

**Tompkins County Council of Governments**  
**May 22, 2008**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Present: E. Conger-V. Groton, R. Dietrich-T. Danby, D. Austic-T. Ulysses, H. Engman-T. Ithaca, D. Barber-T. Caroline, M. Robertson-Co. Legislature, R. Dolge-T. Newfield, P. Dougherty-T. Enfield, C. Peterson-City of Ithaca, D. Makar-T. Dryden, R. Barriere-T. Enfield, M. Koplinka-Loehr-Co. Legislature, G. Morey-T. Groton, E. Thomas-T. Ulysses, M. Lynch-Co. Administration

Guests: Jackie Kippola and Paula Younger-County Administration

Meeting commenced at 3:00 p.m.

Motion: To accept the minutes of the April 24 meeting.  
Made by: H. Engman  
Second:E. Conger  
Carried unanimously

Health Benefits Update:

Ms. Kippola reported on behalf of Health Benefits Consortium Steering Committee that the contract for phase one is winding down. The Request for Proposals (RFP) for phases two and three went out. Eight proposals were received in response to the RFP. The candidates were narrowed to four by a weighted point system. The four finalists were interviewed by the steering committee and it was decided unanimously that the firm of Locey and Cahill was the best candidate for the phase two and three contract.

Ms. Kippola asked that the membership vote on the resolution disseminated prior to the meeting regarding Health Benefits Grant Phase Two and Three Consultant.

Motion: To accept the resolution for Phase Two and Three Consultant for the Health Benefits Consortium.

Made by: R. Dolge  
Second by: D. Barber

Discussion that followed:

Items that distinguished Locey and Cahill from the other candidates were:

- They do not sell insurance or work for/with an insurance company.
- They had the most experience with setting up a consortium.
- Locey and Cahill have more legal knowledge, i.e. with legal issues in Albany, working with a consortium, etc.
- Locey and Cahill also handle the Consortium with T-S-T BOCES

Carried Unanimously

Administrative Support for SPCA:

A request was made for a brief summary of TCCOG history with SPCA and the basis of this subcommittee.

In September of 2007 the SPCA came to the municipalities in Tompkins County with a 100 percent increase in fees. Municipalities were concerned that their budgets would not cover an increase of that magnitude and that services the SPCA provided were not worthy of an increase. TCCOG formed a subcommittee to:

- Explore the reasoning behind the increase with the SPCA,
- Investigate Agriculture and Markets (Ag & Markets) Laws as they pertain to animal control, and

- Research the possibility of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to cover animal control for municipalities in Tompkins County.

The committee met with Ag & Markets and SPCA representatives; there was extensive discussion on this topic at special and regular TCCOG meetings; elected officials, board members and clerks of the municipalities were surveyed; and alternate organizations to supply the SPCA services were sought.

Highlights of the information garnered by the subcommittee are as follows:

- Improved communication with the SPCA.
- A better breakdown of budget information from the SPCA.
- Further negotiation with the SPCA regarding fees.
- A greater knowledge of Ag & Markets requirements.
- A better understanding of what is required by law for animal control and what the SPCA provides as a “No-kill” shelter.
- Services need to improve.
- The County will cover feline control for the all County municipalities.
- Enumeration needs to be updated and kept current.
- A revised SPCA contract for one year, with fees lower than the 100 percent proposed increase, was signed by most Municipalities at the end of 2007 as a stopgap measure.

Early in 2008 Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Engman graciously agreed to continue the work on dog control for TCCOG.

Mr. Dietrich shared his concerns regarding administrative support for the SPCA subcommittee. The members working on the SPCA subcommittee were concerned with the way the removal of administrative support was handled. The support was there one day, then there was an email stating that no more support would be provided. Mr. Dietrich felt that this was not how we should do business. If there is going to be a change we need to bring it back to the table, discuss it, and determine alternatives. The work with the SPCA is extensive and Mr. Dietrich thought he would have administrative support when he signed on for this project. The timing was bad, support was removed when he was scheduled to meet and begin working with the clerks. Mr. Dietrich had to amass information he felt Administration had access to and it would have made his job easier if information could have been disseminated from Administration. He felt there should be assistance from Administration for distributing information.

County Administrator, Steve Whicher was not available at this meeting, however, he has been briefed on this issue.

Ms. Robertson commented that when the Council of Governments first started Legislation and Administration offered support for minutes and to set up meetings because they understood that support was a necessary resource. Administrative support is provided for the SMSI Health Benefits Grant because it involves TCCOG as a whole and the County is the lead agency. The dog control issue, however, involves some of the towns and not the County. There was no malice intended when administrative support was withdrawn from the dog control subcommittee, it is basically an issue of limited staff.

Mr. Barber observed that the county was originally involved with the SPCA project because we were trying to incorporate the dogs and the cats. Since then the County has taken over the cat issue. Mr. Barber did not get the impression that the County was assisting the towns with the staff support. Also, the County did not offer support for all venues that TCCOG would undertake.

