

Broome County Environmental Management Council

Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive • Stacy Merola, Director



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Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC) Minutes from the meeting held Thursday, February 5, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. United Way Board Room, Jensen Road, Vestal, NY

Present:

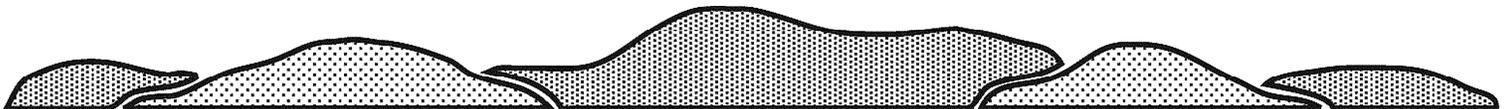
Members-at-Large: André LaClair, Bill Heaviside, Erin Heard, Karen Ciatyk, Tony Lubzanski, Mary Cronk and Julia Hoover
Student Reps: Josephine Chu (BU), Rachel Cornick (BCC)
CAC Reps: Cindy Westerman (Vestal)
Special Reps: Chip McElwee (Broome SWCD)
Legislative Reps: Ron Keibel (11th District)
Ex-Officio Reps: Bob Denz (BC Health)
Staff/Intern: Stacy Merola and Adam Robbins
Guests: Dylan Horvath and Marley Urdanick
Absent with Excuse: Ken Holmes

1. Andre **convened** the meeting at **7:11 pm**. Introductions followed. January's minutes include suggested amendments to the December 2008 minutes, which could not be adopted in January due to lack of quorum. On a motion from Bill, Seconded by Mary, minutes from December 2008 were approved as amended (see January's minutes for amendments).

Several edits were proposed for the January 2009 minutes: first section, change the word "tim" to "time"; section three, first paragraph, remove "that" preceding "ownership" and change "non-forest products" to "non-forest production." Section five, NRC Report, third sentence, change "members" to "member's; in section five, RWMC Report, strike last paragraph; and in section seven, last bullet, first sentence, strike word "under". Mary moved and Bill seconded to amend the minutes. Motion carried.

2. Privilege of the Floor/Member Items of Interest/Announcements

- Adam Robbins was introduced as the EMC's spring semester student intern. Adam is a senior at Binghamton Univ. majoring in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Environmental Planning.
- Call for entries: 2009 Joyce K.L. Smith Environmental Photography Show & Competition. Submission deadline is Wednesday, March 11. Info will be posted on the County's website as soon as electronic files are available. An opening reception will be held Wednesday, May 13 at the County Library.
- Julia announced that Dr Gay Canough, President of ETM Solar Works will be the EMC's March 5 guest speaker. Stacy left a message with BC Historian Gerry Smith, inquiring about his availability to address the EMC at a future meeting. Mary inquired if the EMC can hear a presentation about passenger rail service systems.
- Stacy circulated an informational flyer about HDTV conversion and proper disposal of TVs in BC, which can be brought to the Landfill's Household Hazardous Waste Facility. More info will be posted online. Two other disposal sites are also listed on the flyer: Eco International in Vestal and ICS Industries in Endicott. Also, on Saturday, February 7th, Olum's in Vestal will hold a free electronics collection and disposal day from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- The Center for Technology & Innovation will hold a free open house on the last Saturday afternoon of each month from 1-4 pm at the IBM Endicott History and Heritage Center, 1701 North St, Endicott. Upcoming dates include February 28 and March 28. Reservations are required one week before the open house you plan to attend. Call 607-773-0092 for details or to set up a special tour.



- Julia circulated an article of interest from AARP Magazine called “Feel-good Gifts – good for your health, the planet and your wallet”.

3. Guest Presentation

Draft Broome County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategy

In January Chip McElwee, Executive Director of the Broome County Soil & Water Conservation District, shared the draft County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategy document with the EMC’s Natural Resources Committee in preparation to finalize the Strategy for public input (see NRC January 2009 minutes for reference).

Chip circulated copies of revised the strategy, and explained that the goals of the voluntary AEM program are to protect the environment, comply with regulations, address neighbor relations, and ensure crop sustainability and vitality. He presented slides discussing the various AEM strategies implemented across the state. Broome County has had about 180 farms participate (12,000 farms in NYS participate in AEM), handling topics from initial inventory to actual implementation of strategies. The program aims to help farmers stay in business through sustainable farming practices. Not only do these programs tackle many of the backyard environmental issues, but also a lot of the programs are centered on water quality.

The AEM program creates strategic plans using a specific framework or steps going from Tier 1 - the initial inventory, future planning and potential concerns, all the way up to Tier 5, which is evaluating and monitoring the system after it has been successfully implemented in order to ensure the protection of the environment and farm. Over \$5.1 million was secured for implementing conservation practices in Broome County. Each farm is different, so in order to help each farm succeed and meet the goals of the AEM program, each farm must be analyzed thoroughly and have a program tailored to meet its needs. Meeting specific water quality standards is key to preventing contamination and from promoting effective and sustainable crop yields.

