

TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

Nov. 18, 2024

Via Zoom

Draft Minutes

Attendance

Member		Seat	Member		Seat
Annie Bastoni	P	At-Large	Frank Proto	P	At-Large
Shawn Bossard	P	Agriculture	Brian Rahm	E	Environment
Cynthia Brock	P	Recreation	Stephanie Redmond	P	At-Large
Liz Cameron	P	Co. Environmental Health	Steve Riddle	P	Water Purveyor
Amanda Champion	P	County Government	Becky Sims	P	Municipal Government
Vacant	X	Cooperative Extension	Linda Wagenet	P	At-Large
Brett Hayhurst	P	At-Large	Douglas Barnes	E	Associate
Kristen Hychka	P	Municipal Government	Roxy Johnston	P	Associate
Darby Kiley	P	County Planning & Sustain.	Lynn Leopold	P	Associate
Patrick King	P	Business & Industry	Rebecca Minas	P	Associate
Liz Kreitinger	P	Watershed Organization	Elaine Quaroni	P	Associate
Jon Negley	P	Soil & Water Cons. District	Grascen Shidemantle	E	Associate
Holly Payne	P	At-Large	Tom Vawter	E	Associate
Vacant	X	Environmental Management Council			

Guests: Devin Cox, Paul Gier, Harry Greene

Call to Order/Agenda Review –Chair Cynthia Brock called the meeting to order at 4:16pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

Privilege of the Floor – No one spoke during privilege of the floor.

Presentation: Trees on Farms for Water Quality & Flood Mitigation – *Harry Greene, Propagate*

Harry provided an overview of his business, Propagate, which manages 2,400 acres of chestnuts and other tree species across several states. The company offers software for tree planting planning, tree planting services, and financing through investor capital. Harry focused on the role of trees in flood mitigation and water quality improvement, highlighting the benefits of green infrastructure like tree buffers. He discussed the potential for revenue-generating agroforestry systems and questioned the need for flood-tolerant species in all riparian areas. Harry also discussed various commercial tree species and the importance of soil quality and return on investment. He proposed a green or riparian bond to combine public and private benefits and shared a tool for assessing tree species suitability. Q&A covered topics such as the toxicity of black locust, soil quality, return on investment, long-term lease agreements, payment for ecosystem services, and the potential for municipalities to work with upstream landowners to mitigate flooding. Harry also mentioned two upcoming events: a Thursday evening event at the Soil Factory focusing on scaling agroforestry in the Finger Lakes, and a Saturday morning outdoor walk at his farm for those interested in a more hands-on experience.

Action: Consider applications for voting and associate members – *Membership & Nominating Committee*

Jon presented the list of new and returning voting members up for appointment/reappointment by the County Legislature, as well as the associate members up for reappointment by the Water Resources Council.

Action: Jon Negley made a motion, which Linda Wagenet seconded, to recommend that the Tompkins County Legislature appoint Eileen O’Connor (Environment) and Elaine Quaroni (Municipal Government), and reappoint

Darby Kiley (Planning & Sustainability), Liz Kreitinger (Watershed Organization), Holly Payne (At-Large), and Frank Proto (At-Large), voting members of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Motion carried.

Action: Jon Negley made a motion, which Frank Proto seconded, to recommend that the Tompkins County Water Resources Council appoint Patrick King and reappoint Douglas Barnes, Roxy Johnston, Lynn Leopold, Rebecca Minas, and Tom Vawter associate members. Motion carried.

Action: Approval of draft minutes

The October 2024 draft minutes were approved as submitted.

Review for Future Action: Water Quality Strategy

Darby shared the updated draft of the Water Quality Strategy, highlighting format changes and progress updates on previous actions. The document focuses on goals, action items, and water resource information. Key action areas include Drinking Water Source Protection Programs, TMDL actions, wastewater treatment, and wetland regulations. The committee plans to review the draft further and share it at the December meeting for approval. Frank inquired about action items excluded from the previous plan. Cynthia mentioned a DEC nutrient management calculator that could be a useful tool for property owners to estimate phosphorus reduction from implementing best management practices.

Committee Reports

Form Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee – Group discussed need to form an ad hoc committee to revise the WRC bylaws in accordance with a new template provided by the legislative clerks. Frank and Elaine volunteered to serve on the committee, with Amanda offering to look over the committee’s draft. Staff will provide copies of current bylaws, legislative template, and related policies.

Municipal Training – Kristen reported on the “Stressed Out Streams” municipal training workshop, held the previous week. The half-day training covered watershed dynamics, erosion, and runoff, attracting 19 participants from various local organizations, including municipal staff and New York State Parks. The training included both classroom and field components, with a site visit to Buttermilk Falls. Kristen praised the engagement and questions from attendees, particularly highway department staff. Annie handled information gathering and Jenna managed registration through CCE, contributing to the event's success. Darby's persistent follow-up emails helped boost attendance. The training's success sets the stage for a follow-up session focused on interventions.

Chair and Staff Reports

Cynthia did not have a chair’s report. For the staff report, Darby extended an invitation from the Climate and Sustainable Energy Board to Water Resources Council and Environmental Management Council members to join their next meeting on Dec. 2, which will include a tour of the new downtown conference center and an informal meet-and-greet/dish-to-pass with other County advisory board members at the library.

Member Announcements

Liz K. announced two upcoming Cayuga Lake Watershed Network events: the Hydrilla Forum and a conference on the Cayuga Lake TMDL, which was co-hosted with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization. Jon informed members about the public comment period for guidelines related to Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition funding. Cynthia shared an email of appreciation she received from the City of Auburn mayor thanking the WRC for responding to the state’s actions regarding the Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations. She also mentioned the governor acknowledging receipt of the WRC’s letter. Group briefly discussed holding an in-person meeting in December.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.