

**TOMPKINS COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
MINUTES
December 28, 2006**

Present: D. Austic-T. Ulysses, D. Barber-T. Caroline, G. Beavers-T. Danby, R. Dietrich-T. Danby, H. Engman-T. Ithaca, S. Farkas-T. Lansing, T. Joseph-County Legis, G. Morey-T. Groton, C. Peterson-City of Ithaca, M. Robertson-County Legis, S. Trumbull-T. Dryden, C. Valentino, T. Ithaca, S. Whicher-County Admin, M. Lynch-County Admin.

Meeting called to order at 3:05 PM.

Motion: Accept last month's meeting minutes with corrections.
Made by: D. Austic
Second: S. Trumbull
Carried

Cooperative Efforts on Deer Control:

A resolution from Cayuga Heights regarding this organization's effort to work together on deer management problems was circulated for membership review. The suggestion was that other members of TCCOG might consider using this or a similar resolution for their municipality. TCCOG would only facilitate and not necessarily take action. A discussion followed:

Areas of agreement:

- 1) Deer cross municipal boundaries,
- 2) There is a problem with overpopulation, and
- 3) Deer do damage to property

Possible problems:

- 1) Convincing municipalities to attach a budget line to finance deer management.
- 2) How would this organization proceed?
- 3) Are we the proper venue?
- 4) Can we proceed without consultation with the State?

A couple of months ago there were presentations on deer management regarding reducing deer population by various methods (population control, culling, increase licensing, extend hunting times, trapping and moving, etc.). The consensus of the membership was that no particular method would work on its own; the municipalities would have better results if they worked collaboratively; and (for an effective result) the efforts would have to be continued over a lengthy time period (5 years or so).

An additional option presented was a program that took place in Orchard Park, New York. The Municipalities connected landowners who were willing to let people hunt on their land with people who wanted to hunt and created a lottery for licensed bow hunters to come in and hunt the deer with landowners' permission.

Discussion issues:

- 1) Deer management may be more than this group should be taking on. One of the basic principles of getting a new organization up and running is to start with something where you can achieve success and show the value of the organization. This is a difficult and, possibly an unsolvable, issue.
- 2) Even though this organization may not be able to solve the problem, wouldn't it behoove us to look into this collectively and make sure everyone has all the information available?
- 3) Alternatives to killing should be seriously considered, but if killing is found to be the "best" alternative, it should not be a "game" or "recreational". Maybe we need a cooperative effort to change State Law.
- 4) The consensus of the group was to ask DEC to give a presentation regarding deer management. M. Robertson will look into this.

The path that was followed in this discussion was:

- 1) There has been an effort started at the County level and with Cornell.
- 2) We are looking for a resolution that would be forwarded to other municipalities who may, or may not, decide to do something with it.
- 3) The resolutions would be sent off to DEC and, hopefully, we would be able to use the County, or some other venue, to get DEC to come and talk to the interested parties about the ideas that have been quoted and see where we can go.
- 4) We can keep each other informed as to what actions can be taken to support this effort.

Cooperative Efforts on Emergency Service Staffing Shortfall:

Last meeting we had a discussion with M. Lynch and L. Shurtleff regarding Volunteer Emergency service issues. We left the meeting with several draft discussion items.

Sharing things like drivers between highway and fire departments. Work out a plan or see if there are grants available to try to do more. The notion of dual service workers sounds like it has good potential, but who pays for the drivers and what happens when you need snow removed and fires fought? Is there an alternative? Is volunteer firefighting going to last much longer?

The amount of State mandated training is a barrier. Is there a way to have people serve who don't have to go through all the training? Incentives seem to

be set up for those who already volunteer, BUT maybe it could help someone who is “on the fence” decide to volunteer. Maybe having interdepartmental specialty teams, which can travel from Municipality to Municipality or County to County, would reduce training time.

Not any one thing will solve the problem but something has to be done. Going from volunteer to paid services is a huge step. Ulysses went from no cost for volunteer ambulance service to around \$ 300,000 per year for paid services.

There is a need for a cafeteria list of incentives (recruitment tool) for people considering volunteering as firefighters or emergency medical personnel-health insurance, access to recreational program, youth services programs, retirement benefits, tax incentives, etc.

Pennsylvania combined efforts with merchants and municipalities for a community recruitment-advertising effort. Is that something we could coordinate with the cafeteria list of incentives? This may be difficult, however, because the separate fire departments/districts have their own recruitment venues. We many not have much success, but until we try we will not know how well it works.

While there are sources, such as the Fireman’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY), for information on volunteer emergency services recruitment and retention issues, it was the consensus of the group that some of the best ideas are our own. Maybe TCCOG should be the clearinghouse for information. Staff will send the fact sheet that L. Shurtleff handed out at the last meeting with statistics from the Nation level. Can we get statistics from Tompkins County, fire department by fire department? Staff will check with Lee Shurtleff.

The collective cost of workers compensation for the municipalities in this county is approximately \$ 2,000,000. At the request of D. Barber, staff of the State Workers Compensation Board is examining the matter of writing a countywide policy, which would be expected to produce some cost savings. Members were asked to identify any additional insurance carriers who might have interest in being considered to provide such a policy. The town of Caroline buys insurance for all three fire departments and the departments reimburse the town to help keep overhead costs down. It takes approximately \$5,000 just to take out each policy before you even start talking about the exposure.

The organizational structure of the Fire Disaster and EMS advisory board was another topic. This organization has been in existence for a long time but is not populated by elected officials/policy makers. As suggested by L. Shurtleff, maybe someone from municipal boards or advisory counsels should be on the board. This advisory board was established from the county charter and there would have to be a resolution passed to make changes.

