

TOMPKINS COUNTY ENERGY TASK FORCE
Wednesday, June 8, 2017
TCPL Borg Warner Conference Room
Final Approved Minutes

Attendance

Member		Member		Member	
Sharon Anderson	P	Curt Gooch	A	Irene Weiser	P
Martha Armstrong	P	Jerry Goodenough	P	Gordon Woodcock	P
Cliff Babson	P	Bob Howarth	E	Sarah Zemanick	P
Dan Cogan	P	Sarah Kelsen	P		
Fernando de Aragón	P	Tim Mount	P	Staff	
Jerry Dietz	P	Megan Pulver	P	Katie Borgella	P
Brian Eden	P	Martha Robertson	P	Ed Marx	P
Todd Fox	P	Brice Smith	P	Kristin McCarthy	P
Nick Goldsmith	E	Jennifer Tavares	E		
P=Present, E=Excused, A=Absent					

Guests – None.

Welcome, Introductions – Ed Marx called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. The members went around the table briefly re-introducing themselves.

Comment from the Public – None.

Approval of March 29th minutes – Martha Armstrong made a motion to approve the March 2017 minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Report from Organization Committee

1) Election of Officers — The Organization Committee shared some insight into the decision-making behind their nomination.

ACTION: Martha Armstrong **moved** to recommend the election of Sharon Anderson as chair and Fernando de Aragón as vice chair of the Tompkins County Energy Task Force (ETF). Cliff Babson seconded the motion. There being no further nominations from the floor, the motion **passed unanimously**.

After the Election of the Officers, the meeting continued under the direction of the newly appointed chair, Sharon Anderson.

2) Meeting Structure - Sharon asked if someone from the Organization Committee would walk the group through their suggestions on how to structure the meetings:

- Irene Weiser reported that committee members thought the ETF should hold “focused discussions” in the months when there is no formal meeting. The topics covered at these informal sessions would be determined over time as ETF members identify areas of interest and concern.
- Attendance at these focused discussions would not be mandatory. However, all members would be welcomed. There would be no formal minute-taking, but the attendees would later report back to the entire group at the next full meeting of the task force.
- Sarah Kelsen suggested that experts (in the topic of discussion) be invited to these informal meetings, and that all invitations be funneled through the chair. Martha Robertson added that the Bylaws state the chair has permission to invite individuals. Ed advised the group to come up with list of 5-6 potential

39 guest experts and to reach out to them as soon as possible after the meetings in case of scheduling
40 challenges.

- 41 • Sarah K. and Irene emphasized the need for flexibility – for instance, certain topics may need more
42 continuity and require more meetings. A longer-term committee could also be formed to address issues
43 identified as needing more investigation.

44

45 **ACTION:** Dan Cogan **moved**, and Jerry Dietz seconded, the approval of the meeting structure proposed by the
46 Organization Committee. The motion **passed unanimously**.

47

48 **3) Review and Approval of Bylaws**

49 Katie Borgella led the discussion and review of the Bylaws for the task force that were sent out in the agenda
50 packet. Certain items were highlighted, and the floor was opened up for questions:

- 51 • Sarah Zemanick asked if members can participate in meetings remotely. Martha R. replied that
52 according to the Open Meetings Law of New York State, members are required to attend in person if
53 voting will be taking place. Irene added that she has heard video-conferencing is an option in such cases.
54 Ed noted that is unlikely that we would be arranging video-conferencing for these meetings.
- 55 • Martha R. requested that the words “written (which includes email)” be added to the sentence that
56 follows below. It can be found under Article VI, Section 3: Special Meetings (page 3) of the Bylaws:
 - 57 ○ The Chair shall be empowered to call a special meeting with written (which includes email)
58 notification at least five days in advance. The Chair shall call a meeting at the written request of
59 five voting members.
- 60 • The group agreed to make the Legislative Liaison a voting seat. Cliff Babson pointed out the task force
61 would have 21 voting members that way, ensuring there is always a tiebreaker vote. Ed asked that the
62 language in the Bylaws (Article IV, Section 1 Voting Membership) be edited accordingly.

63

64 **ACTION:** Fernando de Aragon **moved**, and Dan Cogan seconded, to approve the Bylaws with minor editorial
65 changes. The motion was **passed unanimously**.

66

67 **Staff Report: Plan for Development of Energy Strategy**

68 Katie explained that she understands that people want to start on tangible actions right away, so staff is
69 proposing developing a rolling approach to updating the Energy Strategy.

