

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board

Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 4:00-6:00PM

Final Minutes

Meeting Facilitator: Louise Bruce

Attendance

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

*Non-voting member

Guests: Peter Bardaglio, Bill Dailey, Frank Doldo, Anne Koreman, Catherine Wilde, Joe Wilson, Savannah Vega

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Facilitator Louise Bruce called the meeting to order at 4:04pm. She provided an overview of the agenda, to which there were no changes.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft Feb. 27, 2024, minutes were approved (motion by Sara Culotta, second by Martha Robertson) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – No public comment.

4. Member Updates – Martha Robertson expressed gratitude to Annie Koreman, Veronica Pillar, and others for their support of the Case Board’s recent resolution in support of NYS budget proposals and legislation to address climate change. The resolution was passed by the County Legislature with a strong showing of 11 to 3. Brian Eden then detailed ongoing communication with town supervisors and mayors to advocate for climate resiliency funding in their budgets, highlighting initiatives like the Climate Super Fund Act. Irene Weiser followed with updates on the state legislative process, including passage of the No Co2 fracking bill by both the Assembly and Senate. She also emphasized the importance of addressing energy affordability as discussions progress on the New York HEAT (Home Energy Affordable Transition) Act.

5. Chair Report

Sara summarized actions taken on the board’s resolution supporting NYS climate legislation and shared that she had addressed an inquiry by County Legislator Mike Sigler regarding the board’s stance on nuclear energy, solar energy on farmland (agrovoltatics), and plastic recycling plants. Sara asked members to update the board contact list as necessary and reported that Louise Bruce would be serving as a liaison between the Case Board and Environmental Management Council. Agenda planning and meeting facilitation were also discussed. Brian and Andrea Aguirre provided updates on the building code administration study and Clean Fuel Standards bill, respectively.

6. Staff Report

Terry Carroll outlined key department initiatives for the year, which include developing an electricity

emergency response plan and exploring sustainable transportation solutions for employees. Notable projects include an induction cooktop program to improve indoor air quality, the Business Energy Advisors program, and a public EV charging station RFP to expand electric vehicle infrastructure. Members raised questions about various topics, including data tracking for the induction cooktop program. Terry also shared that the County received a Park Foundation grant to conduct a study on geothermal district heating for the downtown campus and reported on the County's green capital program, collaboration with municipalities on environmental initiatives, and the Caswell solar project.

7. Progress Report: Planning & Evaluation Committee

Jaden Beck reported on the Case Board evaluation process. The Planning & Evaluation committee aims to review the board's history, identify areas for improvement, and create a final product like a resolution or presentation for stakeholders. Members are analyzing meeting minutes to categorize discussed topics and generate future ideas for consideration. Their goal is to enhance the board's effectiveness and address community-relevant issues.

8. Presentation: Hydrogen Fuel Cell Pilot in Ithaca – Paul Mutolo and Bill Dailey, Standard Hydrogen Corporation

In a presentation on a collaboration with the City of Ithaca on a pilot project at the former Emerson Chain Works factory (Southworks), Paul Mutolo and Bill Dailey of Standard Hydrogen outlined the company's focus on using hydrogen storage for clean energy production and potentially deferring the need for ratepayer investment in electrical grid upgrades. They explained that Standard Hydrogen focuses on distributed and decentralized energy systems using hydrogen as a clean fuel and storage medium. The company's Energy Transfer System generates hydrogen from surplus renewable energy and utilizes it for various purposes, including grid-balanced EV charging, backup power, and potentially even fueling hydrogen vehicles. Key discussion points included safety considerations for hydrogen storage, the initial reliance on hydropower allocation until local surplus renewable energy becomes available, economic factors affecting pilot projects, the importance of public education and community outreach, and ongoing efforts to define clean hydrogen standards at both state and federal levels.

9. Driving to Action Throughout 2024

Louise facilitated a discussion on maximizing the impact of the remaining eight meetings in 2024. The focus was on speaker selection and presentations. She prompted participants with key questions: identifying the most pressing issues, programs, legislative/regulatory initiatives, and emerging technologies. Additionally, she asked when inviting a presenter or organization would be most impactful. Participants were divided into breakout groups to discuss these questions. Afterward, Louise led a session where participants shared their reflections and suggestions from the breakout discussions.

10. Meeting Wrap-up

Martha commended Louise for the well-structured session and emphasized the value of compiling a comprehensive list of all topics discussed for future reference. Louise proposed creating a calendar of key dates to further enhance planning. The team acknowledged the importance of initiating budget planning early. Louise concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation.

11. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.