TCCOG can draft a resolution for the public safety committee regarding additional membership to the current Fire Disaster and EMS advisory board.

Motion: To make a resolution to Public Safety Committee to investigate the Fire Disaster and EMS advisory board with the possibility of adding membership.

Made by: D. Austic

Second: S. Farkas

Called to question/discussion.

Discussion Topics:

1. Have ideas and plans in place before going to Public Safety Committee regarding EMS advisory board, "We would like to have so many seats added and we would like them to be designated to these things."
2. Look at what the current charges are for the board to see what gaps need filling in, if any.
3. A time frame: 3 months, 6 months, a year? How can we get this through the fastest? The February meeting already has EMS/Lee Shurtleff on the agenda.
4. If this was to go the County Public Safety committee in February, TCCOG could bring a formal written request to that group.
5. Can we get a copy of the current charter/regulations for more information about who is on the advisory board before we do a resolution? County Staff will send that out.

The motion was withdrawn but the membership felt that something needed to go to Public Safety as a heads up regarding what we are looking at. Public Safety can have it on their agenda and then TCCOG can work on next steps.

Public Safety usually meets the 1st Thursday of the month.

S. Whicher will email L. Shurtleff for his input.

Motion: To put public safety on notice that TCCOG is looking into having changes made to the Fire Disaster and EMS advisory board.

Made by: T. Joseph

Second: C. Valentino

Carried

Staff will draft a resolution to be distributed to TCCOG members.

Concern was expressed regarding the amount of municipal staff time needs to be spent working on the proposed coordination between the County and the municipalities providing data information for the Hazard Mitigation and EMS Plan. There are 3 levels of groups handling this effort.

- 1) Emergency Communication Review and Oversight Committee (ECROC)-led by Brian Wilbur.
- 2) A Countywide group for municipalities Tompkins Comprehensive Emergency Management Planning Committee (TCMPC)-which Cheryl Nelson is chair of. Staff will establish communications between the countywide group and TCCOG, and

- 3) Shawn Martel Moore heads the County internal Emergency Management team.

SMSI Health Insurance Grant Application:

The Tompkins County grant application is a model for how the application was supposed to look like, but Tompkins County probably was not funded in the first round, we still hope the project will be funded on subsequent rounds.

Short and Long Term Goals for TCCOG:

Review of topics listed on the monthly agenda:

- 1) *Shared services agreement for Highway departments:* 4 or 5 towns are working on an agreement for this. If other municipalities are interested we can bring this to TCCOG. A copy of an "Intermunicipal Shared Service Agreement" shall be emailed to TCCOG members by staff.
- 2) *Removal of dead animals on the road, who is responsible for what where?* Future Topic.
- 3) *Shared storm water officer for MS4 Municipalities:* Small towns don't have the staffing to put this in place (storm water runoff designs). Future Topic.
- 4) *Shared arrangements with borrowed/lent heavy equipment/machinery:* Included in number 1.
- 5) *Emergency Response/Intermunicipal task force. Agreement between Towns/County/City on liability for people and equipment.* Something is already being circulated between fire departments. TCCOG is considering this with our discussions regarding Fire and EMS issues.
One related issue discussed at this meeting was emergency power sources. S. Whicher reported that the County plans to purchase up to 3 portable generators and install sub-panels in their building for emergency use. The logic behind this approach is that: purchasing a generator for each building at the County would be very expensive; an emergency does not generally hit a large area; sub-panels are less expensive than generators; and portable generators can be attached to sub-panels at emergency sites. Positive feedback was generated by this idea. There were concerns about standardizing specifications for sub-panels and generators for a collaborative, countywide effort during an emergency. S. Whicher will supply specifications for the County sub-panels and generators to the other municipalities for their review.
- 6) *When developing Emergency management plans, how do you manage your fuel resources? Discuss the possibility of a fuel depot with Cornell, County and local municipalities. Alternative fuel depot fleet management regarding greenhouse gas emissions.* Future Topic.
- 7) *Deer management.* TCCOG is visiting this issue now.
- 8) *Coordinating efforts for:*

- a. *Affordable housing and planning.* TCCOG members are currently in attendance at meetings regarding this issue.
 - b. *Communications system.* This is being looked into by TCCOG in combination with EMS issues.
 - c. *Data Sharing.* Future Topic.
- 9) *Use this group to work with the new President of Cornell for support to the community.* Several members of TCCOG are in meetings with Cornell discussing several community issues. Cornell is willing to work with TCCOG but not be a member. There needs to be a progressive discussion on shared equipment/services with Cornell and Ithaca College- it could be a large boost for the community. TCCOG needs to devote a meeting to issues to discuss with Cornell and possible steps to be taken. Then invite Cornell to a meeting and speak with a unified voice about issues we could work on together. We also need to let Cornell know that TCCOG supports Cornell's community efforts. Affordable housing is very important. Maybe Cornell could assist with sewer issues, support costs, banks and mortgages.
- 10) Added to the list 12/28/06-*Reorganization of the recreation partnership.* *The orientation meeting will be in January.* They are having difficulty getting a quorum. They really need to hear from officials from around the County as to what the needs are and what the reasons are for not getting the quorum. Future Topic. (Staff will email TCCOG members when we know the meeting date.)

Housekeeping:

Press release: The press release was fine. We will need to get that to the media approximately one week before the meeting.

The next City of Ithaca Housing meeting will be held on Friday, January 5th at 10am.

An agenda item for the next meeting is protecting the communications system. County Attorney J. Wood wrote a local regarding this issue. Staff will send a copy to TCCOG members for review before the next meeting.

Next Meeting: January 25th, 2007. Meeting from 3:00 to 4:30 PM at Ithaca Town Hall and then a press conference/open house at 4:30 PM.