- 70 • ETF formal meetings would identify topics for focused discussion, using the 10 goals of the Energy
71 Roadmap for guidance.
- 72 • For the focused discussions, the group would review what the Energy Roadmap has to say on the topic
73 of the month. Staff would draft outcomes from these informal meetings and bring them to the full task
74 force for discussion. Further steps would include identifying:
 - 75 ○ A simple goal statement or statements to guide work on this topic
 - 76 ○ Which groups in the community are already working on these issues (e.g. Solar Tompkins, TCCPI)
 - 77 ○ What barriers need to be overcome to achieve the goal(s)
 - 78 ○ Ways to measure progress on the goal
 - 79 ○ 5-10 high-impact actions that can be taken to address these areas of concern
 - 80 ○ Ways to effectively engage the public and implement initiatives in the community
- 81 • By December 2018, the task force would have all the draft components of the energy strategy in place.
82 Next step would be to determine what are the most impactful actions to continue; identify potential
83 new actions, calculate emissions reductions and financial costs associated with the actions; and to set
84 feasible ghg reduction targets for 2025 and 2030.

85

86 Members offered various suggestions and points to consider:

87 **Tim Mount:** How will the local distribution system handle all these new demands on the grid? Avangrid and
88 Cornell are working on the Energy Smart Community to try inventive approaches. Institutional decisions are
89 being made now, and we need give input now. If we're passive, the utilities will have it go their way, which isn't
90 necessarily a good thing for the citizens of Tompkins County.

91 **Martha R.:** In terms of energy strategies, the County Legislature focuses on what's most cost effective and
92 productive. Task force should keep that in mind when developing action steps.

93 **Ed:** In developing the Energy Roadmap, we identified 10 broad actions that had to advance for our community
94 to reach its goal of an 80 percent reduction in 2008 greenhouse gas emission levels by 2050. We need to
95 determine what can we do in the next five years, as well as in the next 10, to advance those actions. Some items
96 might have a slow growth curve, and others could develop quickly depending on what new technology,
97 resources, etc., become available.

98 **Jerry Goodenough:** If we, as a County advisory board, are to formulate a more in-depth plan for moving this
99 forward, we need to create a tick-off list. We need to identify 3 action steps per topic.

100 **Sarah Z:** We can't operate in a vacuum; we need to keep tabs on what's happening at the state and federal
101 levels. Some strategies could apply to various goals (e.g., solar, wind) so we could clump them together.

102 **Brian Eden:** We need to reach out immediately to developers etc. so they know about and implement
103 sustainable solutions.

104 **Todd Fox:** As a government "outsider," he worries that in eight months nothing could happen and the group
105 would still be hashing things over. His company is very task-focused. As an entrepreneurial business owner, he
106 would identify experts by topic, give very specific goals, and delegate by small committee. He volunteered to
107 organize a working group to start tackling a specific topic.

108 **Ed:** The reality is we need to accept the limits of the structure/environment we must operate within including
109 our meeting schedule and time commitments that members have agreed to. Also, the County Legislature is the
110 ultimate decision maker. We need to focus on what do we have local authority over. We don't have the
111 bandwidth to influence everything that is going on at the State and Federal level. We can make
112 recommendations that could be considered by the legislature.

113 **Martha R.:** Echoing back to comment about finding out which groups in the community are already working on
114 specific issues, she suggested setting aside time during meetings for member announcements so everyone can
115 share news and goings-on.

116 **Gordon Woodcock:** Group should create a rubric/template with weighted criteria to prioritize which topics to
117 work on.

118

119 **What needs to be prepared for July Focused Discussion Meeting?**

- 120 • Members voted to form two working groups, one for solar energy and another for heat pumps/natural
121 gas. These two groups will prepare for the meeting in July.
- 122 • Todd will coordinate the heat pumps/natural gas working group. Other members will include Brian,
123 Martha R., and Irene.
- 124 • Sarah Z. will run the solar power working group. Brian, Gordon, Jerry G., Brice Smith, Irene, and Sarah K.
125 volunteered to join the group.
- 126 • Katie will work closely with both working groups.
- 127 • Katie will send to members the appendices from the Energy and Economic Development Task Force,
128 which include a list of action steps that could serve as possible starting points. There is also information
129 on work being done by community groups last year.

130

131 **Wrap-up: What worked well during this meeting, what didn't?**

- 132 • To encourage quieter members of the group to contribute to the discussion, Sharon suggested bringing
133 index cards to the next meeting for them to write their ideas on and submit to her.
- 134 • Fernando and many others thought Sharon did an excellent job as chair.

- 135 • In Jerry D.'s opinion, the group is still gelling and finding its own dynamic. As a business owner, he is
136 much more aligned with Todd's way of doing things.

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138 **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 am.

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140 These draft minutes will be formally considered by the ETF at its next Formal Meeting, and corrections or
141 notations will be incorporated at that time.

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143 Prepared by Kristin McCarthy, Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability Department