

RESOLUTION NO. 65 – ADOPTION OF CLIMATE-SMART COMMUNITIES PLEDGE

MOVED by Ms. Mackesey, seconded by Ms. Robertson.

WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is encouraging the State's municipalities to sign on to a "climate-smart communities" pledge by Earth Day (April 22, 2009), and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County has already undertaken many of the recommended climate-smart activities, including joining ICLEI (the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) in 2001, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County Legislature believes that climate change poses a real and increasing threat to our local and global environments, and controlling greenhouse-gas emissions, which are primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels, is of paramount importance, and

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change will endanger infrastructure, economy, and livelihoods; harm farms, orchards, and ecological communities, including native fish and wildlife populations; spread invasive species and exotic diseases; reduce drinking water supplies and recreational opportunities; and pose health threats to citizens, and

WHEREAS, we believe that our response to climate change provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to save money, and to build livable, energy-independent and secure communities, vibrant innovative economies, healthy and safe schools, and resilient infrastructures, and

WHEREAS, we believe the scale of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions required for climate stabilization will require sustained and substantial efforts, and

WHEREAS, we believe that even if emissions were dramatically reduced today, communities would still be required to adapt to the effects of climate change and peak oil for decades to come, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, That Tompkins County, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate has and will:

1. Pledge to Combat Climate Change by Becoming a Climate Smart Community

Tompkins County has conducted a community-wide planning process to develop and adopt an amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan addressing Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (EGGE). The plan element, adopted in December 2008, sets at least an 80% reduction goal by 2050 and 10% reduction goal within five years. Tompkins County stands ready to work cooperatively with task forces in neighboring communities to ensure that efforts complement and reinforce one another. As an official signal of commitment and for access to technical resources, Tompkins County has been a member of ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability - Climate Protection campaign since 2001.

2. Set Goals, Inventory Emissions, Move to Action

Tompkins County has gathered data, inventoried GHG gas emissions, and established baselines for local government operations and community sectors. We have developed quantifiable interim GHG emission targets consistent with emission reduction goals and are in the process of proposing a schedule and financing strategy to meet them. Stakeholder and public input has been encouraged in the development of an action plan. Tompkins County

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will report emissions to The Climate Registry (TCR), which has developed a standardized method for reporting emissions inventories; and use ICLEI and TCR's tools to track and evaluate progress. A priority action of the EGGE element is to work with local municipalities, school districts, businesses, institutions of higher education, and non-profits to develop a 5-year strategy to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% of 2008 emissions levels, including a detailed plan for County government to achieve that same target.

3. Decrease Energy Demand for Local Government Operations

In 2002 Tompkins County government, as part of our ICLEI commitment, adopted a 2008 goal of a 20% reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from 1998 levels and in 2008, with the adoption of the Energy Element of our Comprehensive Plan, established a goal of a 10% reduction from 2008 levels within five years and at least an 80% reduction by 2050.

A. Existing Public Facilities. Tompkins County has inventoried current government building electricity usage and identified opportunities for conservation and efficiency retrofits. We obtained energy assessments from Johnson Controls pursuant to an Energy Efficiency Performance Contract. We have implemented phase one and are actively considering additional actions such as purchasing energy-efficient equipment and appliances, such as Energy Star®; improving lighting, heating, and cooling efficiency; setting thermostats for maximum energy conservation; and decreasing plug load from office equipment.

B. New Public Buildings. The Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element of the County Comprehensive Plan calls for adopting formal County government policies for achieving at least minimum U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards (LEED Silver) for all new County government buildings.

C. Infrastructure. Tompkins County will incorporate energy efficient technologies and operations and maintenance practices into - its outdoor lighting and traffic signals, and road maintenance operations, and will encourage its constituent municipalities to act similarly, including in their water and wastewater treatment facilities.

D. Vehicle Fleet and Commuting. Tompkins County will improve the average fuel efficiency of local government fleet vehicles; discourage vehicle idling and encourage bicycling, car-pooling and public transit for employees; consider reducing the number of vehicles, converting fleet vehicles to sustainable alternative fuels, and using electric vehicles where possible. To date Tompkins County has purchased B20 bio-diesel for Highway Division vehicles, is evaluating the use of CNG or propane in other vehicles, provides bus passes for commuting to county employees, and is developing a "green fleet" policy for all county vehicles.

