

EMC Final Minutes
Jan. 11, 4:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

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Attendance

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Steve Bissen	P	Town of Dryden	Brad Will	P	At-Large
Christine Collins	P	Town of Ulysses	Ingrid Zabel	P	Town of Ithaca
Cait Darfler	P	Village of Trumansburg	TK		<i>Legislative Liaison</i>
Pegi Ficken	E	Town of Groton	<i>Lindsay Dombroskie</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Brandon Hoak	P	At-Large	<i>Karen Edelstein</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Steve Nicholson	P	Town of Caroline	<i>Thomas Hirasuna</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Peter Penniman	P	Town of Enfield	<i>David Weinstein</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Susan Riley	P	At-Large	<i>Robert Wesley</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Lisa Strayer	P	At-Large	Darby Kiley	P	Tompkins Co. staff
Ron Szymanski	P	Village of Freeville	Kristin McCarthy	P	Tompkins Co. staff
Jeff Walker	A	Village of Cayuga Heights			

5 **Guests:** Jeff Simmons, Elaine Tietjen, Jack Zinda

6 **Call to Order** – Chair Cait Darfler called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

7 **Agenda Review/Public Comment** – No changes to agenda. No public comment.

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9 **Approval of Minutes** – The December 2023 draft minutes were approved (motion by Peter Penniman,
 10 second by Susan Riley) as submitted.

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12 **Action: Election of 2024 Chair** – Nominating Committee

13 Steve Nicholson, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, presented their choice for 2024 EMC chair.

14 Nominations were solicited from the floor, but none were offered.

15 **Action:** Steve Nicholson made a motion, which Peter Penniman seconded, to re-elect Cait Darfler the
 16 2024 chair of the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council. Motion carried.

17 **Organizing for 2024: Board Logistics, Member Expectations, Committees & Task Force Formation**

18 Cait started the discussion by recognizing the board's accomplishments in 2023 before unveiling a new
 19 theme for 2024: "Connections." This theme aims to strengthen bonds between EMC members, partner
 20 organizations, and the wider community. To foster internal connections, the group separated into
 21 breakout rooms, where they participated in icebreaker activities. Cait expressed her interest in
 22 continuing such engagement activities in subsequent meetings. Next, Cait outlined key expectations for
 23 members, including meeting attendance, committee or task group participation, and information
 24 sharing with the County Legislature and municipalities. To streamline workflow and reduce unnecessary
 25 meetings, the EMC plans to transition from traditional committees to smaller, task-focused groups.
 26 However, standing committees like the Unique Natural Areas Committee, with its substantial workload,
 27 will remain in place. Updating the EMC bylaws was identified as a key task for 2024. Cait also
 28 emphasized that all subgroups, including committees and task groups, must operate within the EMC
 29 framework, requiring Executive Committee or full EMC approval for any presentations, reports, or

30 outreach materials. Three in-person gatherings were announced for the year: a joint meeting with
31 municipal conservation commissions, a UNA fieldtrip, and a public outreach meeting. The discussion
32 then shifted to identifying the EMC's unique strengths compared to other environmental groups. Key
33 points highlighted its ability to directly connect and share information between municipalities and the
34 County government, enabling them to learn from each other's environmental initiatives. The EMC's
35 broad scope addressing various environmental issues was noted, necessitating a holistic approach that
36 acknowledges the interconnectedness of different concerns. Additionally, its direct connection to the
37 County Legislature and its historical significance as the oldest recognized environmental group in the
38 county were emphasized. Cait then led an exercise to map the EMC's existing community connections,
39 aiming to leverage them and identify opportunities for new partnerships. Members also brainstormed
40 tasks for 2024, utilizing their individual talents. Ideas included continuing work on the Green Scene e-
41 newsletter, designing and producing additional outreach materials, conducting youth outreach,
42 finalizing UNA map updates and sharing with municipalities, tracking development projects, advocating
43 for natural area protection, and developing a five-year plan for the council's long-term goals. Group
44 agreed to revisit these tasks periodically to track progress. Finally, the group discussed ways to improve
45 member onboarding, engagement, and overall communication.

46 **Staff Report (as needed)** – Darby reported an open position for the EMC's liaison on the Water
47 Resources Council (WRC) following David Wolfe's departure. Cait clarified the distinct roles of the EMC
48 and WRC, emphasizing the liaison's function as a bridge between the two entities.

49 **Member Announcements** – Jeff Simmons, who may be appointed the new Town of Danby
50 representative to the EMC, introduced himself.

51 **Adjournment** – Chair Cait Darfler adjourned the meeting at 5:35pm.