Mr. McElwee made the point that market development is just as important as efficient crop development. Without sufficient local markets that farmers can bring their goods and products to, transportation costs would be greatly increased. Improving the markets could potentially lead to an increase in the number of farms. Josephine asked about local farmers markets and their role in the growing need for improved markets. The County hired consultants to study the feasibility of having a permanent, year-round farmer’s market. Stacy also noted that the Susquehanna Heritage Area Plan, which was set up by NYS to develop cultural heritage areas to support historic preservation, is undergoing a revision. The consultants are looking locally at farms, sustainable agriculture, and other things that could perhaps enhance/promote our Heritage Area as being strong and wealthy in locally grown materials.

Chip went onto discuss water quality and nutrient discharges into the Chesapeake Bay. The EPA really commends farmers who hold the AEM logo as it demonstrates farmers’ commitment to protecting environmental quality. Questions were raised about timber harvesting and factory farms. Discussion ensued. Tony Lubzanski raised the point of how natural gas drilling could affect some farms in the area and how contamination will be handled. Discussion ensued. Question was raised about septic system on farmsteads. Chip made the note that the Health Department, and the Soil and Water Conservation department deal with issues such as septic clean up and mitigation through a regulatory standpoint.

Chip distributed his business card and one for the Farm Friendly Broome County website. Chip was thanked for his time.

4. Council skipped the break

5. Committee Reports

Natural Resources Committee (NRC) - Bill reported that the NRC met January 27; two new guests were present. Chip submitted the '09-'14 AEM Strategy. The Committee looked again at county-wide recommendations related to the BC Open Space Plan. Bill attended the public hearing on the NYS Open Space Plan revision on January 21.

The NRC also reviewed the draft letter in opposition to allowing motorized vehicles in Chenango Valley State Park. The draft was brought before EMC in January, but due to lack of quorum, the letter could not move to the floor for adoption. The letter came before NRC in January, and a few edits were suggested and approved for EMC's consideration. **ACTION ITEM #1: Letter to NYSPRHP opposing use of any motorized vehicles for recreational purposes in Chenango Valley State Park.** Stacy stated that the State's Resource Management Group must approve the CVSP's "plan" before it can go forward. After further discussion and minor edits, on a motion from Mary, seconded by Bill, the letter was approved for sending as amended by NRC. Motion carried.

NRC discussed the proposed 2009-2010 state budget, the status of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which is being used to offset budget losses, and support for an expanded bottle bill with unclaimed nickels going to support the EPF. The NRC recommends that EMC support the bottle bill expansion, especially since a Real Estate Transfer Tax is proposed for reallocation out of the EPF to offset budget losses elsewhere. Discussion ensued. The Recycling & Waste Management Committee also supports the bottle bill expansion, but would like to see compromise language that EMC supported in the past. Also, the idea of supporting a 50/50 compromise where 50% of the unclaimed nickels from recycled bottles would go back to the retailer and 50% would go to the EPF. **ACTION ITEM #2: Letter supporting the Governor's Executive Budget provision of an expanded bottle bill for revenue generation to help maintain the state's EPF.** After minor edits were deliberated (cc list and changing header to reflect compromise – not an all or nothing approach), Cindy moved and Julia seconded to accept amendments as discussed. Motion carried. Chip moved and Julia seconded to send the letter. Motion carried.

Next NRC meeting will be February 19 at 4p.m. at the Broome County Health Dept.

Recycling and Waste Management Committee (RWMC) – Tony reported that the January 26 RWMC meeting was postponed to February 2. There will be more efforts to facilitate more electronic disposal events in the upcoming months. The County's Division of Solid Waste Management has a new Commissioner, Daniel Schofield, former chairman of the BC Legislature. The RWMC discussed a new law that Governor Paterson signed at the end of 2008 - a law mandating large retail stores implement a plastic bags recycling collection program. Stacy received a copy of subcontractor R.W. Beck's Recycling Characterization Report for the BC Solid Waste Management Plan revision for review. She will send a copy to RWMC members for next meeting, which will be Monday, February 23 at 4pm in the Lourdes Conference Room, BC Health Dept.

Membership Committee

- Marley Urdanick and Jamie Welch submitted membership applications for Associate Memberships. Their memberships come moved and seconded by the Membership Committee. Jamie could not attend this evening due to illness, but her application will come before Council for approval in March. The Council unanimously approved Marley's Associate Membership.
- Legislative appointments are forthcoming per the Legislative Clerk.

6. Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC) Reports

Vestal – Cindy reported that the CAC met January 27 and further discussed gas drilling in the town. She reported on the Forestry Initiatives resources that EMC heard about in January, and she hopes to review the revised McGowan subdivision project off Rano Blvd to report back to the CAC. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 24th.

7. Staff and Chairs Reports

- The EMC's 2008 Annual Report needs to be pieced together. Ideally, it should be completed by March, but that may be unrealistic. Stacy asked members to submit any bullets that should be incorporated into a '08 report.
- There is no update about the Environmental Analyst vacant position.

The meeting **adjourned** at **9:26 p.m.**

Adam Robbins, Recorder

Stacy Merola, Contributor and Editor