

TOMPKINS COUNTY ENERGY TASK FORCE
Thursday, April 20, 2018
Human Services Building, 320 W. MLK Jr/State St Ithaca, NY
Final Minutes

Attendance

Member		Member		Member	
Sharon Anderson	P	Bob Howarth	P	Sarah Zemanick	E
Martha Armstrong	P	Tim Mount	P		
Cliff Babson	P	Megan Pulver	P		
Fernando de Aragón	P	Martha Robertson	P	Staff	
Brian Eden	P	Brice Smith	P	Katie Borgella	P
Todd Fox	A	Jennifer Tavares	P	Kristin McCarthy	P
Nick Goldsmith	P	Irene Weiser	P	Megan McDonald	P
Curt Gooch	A	Gordon Woodcock	P		

Guests – Karim Beers, Terry Carroll, Sara Hess, Guillermo Metz, Joe Wilson

Welcome, Introductions – Chair Sharon Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Everyone introduced themselves.

Comment from the Public: Round 1 – No comments.

Approval of February 2018 minutes – Martha Robertson made a motion to approve the February 8, 2018, minutes. Irene Weiser seconded. Bob Howarth abstained. Motion carried.

Business Energy Navigator Program – Katie Borgella and Megan McDonald

- Megan McDonald shared information on the Business Energy Navigator Program and how it may initially be launched, with the understanding that it will undergo frequent evaluation and re-positioning to make sure it is being impactful.
- The County is partnering with TCAD and NYSEERDA to fund the program and connect the new energy specialist, Andrea Aguirre, with area businesses. The goal is for Andrea, who starts in early June, to better understand a business’s priorities and thus get better buy-in with the Business Energy Navigator program. Members asked for more information on the RfQ process as well as options available for specialized financial counseling for companies. The PACE 2.0 program was suggested as one source.
- Katie Borgella talked about Andrea’s professional and academic background. A highlight included her work with Verizon to equip their data centers nationwide with ground source heat pumps. Besides area companies, Andrea will reach out to municipalities to let them know about the program. Planning and Sustainability is looking for businesses open to working with the program. Members recommended Cayuga Medical Center, Guthrie Medical Group, and Cornell’s new development in East Hill as possible partners. Irene Weiser mentioned commercial realtors and “green leasing” as an area to investigate. She will send information on green leasing to Katie.

Get Your GreenBack Energy Navigator Program – Karim Beers

- Sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Get Your GreenBack Tompkins (GYGBT) campaign assists individuals in reducing their carbon footprint while saving money on energy costs. The program’s energy navigators take a personalized approach to each client’s situation and help connect them with services. Peer influence is crucial to changing people’s behaviors and attitudes about energy efficiency. The curriculum aims to give people a better sense of energy currency (what’s a kilowatt hour?) and dispel myths about the cost of renewables.

- GYGBT is working with students at Cornell Sustainable Design to build a tiny house on wheels to bring to festivals and other outreach venues. Inside would be mini centers demonstrating the different technologies available. Off season it would serve as office space for staff.
- NYSEG has given money this year for an energy navigator stipend. The goal is for the program to reach moderate and low income households within the smart meter footprint. Brice Smith cautioned that navigators should understand NYSEG's new time of use rates and their relation to solar energy systems.
- "Decision fatigue" came up as a deterrent to people making energy efficient upgrades to their homes. Consumers need concrete answers when contemplating large purchases, such as switching to air source heat pumps: when to buy it and how much will it cost?

Electric Grid and Storage – Tim Mount

- Tim Mount gave a presentation on the future of the electric grid, in particular its ability to store distributed sources of energy. Renewable energy generators, such as wind turbines and solar farms, will grow in prevalence. However, the variability of renewables, due to fluctuations in the weather, can impact generation time. Distributed storage can mitigate this tendency and flatten the daily demand for electricity from the grid, which in turn could lead to lower operational costs.
- Tim recommended that space heating/cooling by heat pumps and water heating, as well as rooftop solar panels, be coordinated with local storage (and electric vehicle charging) to minimize the cost to municipalities of buying electricity from the grid.
- Brice said that policy issues need to be kept in mind. The new Interconnectivity Rules have a section on energy storage for the first time.
- Irene mentioned that a discussion at the NY-GEO conference, which she and Brian Eden attended, focused on whether the most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gases was to switch from natural gas to ground or air source heat pumps rather than use insulation and air sealing. Cliff Babson cautioned against this line of thinking, as energy efficiency work does the most to reduce energy use and that is still critical to combating climate change.

Member Announcements

- Nick Goldsmith relayed that the second draft of the Ithaca Green Building Policy Report was adopted by the City of Ithaca Planning and Economic Development Committee. The Town of Ithaca Board and the Common Council will consider the draft next.
- Nick is working on the scope for phase 2 of the Ithaca Green Building Policy.
- Bob Howarth said that new research is showing that in the last decade global methane emissions have risen steadily. Per Bob's analysis, half of this increase in global methane emissions is tied directly to the production of shale gas, primarily in Pennsylvania.
- Irene reported that NYSEG extended the deadline for non-pipeline alternatives RfPs to May 1.
- Brian added that more than 300 people attended the NY-GEO conference, including several representatives from the utilities sector.

Comments from the Public: Round 2 –

Joe Wilson shared thoughts on the Ithaca Green Building Policy recommendations and adoption of New York State's approach to greenhouse gas emissions under SEQR. Sara Hess expressed her support for Joe's comments and thanked the group for a great meeting.

Adjournment – Vice Chair Fernando de Aragón adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:10 am.