

TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

Dec. 16, 2024
 TC Highway Facility
 170 Bostwick Road, Ithaca NY
 Final Minutes

Attendance

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

Guests: Andrew Murphy

Call to Order/Agenda Review –Chair Cynthia Brock called the meeting to order at 4:15pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

Privilege of the Floor – No members of the public spoke during privilege of the floor. Shawn provided a quick update from the Farm Bureau, and the possibility of him joining the Hydrilla Task Force was mentioned.

Discussion: Debrief on DEC’s TMDL Presentation – Members discussed the recent New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) presentation on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for phosphorus in Cayuga Lake, focusing on implications for municipalities and agricultural properties. While the TMDL does not currently impose new requirements on municipalities, the group discussed the importance of providing local governments with a clear summary of the program's implications. Members explored several key concerns, including the role of non-CAFO farms in phosphorus runoff, the potential for increased DEC oversight of construction activities, and the relationship between MS4 permits and future development impacts. The discussion highlighted challenges in monitoring phosphorus loading from smaller farms and the need for improved data collection methods. Other topics covered included tile drainage impacts, Soil and Water Conservation District reporting responsibilities, lake source cooling, seasonal variations in phosphorus loading, and the Enfield Water Protection Plan. Members emphasized the importance of funding and technical assistance to help farmers implement better management practices, particularly for properties not covered under existing SPDES permits. The group explored establishing a TMDL coordinating committee to address these ongoing concerns and ensure effective implementation of the program.

Before continuing to next agenda item, Darby invited prospective WRC member Andrew Murphy to introduce himself. Andrew manages Cornell's water filtration plants and brings years of environmental engineering experience, including involvement in drinking water source protection planning.

Action: Review Water Quality Strategy 2025-2027 and consider approval – *Water Quality Strategy Committee*
Members reviewed the final draft of the 2025-2027 Water Quality Strategy (WQS), discussing various topics including the selection of a new cover photo, riparian buffers, sediment and erosion concerns, and the role of Six Mile Creek as a drinking water source. The group also reviewed ongoing efforts, such as tracking the Owasco watershed rules and regulations considering the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco's Article 78 proceeding against NYSDOH. WRC will plan regular quarterly reports to both the County Legislature and TCCOG. WRC will continue to provide municipal education was identified as a potential key goal, specifically suggesting training for planning board members and addressing how daily municipal activities impact the lake. The WQS was deemed flexible enough to adjust focus as needed and straightforward, coming in at less than 30 pages. Background information was provided in the appendices. The document will be presented to PEEQ in the coming months.

Action: Darby Kiley moved to approve the 2025-2027 Tompkins County Water Quality Strategy. Amanda Champion seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Action: Consider comments on Cargill mining permit amendment for water storage – *Monitoring Partnership*
The Water Resources Council (WRC) reviewed the draft comment letter regarding Cargill's request to NYSDEC for a mining permit amendment for water storage. Key discussion topics included the need for a publicly available Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), concerns about potential environmental impacts and mine stability, ensuring fair compensation and care for workers if the mine is sold and closed, the importance of adequate environmental bonds if the mine is closed, and concerns about the proposal's plan to store large quantities of salt brine water underground. The group also considered recommendations from Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now, including denying or rescinding the negative declaration and requiring reclamation and subsurface closure plans.

Action: Darby Kiley moved, with a second by Amanda Champion, to have the Executive Committee finalize and send a comment letter on behalf of the full WRC regarding the Cargill mining permit amendment. The letter will be consistent with previous letters sent by the WRC on this topic, reiterating the need for a thorough environmental review and responsible mining practices, and will encapsulate the comments and concerns expressed at the December 16, 2024, WRC meeting. Motion carried, with Brett Hayhurst abstaining.

Action: Consider applications for voting and associate members – *Membership & Nominating Committee*
On behalf of the Membership & Nominating Committee, Linda Wagenet proposed the appointment of Andrew Murphy as an at-large member on the Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Linda is vacating that seat and is applying for a non-voting associate member seat, subject to WRC approval.

Action: Linda Wagenet made a motion, which Darby Kiley seconded, to recommend Andrew Murphy for an at-large seat on the Water Resources Council. Motion carried.

Action: Linda Wagenet moved, with a second by Cynthia Brock, to appoint Linda Wagenet for associate membership starting January 1, 2025. Motion carried.

Action: Approval of draft minutes

The November 2024 draft minutes were approved with one minor edit.

Committee Reports *(as needed)*

None

Chair and Staff Reports

Cynthia relayed that the Environmental Management Council is working to fill their seat on the WRC. In addition, WRC members interested in learning more about EMC activities are welcome to join their meetings as guests.

Darby shared that there are significant funding opportunities at the moment for trees and forests, including landowner reforestation funding and a \$15 million community reforestation grant program.

Member Announcements

None

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 5:40pm.