

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Tuesday, July 23, 2024, 4:00-6:00PM
Final Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Guillermo Metz

Attendance

Member	Member	Staff
Andrea Aguirre	E Rebecca Evans	P Terry Carroll P
Jaden Beck	P Guillermo Metz	P Hailley Delisle P
Louise Bruce	P 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	E	

*Non-voting member

Guests: Annie Koreman, Savannah Vega

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Facilitator Guillermo Metz called the meeting to order at 4:03pm. In terms of changes to the agenda, group agreed to discuss extreme heat and County response if time permits.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft June 25, 2024, minutes were approved (motion by Martha Robertson, second by Irene Weiser) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – No public comment.

4. Member Updates – Brian reported on a letter from concerned Ithaca residents, academics, and scientists to the Town and City of Ithaca Planning Boards criticizing Cornell's proposed artificial turf fields. The letter cited concerns over potential environmental impacts, flawed information used in the assessment, and lack of public participation in the decision-making process. Sara relayed information regarding a NYSERDA large-scale thermal program opportunity notice with two funding rounds totaling \$10 million, focusing on energy-efficient building projects. Brian expressed concerns about the cost of a utility thermal energy network project, while Guillermo shared the upcoming NYSEG climate vulnerability plan public session on August 14th.

5. Chair’s Report – Sara opened her report by discussing the Sciencenter's request for a letter of support to convert their HVAC system to geothermal. Due to a tight turnaround time, she shared that she and Irene had submitted the letter as officers on behalf of the full Case Board. Sara then shifted focus to discussing the drafting of a resolution in support of the County's Green Facilities capital budget request, emphasizing its alignment with the County's strategic plan to reduce carbon emissions. The resolution was expected to highlight projected energy savings and carbon reduction data. Board members discussed key points for the resolution, with Annie providing insights on budget timelines and suggesting potential presentation opportunities. The group agreed to finalize the resolution draft by the August meeting.

Following the discussion, Sara yielded the floor to Brian, who requested a legislative update from Annie. Annie reported that while the Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality (PEEQ) committee did not meet in July, discussions surrounding environmental issues were ongoing. She emphasized the need for an update on the state budget's allocation for environmental initiatives, particularly climate-related programs. Additionally, Annie mentioned the potential for a resolution to make CaSE permanent, reflecting the board's value to the County. Brian concluded the discussion by noting a lack of progress on climate-related legislation at the state level and the need for increased public engagement to drive change.

6. Staff Report – Terry reported on the new Center of Government building, outlining the RFP process currently underway and the Planning and Sustainability Department's role in reviewing proposals. He also highlighted the department's pursuit of a \$2 million NYS consolidated funding application grant for a geothermal project and exploration of potential incentives from the Inflation Reduction Act for past initiatives. Hailley reported on the outcomes of recent RFPs for EV charging stations and induction cooktops, noting a strong response from municipalities and plans to test selected products. She also announced the renaming of the electricity emergency response plan to "Navigating Electrical Outages: Proactive Steps for Today and Tomorrow's Electrified World" with a presentation to PEEQ scheduled for August 12. Terry concluded by sharing the expanded distribution of induction cooktops to 268 units through the Healthy Neighborhoods program and expressed enthusiasm for the successful RFPs, particularly the participation of local vendors.

7. Discussion: Feedback on utility climate vulnerability plans

The group discussed the climate vulnerability and resiliency plans submitted by utilities to the NYS Public Service Commission (PSC), with a particular focus on the NYSEG plan. As the PSC is hosting a public meeting on August 14 to gather feedback, the board considered forming a working group to delve into the plans and develop talking points. Irene Weiser, Brian Eden, Sara Culotta, and Sarah Schnabel volunteered for this group, aiming to meet in the coming weeks. Concerns were raised about the plan's complexity, its failure to address flooding impacts on transmission lines, and the potential for increased ratepayer costs. The discussion also covered local control, public ownership, the need to address billing inequities, and the relationship between electrification plans and gas system decommissioning. The board recognized that municipalization and these issues warrant further discussion.

8. Discussion: CaSE Board continued discussion on strategy, shared leadership, and a common framework

Members continued their discussion on board strategy, shared leadership, and a common framework. The group had previously proposed making these topics recurring agenda items to assess progress and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, it was suggested to invite County legislators and other stakeholders, including municipal officials, the Chamber of Commerce, and business leaders, to attend meetings and participate in the NYSEG climate vulnerability plan working group. Sara expressed her appreciation for the meeting's focus on discussion rather than presentations, allowing for deeper engagement. She valued the interaction with County staff and found the meeting productive and relevant. Jaden noted her interest in understanding the impact of the group's resolutions, as follow-up

on outcomes seemed unclear. In closing, it was suggested that while the core topics should remain on the agenda, extensive updates or in-depth discussions might not be necessary every month.

9. Discussion: Set up a working group for All-Electric Building Act

Brian informed the group that the Building Code Council is holding a meeting on Energy Code 3.0. The council consists of 17 members, including industry representatives, technical experts, and six elected officials. A discussion ensued about the possibility of the County becoming a member of the Building Code Council. It was clarified that there is only one available seat for a County representative. The group questioned whether a County advisory board member could fill this role and if the County's lack of land use authority would be a factor. Brian will follow up with staff to gather more information.

Resiliency Center Working Group Discussion

Irene led a discussion on cooling centers, following up on concerns raised last month. She shared responses from staff regarding the County's role in communicating cooling center information and the timeline for potential funding through the new Hazard Mitigation Plan. She explained that the Department of Emergency Response (DoER) is responsible for disseminating cooling center information, while funding for additional cooling centers may be available through the new Hazard Mitigation Plan, but it won't be finalized until October 2026. Guillermo mentioned potential funding opportunities through climate smart communities grants. Annie outlined initial steps she'd taken to address the issue, including reaching out to the Shawna Black, chair of the Health and Human Services legislative committee, and the Department of Social Services, to leverage their existing work with vulnerable populations. Other ideas include exploring partnerships with the County Office for the Aging and Department of Veterans Affairs and gathering information on current efforts related to cooling centers. Rebecca highlighted potential funding sources through FEMA and state grants related to extreme heat and air quality and asked if DoER conducted any training with local agencies to prepare existing facilities as cooling centers. Guillermo emphasized the need for improved inter-agency coordination and data on heat-related emergency room visits. Irene proposed the creation of a working group to address the issue, clarifying that CaSE wouldn't lead it but would advocate for its creation with the Legislature.

10. Meeting Wrap-up

Rebecca shared that the Ithaca City School District passed their first climate resolution and is now preparing to write a Climate Action Plan. Sara expressed gratitude to Guillermo for facilitating the meeting, acknowledging the lively discussion. Guillermo credited Danielle for setting up the meeting and thanked Kristin for her assistance, as always.

11. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:02pm.