

**Tompkins County Council of Governments
November 19, 2009
Scott Heyman Conference Room
3 p.m.**

Members Present:

T/Caroline – D. Barber	V/Cayuga Heights – J Gilmore
T/Danby – R. Dietrich	V/Dryden C. Becker
T/Dryden – M. Sumner	V/Lansing – D. Hartill
T/Ulysses – E. Thomas	V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke
T/Newfield – R. Driscoll	C/Ithaca – C. Peterson
	Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson

Municipalities Not in Attendance: T/Lansing, T/Enfield, V/Freeville, T/Groton, T/Ithaca, V/Groton

Guests: J. Mareane, County Administration; M. Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Legislature; D. Frongillo, T/Caroline; S. Shackford, Ithaca Journal; B. Chedzoy, Schuyler County Cooperative Extension; S. Anderson, Cornell Cooperative Extension (Ithaca)

Staff: M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Call to Order

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Review of Agenda

It was agreed by consensus to add an update on dog control to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes: October 22, 2009

It was MOVED by Ms. Peterson (C/Ithaca), seconded by Ms. Robertson (Co./Tompkins), and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2009, meeting as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Gas Drilling

Mr. Barber said in addition to the public hearing scheduled tonight on the dSGEIS there are many other activities going on across the State that relate to the issue of gas drilling. He introduced Brett Chedzoy, a Forester in Schuyler County who spoke of natural gas drilling and the issues that local governments are dealing with.

Mr. Chedzoy spoke of the Energy Task Force that has been meeting over the last few months in Schuyler County and has information available on the website: www.schuylerenergy.org. Mr. Chedzoy distributed information on “Planning for Landscape-scale Energy Development Projects in Schuyler County”. He said the Schuyler County Council of Governments asked the County Executive to convene a work group that would focus on natural gas issues and how communities in Schuyler County could be impacted.

Mr. Chedzoy spoke of why the Task Force was formed and said they believe it is difficult for County Legislators and the largely volunteer town board members to keep up with all of the changes in

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that relate to this. Mr. Chedzoy distributed information containing a number of tools and strategies they will be using to make recommendations to the Schuyler County Council of Governments.

Mr. Chedzoy said the scope of the group was expanded and it is now called the Task Force on Energy Development because they believe a lot of the work they will be doing can also serve them for other up and coming projects such as wind farms. He noted Tioga County was one of the first counties to form a special group to investigate natural gas; this group began meeting in March and is called T.I.N.G. (Tioga Investigates Natural Gas). He said the Schuyler County Task Force has approximately 23 members and has five subcommittees (executive committee, environmental issues committee, public health and safety committee, roads and infrastructure committee, and a socio-economic issues committee).

Mr. Chedzoy said the goal of the Task Force is to present recommendations to the Schuyler County Council of Governments in mid-January. He said an analysis of all the issues has been done and they are focusing in on those issues they feel will have the greatest impact and are of the most imminent concern so that they can come up with recommendations in a short timeframe to address them as quickly as possible. He said the DEC will be concluding its process soon and it is very possible the industry will be coming into Tompkins, Schuyler, and other surrounding counties and begin to develop some of their leases. He said the industry has found that Marcellus Shale, a term many had never heard of before last May, has become a very viable formation and their expectations have consistently been exceeded. Even though this area is not as prime of a location as Susquehanna, Bradford, and Wayne Counties, he believes it would be unrealistic to think that the companies won't eventually move into this area.

Ms. Nottke asked if he was aware of any efforts underway to improve or change the process of hydrofracking. Mr. Chedzoy said there is a new technology being used by the industry called "gas fracking" in which other things are being used rather than water. He said there seems to be some advantages to that and he recently toured the Fortuna operation in Troy Pennsylvania. He said they are looking for a better alternative to hydrofracking which he believes is the main source of many of the environmental concerns that have been brought forward.

Mr. Barber asked what the Task Force deliverables would that are going to be presented to the SCCOG (Schuyler County Council of Governments) in May. Mr. Chedzoy said they would likely provide content for a local law that would be later referred by the County Legislature to the Schuyler County Attorney. They will be trying to do things that will ease the burden as much as possible on the towns and the County so they don't have to invest large amounts of hours and legal fees into this.

Ms. Robertson said the idea of using oil to frack the wells to get natural gas sounds worse instead of better than using water. She said one problem that exists is the differences in opinions on this issue by lawyers. Mr. Chedzoy this is a concern that was also expressed by TING but noted he does not believe all of the solutions lie in coming up with local laws and ordinances or other legally crafted documents. He announced a summit being held at the Owego Treadway Inn in Owego that will include a track on municipal issues. He stressed the importance of collaboration between towns and counties and said a legal fund is being established but there very few precedents in case law.

Mr. Chedzoy spoke of the importance in counties and towns sharing information and keeping the lines of communication open on this complicated issue that will impact all communities. He also spoke of involving the industry and said if ideas that are suggested are not found to be viable to the industry they will not give them consideration. He said he has dealt with Fortuna extensively and they are usually very willing to give tours and answer questions and he would recommend members have dialogue with them. He will let members know if he becomes aware of any scheduled Fortuna tours but doesn't expect one to be scheduled until Spring.

Ms. Anderson said there are many groups that have gas drilling committees in Tompkins County, such as the Water Resources Council, Environmental Management Council, and Cooperative Extension. She said she would be interested in on possible opportunities to share information.

Public Hearing on Gas Drilling dSGEIS

At this time there was discussion of the format of the public hearing this evening at the State Theatre. Ms. Robertson said all speakers would be required to sign up and would be given a three-minute time limit to comment. The hearing will begin at 7 p.m. with doors being open at 6 p.m. Mr. Barber reminded members to keep focus on directing key comments to the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Ms. Robertson said a stenographer will be present and will prepare a full transcript of the hearing to be submitted to the Department of Environmental Conservation. She also announced there will be a rally on the Commons prior to the hearing at 4:30 p.m. that is being sponsored by Shaleshock.

Natural Gas Drilling Subcommittee Update

Mr. Barber reported the next meeting will be November 23rd in the Courthouse Conference Room. They are working on discussing road issues, legislative direction, municipalities creating lists of critical environmental areas, and possibly doing a moratoria. Jay Franklin, Director of Assessment, will be in attendance at that meeting to discuss property values and the assessment process for natural gas.

Update on Health Insurance Consortium

Mr. Barber said the Health Insurance Consortium is moving forward with the New York State Insurance Department. He spoke of a problem that they are working through that involves union representation on the Consortium.

Update on Cell Towers

Ms. Robertson said the Request for Proposals for legal services has been sent out.

Update on Dog Control

Mr. Barber said a contract has been negotiated with the SPCA for specifically working with dogs and contracts have been sent out to municipalities with the exception of the City.

Update on Emergency Services

Mr. Dietrich deferred a report to the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next Council meeting is scheduled for December 17th at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office