

TOMPKINS COUNTY Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board
Tuesday, June 25, 2024, 4:00-6:00PM
Final Minutes
Meeting Facilitator: Brian Eden

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 E
Sara Culotta	P Martha Robertson	P
Veronica Pillar*	P Sarah Schnabel	A
Brian Eden	P Irene Weiser	P
Danielle Eiseman	E	

*Non-voting member

Guests: Ingrid Zabel

1. Call to Order/Agenda Review – Facilitator Brian Eden called the meeting to order at 4:03pm. No changes to the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes – The draft May 28, 2024, minutes were approved (motion by Martha Robertson, second by Irene Weiser) as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment – Ingrid Zabel commented on establishing a resilience hub at the Paleontological Research Institution, with a focus on extreme weather and climate change education, and a goal to convert the Museum of the Earth into a cooling center. A question was asked about the purpose of the County’s Community Justice Center’s resource hubs. Veronica clarified that the community resource hub is not focused on climate resilience but on connecting people to social services.

4. Member Updates – Irene clarified details about her agenda item proposing a working group to address cooling center capacity. Rebecca then mentioned Cornell’s expertise in resilience hub planning, highlighting their blueprint that uses Ithaca as a case study. Brian shifted the focus to the recently concluded state legislative session, detailing the impact of the stalled NYC congestion pricing talks on climate bills. Group discussed passage of Climate Superfund bill, governor’s potential approval, and ongoing lobbying efforts. Finally, Sara shared news of a design cost-share program for large-scale thermal districts.

5. Chair’s Report – Sara reported that there was no pressing board business to discuss. She expressed her gratitude to Martha, Jaden, and others who had kept things moving throughout the month. Sara then drew attention to Tompkins County’s recently announced Strategic Operations Plan, for which CaSE provided input during a consultant-facilitated focus group that included Sara, CJ Randall (Town of Lansing planner), and Cynthia Brock (City of Ithaca councilperson). The plan outlines five overarching goals: health and safety, organizational excellence, equitable service delivery, economic opportunity and quality of life, and climate change mitigation and resiliency. She noted that each goal has

corresponding objectives and performance measures, providing context for the board's work. [The plan is available at https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/2024-06/Tompkins_Strategic%20Plan_06.07.24.pdf](https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/2024-06/Tompkins_Strategic%20Plan_06.07.24.pdf).

6. Staff Report – Terry presented on the County's new solar-powered EV ARC units with battery backup for emergency power. Funded by a grant, these \$60,000 units will be deployed at key facilities and offer data tracking for usage patterns. He also reported on progress with the Green Facilities Project's Phase 2 design, the Center of Government project, and the 2024 draft budget. Group discussed timing of a CasE Board resolution supporting the Green Facilities Project. Hailley provided updates on the EV Charging as a Service RfP and Clean Energy Communities.

7. Report/Discussion: Planning & Evaluation Committee Survey Results – *Jaden Beck*

Jaden led a discussion on the Planning & Evaluation Committee's survey results, which assessed the board's purpose, effectiveness, and relationship with the County Legislature. Beck presented the findings, including a 6/10 self-reported effectiveness score from board members. The discussion highlighted the need for greater collaboration with the Legislature on energy issues and improved communication. Strategies to enhance the board's effectiveness included dedicating time at future meetings, encouraging member participation in legislative meetings, and fostering communication with additional legislators. The importance of staff involvement was also acknowledged. Louise noted the interesting connections between Jaden's feedback on rotating facilitation and ownership of meetings, and the desire for a narrative arc throughout the calendar year, suggesting that the board explore models that balance individuality and shared leadership while establishing a common framework.

8. Discussion: Formation of Cooling Center Working Group – *Irene Weiser*

Members discussed establishing a working group focused on Tompkins County's cooling centers. It was suggested that representatives from the County's Whole Health and Emergency Response Departments be invited to a future board meeting to provide information. Some individuals expressed a desire for more details on existing cooling centers, including locations, resources, and communication plans. The group agreed to seek an update on current plans and explore expanding the scope to include warming centers for year-round support. Additionally, concerns about potential electricity outages during extreme weather events were raised, and collaboration with relevant organizations like the Tompkins County Council of Governments and Human Services Coalition was suggested.

9. Report: NYSEG Long-term Gas Planning Process Update – *Irene Weiser, Terry Carroll*

Irene and Terry gave an update on NYSEG's Long-Term Gas Planning Process. They explained that NYSEG's initial plan, which relied heavily on natural gas and did not comply with climate regulations, was met with criticism from stakeholders, including Tompkins County. Stakeholders pointed out flaws in the plan's assumptions and urged the Public Service Commission (PSC) to reject it. An independent report by Charles River Associates further highlighted these issues. Despite stakeholder recommendations for alternative scenarios and a revised process, NYSEG's final report remained largely unchanged. Irene expressed disappointment that their proposed solutions were not addressed, and Terry emphasized the ineffectiveness of the current planning process. The PSC is currently reviewing comments and will decide on the future of the plan. The outcome is uncertain, especially considering

recent changes at the PSC and a lack of precedent for these plans. Other utilities' long-term gas plans are reportedly facing similar criticisms.

10. Presentation: Draft Electricity Emergency Response Plan – Hailley Delisle

Hailley presented a draft of the Tompkins County Electricity Emergency Response Plan. Hailley began with background information explaining the purpose of the plan, its goals, and trends in both electrification and outages. She then presented data on the number, duration, and causes of outages experienced in Tompkins County over the past three years. The proposed actions in the plan focus on two key areas: reducing the impact of outages and reducing their likelihood. Examples of actions to lessen the impact include establishing designated resilience hubs and creating a network of phone charging stations during emergencies. To reduce the frequency of outages, Hailley suggested working with major electricity consumers to manage demand and participating in NYSEG rate cases to advocate for improvements. The group discussion following the presentation centered on concerns regarding available resources, funding, and prioritizing actions. The challenges of vegetation management and the increasing impact of extreme weather events on outages were also acknowledged.

11. Meeting Wrap-up

Brian thanked everyone for attending and reminded them to submit ideas for next month's meeting in the agenda item request form.

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