

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 4:00-6:00PM
Final Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Sarah Schnabel

Attendance

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

*Non-voting member

Guests: Annie Koreman

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Facilitator Sarah Schnabel called the meeting to order at 4:03pm. No changes to the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft April 23, 2024, minutes were approved (motion by Martha Robertson, second by Sara Culotta) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – None

4. Member Updates – Danielle and Brian swapped meeting facilitation dates, with Brian leading the June meeting and Danielle taking over in July. Sara reported that the Sciencenter board of directors had approved an open-loop geothermal system to replace the existing HVAC system, and Jaden shared news of her new role as project manager at NYSERDA, where she'll focus on clean energy communities and regional hubs. Brian mentioned a Public Service Commission nomination, an upcoming City of Ithaca Planning & Development Board hearing on the Cornell synthetic turf fieldhouse project, and his plans to participate in lobbying efforts in Albany. The group discussed key bills pending in the state legislative session, including New York Heat, Packaging Reduction Act, and Climate Super Fund. Martha shared call relay information for Renew NY to encourage support for these bills. Finally, Sara wished Danielle a happy birthday on behalf of the board.

5. Staff Report

Staff provided updates on various topics, including the Clean Energy Communities program, Inflation Reduction Act funding, NYSDEC Zero Emissions rebates, NYS Consolidated Funding Application, Business Energy Advisors program, the department’s new housing and community development planner, training opportunities for municipal staff, and more. In addition, they shared that the EV arcs are expected to be delivered in July, and the draft Electricity Emergency Response Plan will be presented at next month’s Case Board meeting.

The discussion then turned to improving energy efficiency in manufactured housing. A U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant opportunity was mentioned, but the 50% match requirement and tight deadline make applying for it unlikely. However, ongoing dialogue with HUD was encouraged to explore future possibilities and build relationships.

6. County Budget Process

The County budget process was discussed, led by Terry. Advisory boards must submit budget requests for the next fiscal year by the end of the week, with a possible extension into early June. Kristin shared examples of past funding requests. Terry highlighted his priorities: green facilities projects and green fleet funding. The conversation ended with a suggestion to prioritize support for Terry's capital budget proposals and share information on grant opportunities.

7. Chair's Report

Sara led a discussion on updating the board's bylaws, considering a new template for advisory boards circulated by the County. However, it was recommended that bylaw revisions be deferred until the future of the CASE Board is determined. Next, Sara outlined a timeline for advocating for CASE's continuation, aiming to present a resolution to the Legislature in the fall. If renewed, the board will need to address its bylaws and member applications, as all terms expire at the end of the year. Finally, Sara acknowledged the valuable contributions of new members Jayden and Louise, who are leading efforts to review past accomplishments and plan for the future.

8. Insights from Planning & Evaluation Committee – Jaden Beck

Jayden Beck gave an update on behalf of the Planning & Evaluation Committee's exploration of board priorities in 2024, framing their work around two key questions: "Where have we been?" and "Where are we going?" She highlighted the importance of making a case for the board's continuation to ensure members find purpose and motivation. The committee conducted a comprehensive review of meeting minutes from 2020 to 2023, categorizing topics and trends. They focused on identifying trends and high-level points from past topics, including relationships with County staff and the Legislature. The committee plans to consolidate discussions into focused sections to ensure consensus and clarity on duties and purpose.

9. 2024 Case Priorities Synthesis – Sara Culotta

The group discussed implementing a framework for their remaining 2024 meetings, which would involve explicitly stating County problems or opportunities and potential solutions. The framework would consider the local impact of solutions, their potential to demonstrate best practices to New York State, and the County Legislature's ability to take action. Members emphasized the importance of collaborating with other County departments and advisory boards, such as the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, and potentially assigning a liaison to attend Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee meetings. They also suggested dedicating time in each meeting for legislative updates on relevant initiatives. Additionally, the group noted that maintaining a flexible meeting format would allow for in-depth discussions and facilitate the incubation of new ideas.

10. Presentation/Discussion: Upcoming Refrigerant Transition – Sarah Schnabel

Sarah delivered a presentation on the refrigerant industry's transition, focusing on the challenges posed by the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act. This legislation aims to reduce HFC refrigerant production by 85% by 2036 and empowers the EPA to regulate this transition. The EPA's ruling, effective January 2025, bans the production and import of certain refrigerants, with sales and installation to follow suit in January 2026. The NYSDEC's proposed amendments may accelerate the residential transition to January 2025. Sarah clarified that existing equipment can still be serviced, but new installations will come at a higher cost. The team discussed potential issues arising from the transition, including excess refrigerant stock leading to cost increases and divided contractor opinions on adopting new equipment. While this transition offers opportunities for higher efficiency, lower refrigerant volume, and reduced global warming potential, homeowner concerns persist regarding increased installation costs and the use of flammable materials. The team recognized the need for education and training to address these concerns, which may impact the pace of house electrification in Tompkins County.

11. Agenda Topics for June Meeting & Wrap-up

Brian encouraged anyone interested to submit topics for the next meeting. Sara noted that the form's spreadsheet contains previous submissions, including some awaiting discussion. Sarah invited people with further questions or concerns regarding her presentation to contact her via email.

11. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:04pm.