

TOMPKINS COUNTY ENERGY TASK FORCE

Friday, August 17, 2018

Human Services Building (Beverly Livesay Room), 320 W. State St, Ithaca
Final Minutes

Attendance

Member		Member		Member	
Sharon Anderson	P	Bob Howarth	P	Staff	
Martha Armstrong	P	Tim Mount	P	Andrea Aguirre	P
Cliff Babson	P	Martha Robertson	P	Katie Borgella	P
Fernando de Aragón	E	Brice Smith	P	Darby Kiley	P
Brian Eden	P	Jennifer Tavares	P	Kristin McCarthy	P
Todd Fox	E	Irene Weiser	P	Megan McDonald	P
Nick Goldsmith	P	Gordon Woodcock	P		
Curt Gooch	A	Sarah Zemanick	P		

Guests – Keith Bohling and Gabrielle Casuto, NYSERDA; Milton Matter, Pearl Certification; Terry Carroll, Guillermo Metz, and Anne Rhodes, CCETC; Sarah Hess

Welcome– Chair Sharon Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Comments from the Public: Round 1 – None

Approval of June 15, 2018 minutes – Martha Armstrong moved approval of the June 15, 2018, minutes. Nick Goldsmith seconded. Motion carried, with minor editorial changes. Bob Howarth abstained.

Home Energy Rating: Nick Goldsmith; Keith Bohling, NYSERDA and Milton Matter, Pearl

Nick Goldsmith recapped the local residential energy score project that a consultant developed for five municipalities and partner agencies. The aim is to use market forces to incentivize owners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Data about a home's enhanced energy performance would then be provided to future home buyers. An early report identified potential legal issues with a mandatory home energy rating program so municipalities opted for a voluntary approach. The project utilized funding from NYSERDA and settled on two rating systems: HERs and HES.

Guest Keith Bohling from NYSERDA explained the pilot projects that will be targeting six communities across New York. Three communities will use Home Energy Ratings (HERs) and three will use Pearl Certification. The projects are broken down into two pilot programs. One will target existing home owners and use the rating as a sales tool for home performance contractors. The contractors would use the home's score to provide a snapshot of where its energy performance is today compared with where it could be if the owner made their suggested improvements. Pilot 2 is targeted to home buyers, with home inspectors providing data on a home's energy performance as part of the pre-purchase process. Statistics show homeowners tend to make any major renovations in the first few years.

Participating contractors and home inspectors will receive training through NYSERDA. Both pilots focus on existing homes, including single-family houses and side-by-side multi-unit dwellings (e.g., condominiums). Landlords can participate if their rental property meets the criteria. Pilot 1 will target 2,500 homes in six communities across the state. Pilot 2 will cover 1,300 homes, also in six communities spread statewide.

NYSERDA will track financial information where they can. Projects financed or subsidized by NYSERDA will provide a rich dataset. They will use surveys and other measures to track what happens when homeowners choose an outside contractor or undertake DIY renovations. That information is likely to be anecdotal.

Next, Milton Matter, vice president of research and development at Pearl Certification, spoke to the group about the mechanics of that system. Pearl uses an asset-based, versus behavior-based (e.g. energy usage not measured), scoring system to inventory a home's high-performing features and provide guidance to homeowners on how to improve energy performance. The program's tiered Silver-Gold-Platinum rating system is designed to also improve a home's attractiveness in the real estate market. In order for a home to attain Gold or Platinum status, the contractor must hold a BPI Building Analyst or RESNET HERs Rater certification. To ensure integrity of certification data, Pearl conducts a thorough quality assurance review through field visits, file review, virtual quality control, and trend analyses. Independent appraisal reports have shown an average 5% increase in purchase value among Pearl Certified homes. Steady state homeowners anecdotally have been shown to be motivated by such a reward system as well.

Homes are awarded base points. Bar is not set high as realtors psychologically like having points to start with. Points are divided by: building shell (30%), heating and cooling (35%), baseload (10%) and home management (25%). This point system changes according to the characteristics of each climate zone and is based on national consensus standards on home energy efficiency.

