

**TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board**  
**Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023, 4:00-6:00PM**  
**Final Minutes**  
**Meeting Facilitator: Andrea Aguirre**

**Attendance**

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

\*Non-voting member

**Guests:** Peter Bardaglio, Cole Burgess, Sara Hess, Anne Koreman

**1. Call to Order/Agenda Review** – Moderator Sara Culotta called the meeting to order at 4:04pm. She gave a quick overview of the agenda. Martha and Evan are set to facilitate in November and December, respectively. Attendees were okay with Kristin’s request to record meetings for minutes taking. The group discussed the proposed Cargill Salt Mine resolution and proper protocol for moving items through the advisory board-Legislature approval pipeline. Terry shared that the Department of Planning & Sustainability includes a memo with every resolution to provide background information and backup documentation, suggesting it as a best practice the board could adopt moving forward.

**2. Approval of Minutes** – The draft September 2023 minutes were approved (motion by Martha Robertson, second by Rebecca Evans) as submitted. Motion carried.

**3. Public Comment** – Peter Bardaglio shared a note in the chat regarding an upcoming NY Heat event co-sponsored by TC Climate Protection Initiative and Mothers Out Front.

**4. Chair and Member Updates** – Sara announced that she will be supervising a full-time intern over the summer to learn about the business of the energy transition. Rebecca shared two opportunities for graduate students to work on energy transition projects. She also announced that the City of Ithaca is finalizing its submission to the Department of Energy for congressionally directed spending from Sen. Chuck Schumer's office for energy assessments. Brian shared that there were submissions to the NYS Public Service Commission on joint utilities, annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting, and inventory reporting. He also shared that NYS Department of Environmental Conservation released a new policy in September on permitting and disadvantaged communities (DAC). Terry remarked that Hailley will be looking at the DEC policy to consider whether the department should comment.

**5. Staff Report** – Hailley reported that a second heat pump training session for code enforcement officers and heat pump contractors will be held Oct. 30, and Tompkins County was recertified as a Climate Smart Community. Terry reported that the Caswell solar array project is moving forward, and the County is exploring the possibility of doing a solar project at the airport. Guillermo asked if the timing of either project could work out so that they could be part of the City and Town of Ithaca's CCA

plan. Terry said it's possible and that the County can have those conversations as the CCA gets rolling. Sara suggested that the County make developers aware of the potential for interest in a CCA offtake agreement for the Caswell project. Rebecca shared that the CCA menu of offerings will likely not become public or allow for collective investment until spring 2025. Terry also reported that the County has replaced the roof on the public library and decided not to replace the solar panels that were previously installed. He cited several reasons for this decision, including vandalism, maintenance issues, and roof leakage.

#### **6. Report: Weatherization Workforce Development with BlocPower – Guillermo Metz**

Guillermo reported on Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)'s collaboration with BlocPower on weatherization workforce development. The project is funded by a private foundation through anonymous donations. CCE is working with BlocPower to provide hands-on training for workers in weatherization techniques. The goal is to weatherize 40 homes by the end of the year. Guillermo said that the project was slow to get started due to contractual issues, but that it is now underway. The project is open to homeowners in Tompkins County who meet income qualifications. Attendees suggested sharing the program with Case's Manufactured Housing Working Group, municipal governments, Tompkins County Council of Governments, and the general public through the Environmental Management Council's Green Scene e-newsletter.

#### **7. Update: Building Code Administration & Operations Study – Darby Kiley, DPS**

Darby gave an update on the Tompkins County Building Code Administration and Operations Study, conducted by Laberge Group. The study aims to identify opportunities for shared services, coordination, and consolidation. These include streamlining and formalizing the 911 addressing system; identifying code enforcement software that can be used by multiple municipalities; improving recruitment and retention of code enforcement officers; enhancing timeliness and efficiency of building safety inspections; streamlining process of pursuing court action against individuals not in compliance with building codes; and providing training to code enforcement officers on a variety of topics, including the latest building code requirements and enforcement techniques. Discussion covered the 911 addressing system portion of the study, informal shared staffing between municipalities, and succession planning, among other topics. Next steps include finalizing the draft report and presenting it to advisory boards, PEEQ, the County Legislature, and the public.

