

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, 4:00-6:00PM
Final Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Sara Culotta

Attendance

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

*Non-voting member

Guests: Peter Bardaglio, Charles Benisch, Nick Goldsmith, Anne Koreman, Pat Sewell, Savannah Vega

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Chair Sara Culotta called the meeting to order at 4:03pm. No changes to the agenda.

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

3. Public Comment – Anne Koreman provided an update on the Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee. She and Veronica Pillar will continue serving as chair and vice chair, respectively.

4. Member Updates – Evan Hallas announced his intent to step down from the Case Board once current vacancies are filled. Brian provided an update on the Ithaca Utility Thermal Energy Network project, following up on the Case Board’s comment filed a year ago. Irene reported that Gov. Hochul, in her State of the State address, expressed strong support for key elements of the NYS Heat Act, such as removing utilities’ obligation to provide gas service and ending subsidies for new gas hookups. Irene also shared that the NYS Department of Public Service has invited Tompkins County stakeholders to present on strategic decommissioning at a technical conference for the long-term gas planning proceeding. Sara reported that the NYS Cap and Invest program has moved into its second stage, with a detailed 32-page pre-proposal document seeking further public input. Rebecca Evans asked her peers for patience as the City of Ithaca goes through a period of restructuring.

5. Chair’s Report/Board Activity Updates

Members discussed maintaining the alternating facilitation schedule and keeping potential candidates informed about the role. Sara expressed her willingness to continue as chair in 2024 as long as the facilitator model was followed. Board discussed moving the meeting schedule to the first week of the month to align with Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee meetings. Evan updated group on new member recruitment. Next, Evan presented the 2024 officer slate. No additional nominations were received from the floor.

Action: Evan Hallas made a motion, with Brian Eden seconding, to nominate Sara Culotta as the 2024 chair and Irene Weiser as the 2024 vice chair of the Case Board. Motion carried.

Irene led a discussion on forming a Case Board Planning & Evaluation Working Group, given the board's three-year appointment by the County Legislature is scheduled to end in 2025. This process would assess the board's accomplishments, identify areas for improvement, and inform its future direction (if it's extended for another term). Irene will connect with members interested in participating.

6. Presentation/Discussion: Direct to Work Program for Construction Trades – Danielle Szabo, Ithaca Area Economic Development (IAED), & Chris Sponn, TC Workforce Development Board (TCWDB)

Danielle Szabo, of IAED, and Chris Sponn, of TCWDB, presented to the group on their organizations' efforts to help build a unified and comprehensive workforce ecosystem in Tompkins County. Strong partnerships emerged as a central theme of the presentation, as did bridging the gap between employers and qualified job seekers. In particular, they referenced the Direct to Work program for manufacturing, which employs an industry partnership model, leveraging industry insights and community-supported training to address specific workforce needs. Their talk and the subsequent discussion touched on numerous topics. These included green jobs advocacy, community engagement and employer outreach, importance of long-term supportive services, manufacturing and construction trades, identifying key resources and educational partners as well as supporting partners already engaged in the workforce sector. The discussion also emphasized the importance of proactively reaching underserved communities and establishing diverse career pathways through partnerships and targeted outreach. The conversation also acknowledged the potential gap between emerging jobs and training programs based on outdated data and identified the Ithaca Green New Deal as a potential resource for green jobs initiatives.

7. Action: Vote: Resolution in Support of the Green Building and Construction Renovation Policy (proposed by Irene Weiser)

Irene presented the revised resolution supporting the County's updated Green Building policy. Case passed a resolution in support of the Green Building policy in December, but the policy was later revised in the Facilities and Infrastructure and Government Operations Committees. Key concerns with the modifications included downgrading from LEED Gold to LEED Silver based solely on fiscal concerns, potentially compromising energy efficiency standards. These concerns were subsequently addressed in another amended version, which will now go to the full Legislature for a vote. Members discussed possible textual edits and expressed appreciation to County staff and legislative committees.

Action: Irene Weiser made a motion, which Brian Eden seconded, to adopt resolution in support of the Tompkins County Green Building Policy as amended. Motion carried. Guillermo Metz abstained.

8. Staff Report

Hailley provided more details on the Clean Energy Communities Grant, which will be used to purchase induction cooktops for qualifying households in coordination with the Healthy Neighborhoods program at Whole Health. Terry reported on the EV ARC grant.

9. Meeting Wrap-up

Peter Bardaglio announced he will be unable to attend future meetings if they move to Thursdays due to scheduling conflicts. He expressed his appreciation for the board's work and hopes the County Legislature extends it past 2024. In closing, group confirmed they'll meet Thursday, Feb. 1, then figure out 2024 monthly meeting schedule once County Legislature finalizes its committee schedule.

10. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:07pm.