

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, 4:00-6:00PM
Final Meeting Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Andrea Aguirre

Attendance

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

*Non-voting member

Guests: Peter Bardaglio, Cole Burgess, Lloyd Harryman, Sara Hess, Avery Johnstone, Anne Koreman, Joel Mills, Chrstine O’Malley, Alex Travis, Ray Vaughan

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Moderator Andrea Aguirre called the meeting to order at 4:04pm. New member Martha Robertson was welcomed to the board. Members and guests introduced themselves. Chair Sara Culotta provided update on meeting facilitator schedule. Evan Hallas will host December meeting. At Sara’s request, Martha Robertson agreed to facilitate the November meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft July 2023 minutes were approved (motion by Danielle Eiseman, second by Sara Culotta) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – Annie Koreman announced that the Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality legislative committee will hear a presentation by Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now on the rumored sale of the Cargill salt mine at their Sept. 18 meeting. She invited everyone to attend the meeting in person, watch it on YouTube, or request a Zoom link from a clerk. Peter Bardaglio announced that the Ithaca 2030 District has welcomed two new member buildings. He also said that the district now has over 600,000 square feet of building space participating.

4. Member Updates – Sara Culotta gave an update on the Siemens electrification study. She said that the study is now complete and that she is working on getting feedback from stakeholders. She also said that she plans to share the study with the Ithaca 2030 District board later this year or next year. Rebecca Evans announced that the City of Ithaca Common Council adopted the distributed energy resource plan last week. She said that the plan includes inclusive financial pathways that will stimulate local economic growth and deploy renewables and shared assets.

5. Report/Discussion: Potential Environmental Ramifications of a Cayuga Salt Mine Sale – *Brian Eden*

Brian reported to the group on the environmental risks associated with salt mining under Cayuga Lake and the potential ramifications if Cargill sells its salt mine. He expressed his concerns that the state is not doing enough to protect the lake, and that Cargill is not being held accountable. He then turned the presentation over to geologist Ray Vaughan, who talked about the mining process’s effects on the stability of the mine ceiling and land surface. He noted that there have been cases of sudden and

unpredictable subsidence at other salt mines and strongly recommended that an environmental impact statement be done to evaluate the risks associated with the salt mine. Brian offered to share more information about the salt mine and its regulatory history with anyone who is interested. It was decided that Case leadership will connect with PEEQ legislators after the Sept. 18 presentation by Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now.

6. Presentation/Discussion: The Net Zero Urban Program & Digital Twins for Decarbonization – *Avery Johnstone (KPMG) and Joel Mills (Augment City)*

Avery Johnstone from KPMG presented on how they are working with cities like Ithaca to achieve net zero by 2030 using digital twins technology. She explained that a digital twin is a virtual replica of a real-world system, and that it can be used to test out different scenarios and identify the best solutions for reducing emissions. Members asked about methane emissions tracking, modeling of social and political factors, the type of sensors to be deployed around Ithaca, and the scope of work that KPMG and Augment City plan to do. Joel Mills of Augment City shared examples of data modeling studies done with digital twins technology to test different scenarios. He talked about testing out new ideas for a total systems approach in Ithaca, referencing a project where they used a traffic simulator to help a small city assess the impact of a new campus on traffic flow.

7. Staff Report (as needed)

No report.

8. Report: NYSEG Rate Case – *Irene Weiser*

Irene updated group on the proposed rate increase for NYSEG customers. She noted that the rate increase would be significant and is particularly concerning given that many NYSEG customers are already struggling to afford their utility bills. She also criticized the public process that has been followed in this case, noting that there has been no public hearing scheduled on the proposed rate increase and that the agreement reached between the company and staff is confidential. Her talk and subsequent discussion covered campaign lobbying, suggestions for advocacy measures, effective messaging, lack of compliance with Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act requirements, and other topics.

9. Report: Lansing Non-Pipeline Alternatives Update & Other Projects – *Guillermo Metz*

Guillermo updated the group on the non-pipes alternatives (NPA) program, a collaboration between Cooperative Extension and NYSEG intended to reduce gas use in the moratorium area of Lansing. Five of the six NPA projects mentioned have signed contracts with NYSEG. Projects include geothermal work at Cornell Childcare Center, a HeatSmart campaign focused on heat pumps for residences and small businesses, a proposed neighborhood geothermal loop, and more. There is concern that if the NPA projects do not meet their goals, NYSEG may build a pipeline. Group discussed importance of monitoring the program and collecting data on electrification projects to track progress regardless of whether or not they are part of the NPA. They also spoke about the challenges of getting people to switch to heat pumps, even with the enhanced incentives offered by NYSEG.

9. Meeting Wrap-up

Andrea thanked everyone for attending and the great discussions.

10. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:01pm.