Paula Younger, Deputy County Administrator explained that there are two support staff at Administration: One is an Executive Administrative position, which also covers the entire County budget process, and the other is general support. These two positions answer to six people in Administration, fifteen County Legislators and twenty-seven Department Heads. According to data compiled at Administration, one third of the general support position is currently being utilized for TCCOG: 23% meeting support and 9% SMSI Health Benefits support.

Mr. Dietrich feels that we need clarification of what support Administration is offering TCCOG. This item should be tabled for discussion when Mr. Whicher is available. A limited support resource is an

issue for the TCCOG: where do we get administrative support if not from the County? What is available at the Town and Village level?

### SPCA/Animal Control:

Mr. Dietrich and Abigail Smith, from the SPCA, met with the municipal clerks. The clerks would appreciate receiving the same information as the TCCOG members regarding dog control. Mr. Dietrich feels that this meeting was informative. Ms. Smith of the SPCA has agreed to be the contact person and coordinator of the information between Clerks and the SPCA. Minutes were taken at the meeting and will be disseminated to the clerks. The clerks asked Ms. Smith if the SPCA could reconfigure its budget into a similar format to what the towns use and she agreed. Mr. Dietrich should have additional information for the July TCCOG meeting.

Mr. Barber reiterated that there are three parts to the dog control contract.

1. Enumeration,
2. Enforcement and Licensing
3. Impoundment

Anyone of those parts could be broken out for a Request For Qualifications.

The clerks will be able to supply the information licensing for a contract or an RFQ. We should be defining the process not defining the outcome.

Mr. Dietrich was looking for clarification as to what was wanted from him, what he should be looking for. Mr. Engman came away from the last meeting with the same impression as Mr. Dietrich that we were negotiating with the SPCA. Mr. Engman feels that an RFQ is wishful thinking. There is not an entity in this area to provide the services that the SPCA is providing.

Key points discussed:

- We are looking for information for a RFQ.
- We need to identify the outcomes that the municipalities are looking for.
- Enumeration: we need to decide collectively if we want it done every year or every three years, etc.
- Impoundment: we are asking for minimum requirements.
- Enforcement and licensing: we need an interaction with our clerks and the service provider. This will be the most difficult aspect because animal control laws vary at the municipal level.
- We need to find out if there is anyone out there who can provide the services at a lower amount, which would be best for the taxpayers.
- We need to define what we want.
- We are revisiting everything that was in the last meeting minutes. The request at the last meeting was for the subcommittee to present a resolution to the membership for vote.

There was a proposal that Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Engman will compile a resolution that determines which way we go with this: ie: negotiations with the SPCA to cover dog control for the County; or researching/preparing RFQ(s) to investigate entities in or around the County that could cover what the SPCA is currently doing at a decrease in cost to the taxpayers.

At the end of the meeting a special SPCA meeting was scheduled to discuss the purpose of a resolution to bring back to the next TCCOG meeting.

### Cooperative Extension:

Mr. Austic met with Dick Coogan from Cooperative Extension to discuss Cooperative Extension offering and/or coordinating training efforts for municipal Board members within the County to meet State requirements. Trainings are offered through several venues and this could offer a reliable, consistent, easy access to mandatory trainings. Cooperative Extension will come to the next meeting to discuss the types

of trainings we are looking for and explain what they have to offer. Members need to ask their planning boards what trainings they would like to see offered and send that information to Mr. Austic prior to the June 26 TCCOG meeting.

Complete the Review of the “Future Topics List”:

**Remove the Waste Haulers item from the list, we have covered that and the State is working on it.**

- When doing Emergency management, 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 re: greenhouse gas emissions. (C. Peterson 9/28/06) **Leave this on the list and break it down into two parts:**
  1. When doing Emergency Management, how are fuel resources managed?
  2. Discuss the possibility of a fuel depot with Cornell, County and local municipalities. Research an alternative fuel depot and fleet management re: greenhouse gas emissions.

**There could be shared services funding and other incentives for this. There are entities that are working on this already-meetings at Cornell.**

- Deer management (M. Robertson 9/28/06) **Remove from the list.**
- Coordinating efforts for:
  - a. Affordable housing and planning. (C. Peterson & D. Austic) **Keep H. Engman has connections with a group researching affordable housing and planning who he feels has done some remarkable things, and he will contact them to ask if they could do a presentation to TCCOG, possibly in July.**
  - b. Communications system. **Remove from the list.**
  - c. Data Sharing. **Keep. Is this the Court thing? (What is this in regards to? Ask S. Whicher)**

Use this group to work with the new President of Cornell for support to the community. (C. Valentino)  
**Remove from the list.**

Motion: To Adjourn the meeting at 4:20 pm  
Made by: D. Makar  
Seconded: E. Conger  
Carried unanimously  
Next meeting 6/26