#### **8. Manufactured Housing Working Group Update – Danielle Eiseman**

Danielle provided an update on the Manufactured Housing Working Group's progress. The group is working with students in her consulting course, and she had a student assisting her over the summer on this project. The group has been collecting data on risk and vulnerability for manufactured housing communities in Tompkins County. This data will be used to develop a visualization to help policymakers understand the challenges facing these communities. A webpage is also under development with resources for municipalities that are interested in allowing manufactured housing as an option for affordable housing. In addition, the students are working on a white paper that will explore innovations in zoning and policy and provide recommendations for improving resiliency for people living in manufactured housing. Sara shared that the climate vulnerability index is a tool that can be used to assess the climate vulnerability of specific locations.

#### **9. Proposed CaSE Resolution on the Cayuga Salt Mine – Brian Eden**

Brian led the group through a review of the draft Cayuga Salt Mine resolution. Sara suggested that the

group discuss the resolution and try to reach a consensus on how to finalize it. Brian presented some of the key points of the resolution, including that the DEC has never required an environmental impact statement (EIS) be done for the mine and that a collapse of the mine has the potential to negatively impact residents' drinking water as well the lake's fishery, recreation, and tourism industries. Sara said that since Case cannot vote outside of meetings, the board would need to empower Brian and Martha to finalize the resolution, possibly with input from other advisory boards. Sara then asked if the group was comfortable with delegating Martha and Brian to work out the fine details of the resolution. The title of the resolution may be changed to reflect the fact that it is not advocating for the closure of the salt mine, but rather for an EIS to assess the potential impact of future mining on water quality. Brian and Martha will present the resolution to the PEEQ committee.

**Action:** Brian Eden made a motion, seconded by Evan Hallas, to approve the draft Cargill Salt Mine resolution. The motion empowered Brian Eden and Martha Robertson to continue fine-tuning language of the resolution through collaboration with other advisory boards as needed. It will then be submitted on the Case Board's behalf to the Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality and County Legislature for consideration. Motion carried, with Guillermo Metz abstaining.

#### **10. Update: Ithaca Utility Thermal Energy Network – Brian Eden**

Brian opened the discussion by reminding the group of the interest in community thermal energy networks locally. He mentioned that there had been several meetings earlier in the year and that comments had been submitted for the NYSEG proposal in Ithaca. Brian then expressed concern that the Public Service Commission (PSC) is not ready to go ahead with any of these projects in New York State and that they want more details. Sara responded by saying that NYSEG has made some commitments to the Science Center, including paying for some preliminary design engineering work. She also mentioned that she has read the order from the PSC and that it is quite technical. Rebecca added that she and Terry plan to talk with NYSEG about the project. Cole Burgess, a staffer from NYSEG, joined the meeting and confirmed that the project is still a priority. He said that they will engage the public, including the Case Board, once the project gets to the community input stage. Sara extended an invite for NYSEG to present to Case in the future about this topic. Rebecca brought up Taitem's proposed district energy project in the Titus Towers area. Evan said he would talk with his colleagues at Taitem about a presentation to the Case Board.

#### **11. Chair's Report/Board Business**

Sara shared that she had attended the Greater Binghamton Clean Energy Careers Summit, which reignited her interest in green workforce development. She also met with Danielle Szabo from Ithaca Area Economic Development and Chris Sponn from the TC Workforce Development Board, who have been awarded a \$1.2 million grant to recruit and place talent in green jobs in the trades, as well as entry level manufacturing. Group also discussed recruiting new members for the vacant seat on Case. Sara shared that she had a wonderful interaction recently with Jaden Beck from BlocPower and thought her a strong candidate. Rebecca suggested that the board consider candidates from the pool of applicants who were declined for the City of Ithaca's Sustainability and Climate Justice Commission because they did not live in the city.

#### **12. Meeting Wrap-up**

Sara thanked everyone for attending.

#### **13. Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 6:02pm.