4. Encourage Renewable Energy for Local Government Operations

Tompkins County will supply as much of the local government's power, heat and hot water needs as possible from solar, wind, geothermal and small hydro through purchase or direct generation. Tompkins County's installation of photovoltaics on the Public Library in 2001 was one of the first such installations by a municipality in New York State and Tompkins County has purchased a portion of its electrical energy from wind since 2007.

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5. Realize Benefits of Recycling and Other Climate Smart Solid Waste Management Practices

Tompkins County has expanded the “reduce, reuse and recycle” approach to waste management in local government operations and in the whole community. We are reducing the amount of solid waste generated by: promoting backyard, municipal, school, institutional and commercial composting, implementing volume-based pricing and educating residents on how to prevent waste. We have promoted reuse by assisting in the establishment of the not-for-profit Tompkins County Reuse Center, organizing community-wide yard sales, and providing opportunities for drop-off or trade of reusable goods. We provide recycling receptacles in local government buildings and outdoor spaces, encourage duplex printing in government offices and composting food scraps and green waste, and have adopted a comprehensive green purchasing program. The County is developing a strategy to divert 75% of the community waste stream from landfills by 2015 as provided for in the EGGE element.

6. Promote Climate Protection through Community Land-Use Planning

Tompkins County is combating climate change by encouraging low-emissions development that is resilient to climatic changes. The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan includes provisions to combat climate change; reduce sprawl; preserve and protect open space, biodiversity, and water supplies; promote compact, transit-oriented, bikeable and walkable communities; promote infill development; minimize new development in floodplains; maintain or establish healthy community forests; and promote best forest management practices and encourage tree planting, especially along waterways, to increase shading, to hold soil, and to absorb carbon dioxide.

7. Plan for Adaptation to Unavoidable Climate Change

Tompkins County will evaluate risks from unavoidable climate change, set adaptation goals and plan for adaptation including: identifying climate change impacts (such as flooding, drought, more powerful storms, changed growing seasons, and extreme temperatures) that could affect the community; identifying areas such as water supply and sewer infrastructure that may be at risk due to future changes in climate; factor environmental risks into long-term investments and decision-making; and, execute climate change adaptation and preparedness measures through local government planning, development and operations, giving priority to the highest risk areas. A priority action of the EGGE element is to develop an adaptation plan to help prepare the community for impacts of global climate change and peak oil.

8. Support a Green-Innovation Economy

Tompkins County will identify opportunities to incorporate climate protection, sustainability, import substitution, and environmental goods and service industries into economic development plans; encourage workforce development training and school curricula that support good jobs in the emerging green collar job sector, including renewable energy and energy efficiency, as well as climate-smart solid waste management practices; procure climate smart goods and services for local government operations and support modernizing of local and national electricity grids. A priority action of the EGGE element is to promote green business development and create green job training opportunities for the unemployed and employed workers, high-school students, and college students.

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9. Inform and Inspire the Public

Tompkins County has led and will continue to lead by example including highlighting local government commitment to reducing energy use, saving tax dollars, and adapting to changing conditions; demonstrating the benefits of energy savings, energy efficiency, and renewable energy projects; working with school districts, colleges, and universities to develop climate change curricula and programs; engaging faith-based communities in climate protection; and regularly communicating community climate-protection goals and progress to constituents. A priority action of the EGGE element is to incorporate into the *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Indicators of Success Report* metrics of change in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency improvements, and renewable energy systems installations in the community.

10. Commit to an Evolving Process

Tompkins County acknowledges that research and policy on climate protection are constantly improving and evolving and is willing to consider new ideas, commit to update plans and policies as needed, as well as compare successes, cooperate, and collaborate with neighboring communities to redirect less-effective actions and amplify positive results.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss:
COUNTY OF TOMPKINS)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of a resolution adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature on the 21st day of April, 2009.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the said Legislature at Ithaca, New York, this 22nd day of April, 2009.

Catherine Corbett, Clerk
Tompkins County Legislature