Martha Robertson questioned whether the increase in home value through energy efficiency savings is a double-edged sword since it also presumably increases property taxes. Gordon suggested New York State offer property tax incentives in such cases.

Media campaign for both pilots will launch toward the end of October. No firm date has been set yet. Keith requested that his contact information be included in the minutes in case anyone wants to connect later. [Keith Bohling, Senior Project Manager, Single Family Residential, NYSERDA, tel: 518-862-1090, ext. 3491, keith.bohling@nyserda.ny.gov.]

Energy Strategy and timeline, including ETF input into process – Darby Kiley

Darby Kiley summarized the background documents and said that the Planning and Sustainability Department is taking a fresh look at the Energy Strategy, and instead of an update of the last report, it will be titled "Second Report on the Path to Achieving Community GHG Emissions Goals." She invited the members to help brainstorm on the title, the purpose and draft topic areas, which include solar, heat pumps, and transportation. Darby presented the proposed timeline for finalizing the report with endorsement by the Legislature by the end of 2019. The floor was opened for discussion, with the following recommendations:

- Add energy efficiency to the list of draft topic areas.
- Keep heat pumps separate but distinguish between residential heat pumps and larger commercial heat pump systems. Same with transportation and the electrification of personal vehicles versus municipal or commercial fleets
- Choose a core topic (e.g., energy storage) that interconnects various subtopics (e.g. heating and cooling, electricity, etc.)
- Add street lighting and other forms of public lighting to list of topics. (The City of Ithaca is already undertaking a lighting initiative that other municipalities can participate in.)
- Keep the bulk of the language generic ("kitchen sink material" that can be repurposed as needed) but include specific examples of grant proposal ready solutions for municipalities.
- Create umbrella categories like electricity or heating and cooling and fold topics like solar or heat pumps underneath.
- Expand grant proposal ready ideas to include private-public partnerships.
- Catalog progress made since the Energy Roadmap was completed.

- Address the needs of larger systems and not just homeowners.
- Focus on new construction. County could influence state policy on building codes.
- Include community choice aggregations.

Meeting Schedule and Membership Discussion – Sharon Anderson

Katie asked the members to contemplate what model of advisory board they envision the task force following, bearing in mind the realities of limited staff support. Darby spoke about the Water Resources Council as one possible example to follow.

Action: Bob Howarth made a motion to approve the EFT switching from bimonthly to monthly meetings. Irene Weiser seconded. Discussion:

- Stick to every two months, use it as opportunity for deep-dive discussions.
- What does County need? Katie could see Energy Strategy still being addressed bimonthly, with other energy-related topics touched upon in the intervening months. It could be a great opportunity for Andrea Aguirre to get feedback on Business YES projects from members.
- Staff resources are limited. Members' time is also scarce given other commitments.
- Maintain bimonthly schedule but build in flexibility to hold more frequent meetings on an as-needed basis.
- Monthly meetings would ensure better continuity and help County influence and inform New York State energy policy, as it has done in the past.

The vote was six in favor, six opposed and one abstention. Motion failed.

Chair Anderson established a policy committee. Interested parties should contact her and Darby. Katie suggested adding a routine 10-minute policy committee report to the bimonthly agenda.

Member Announcements

- On September 6th, the Environmental Management Council is hosting a presentation with geothermal systems technology expert Jay Egg at Tompkins County Public Library (TCPL). Brian thinks he would be a valuable guest speaker for the ETF as well.
- On September 26th, there will be an innovative program at TCPL called "Farmers Can Help Cool the Planet," where farmers will share their experiences increasing soil carbon and implementing other measures to improve soil health. Sharon will send out details via Kristin McCarthy.

Comments from the Public: Round 2 – Sara Hess shared that there will be an Electric Vehicle Ride and Drive event on Saturday, September 8th, in the parking lot of Press Bay Alley (118 W. Green St.).

Adjournment –Per chair Sharon Anderson's request for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Jennifer Tavares moved to end the meeting at 11:33am. Motion carried.