board's endorsement of a supportive resolution open to future refinements. It touched on various topics, including embodied carbon, LEED platinum standards, and more. The board voted to approve the resolution with minor revisions, entrusting Evan and Kristin with its finalization and distribution to the County Legislature.

Action: Martha Robertson made a motion, which Brian Eden seconded, to approve the Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board resolution in support of the updated Tompkins County Green Building Policy with minor revisions as discussed. Guillermo Metz abstained. Motion carried.

7. Energy Warriors Green Workforce Training – *Aloja Airewele, Cornell Cooperative Extension*
Aloja presented to the board on the Energy Warriors program, which provides paid training and job placement support for individuals interested in careers in the green economy. The program, which seeks a diverse cohort of participants, including individuals from underserved communities, veterans, and those seeking career advancement, includes an eight-week environmental literacy curriculum, hands-on activities, and paid on-the-job training with companies like BlocPower in areas such as rim joist insulation and weatherization. Challenges the program has faced include recruitment, due to factors like transportation limitations; lack of green job opportunities in the local market to absorb trained individuals; and long-term sustainability. Discussion points included transportation support for trainees, building capacity for trainees to start their own businesses, potential for the Green Jobs Corridor initiative to attract workers from other areas, connecting trainees to existing County workforce and training resources, funding streams, and more. Possible next steps mentioned were further discussion on addressing recruitment and job placement challenges, advocating for increased funding, and exploring partnerships and collaborations to expand the program and create more green jobs.

8. Discussion: Climate Change Superfund Act (S.2129/A.3351) and Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act (S.3389/A.7949) – Brian Eden/Peter Bardaglio

Brian and Peter spoke to the board about two pieces of NYS legislation, the Climate Change Superfund and Stop Climate Polluter Handouts acts, which aim to address the financial burden of climate adaptation in local communities. Inspired by the federal program, the Climate Change Superfund proposes a \$3 billion annual fund from large polluters, primarily in oil and gas, to support high-ranking resilience projects across the state. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act targets \$336 million in fossil fuel subsidies, including exemptions for bunker fuel, research and development, and fracking infrastructure, while preserving exemptions for vulnerable populations. Funding from the Superfund could support critical infrastructure upgrades in roads, bridges, drainage, and public health. Peter and Brian urged the board and County Legislature to support these bills. Assemblymember Anna Kelles, a co-sponsor, will be present at the January TCCPI meeting to discuss these and other climate initiatives.

9. Discussion: Looking back on 2023 and looking ahead to 2024

Discussion was tabled for a future meeting due to time constraints.

10. Chair’s Report/Board Business: Vacancies and Chair/Vice Chair Nominations

Evan kicked off the discussion by presenting progress from the Membership & Nominating Committee, comprised of himself, Andrea, and Rebecca. They plan to collaborate remotely between meetings. Sara and Irene expressed willingness to continue their officer roles for 2024, provided the rotating monthly meeting facilitator model endures. They also encouraged others to step up if interested in leadership roles. The group generally agreed that this rotation has proven successful. The topic then shifted to filling the vacant board seat. With no official recruitment process outlined in CaSE bylaws, the members debated the best approach. Some expressed interest in reviewing the four submitted applications. Evan welcomed staff, other members, and legislators to participate in candidate interviews. Terry highlighted the importance of communicating to potential members the expectation of facilitating at least one monthly meeting. The group outlined the next steps, including reviewing applications, scheduling interviews, sharing materials, inviting additional participants to interviews, and ultimately deciding whether to recommend candidates directly to the PEEQ committee or the CaSE Board first.

12. Meeting Wrap-up

Peter shared that the Fashion Act coalition is holding a virtual party on Monday at 7pm. Anna Kelles is the guest speaker. Evan thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

13. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 5:58pm.