



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council
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Draft

MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2020

Via ZOOM

Action items in bold italics / Motions underlined.

1. **Call to Order:** In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair Donald O’Shea called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

2. **Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** *A quorum was present.*

Members present: Aaron Barrigar; Catherine Bennett, *Chair* (arrived late); Richard Marshall; Don O’Shea, *Vice Chair*; Sue Rau; Tiernan Smith; Nicole Terminelli, *BOL Liaison*; Brian Washburn; Pat Whalen, *Secretary*.

Members absent: David Barnes; Jennifer Berbrich; Joseph Brant; Ryan Burkum; Lance Rudiger; Rod Tozzi.

Guest(s): Richard Grover; Ryne Martin; Emily Sheridan, DEC. Staff: John Tenbusch.

3. **Acceptance of Order of Business:** *The Order of Business was accepted by consensus.*

4. **Hearings, Comments from the Public.** Jason Pfothenauer, SLC Planning Director, made a presentation about “Large Scale Projects in St. Lawrence County”.

Jason reviewed the goals for renewable energy as set by New York State:

- 100% clean electricity by 2040;
- 6 GW of solar-produced electricity by 2035 (this is equivalent to 19 million solar panels, or 36,000 acres devoted to solar panels, at a rate of 6 acres per megawatt produced).

He reported that 32 MW of electricity are produced at a 200-acre facility at Brookhaven, on Long Island. By contrast, the two proposals for solar facilities are almost 6 times (180 MW; in Massena, Brasher, Norfolk; ~2,200 acres), and almost eight times (180 MW; Town of Canton; ~5,000 acres), as large as the Brookhaven installation.

Pfothenauer reported that new standards have been proposed for reviewing large-scale solar projects (>20 MW); unless and until those regulations are implemented, large-scale energy projects will be governed by Article 10, which has been in effect for approx. 10 years.

See <https://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Clean-Energy-Siting/Siting-for-Large-Scale-Renewables/Article-10> for additional information about Article 10, and about the new Office of Renewable Energy Siting.

Pfotenhauer reported that the County is concerned about whether large-scale energy facilities will occupy prime farmland; the amount of such land in the County is limited.

In response to a question about whether the County has done a land-use analysis of the upgrade to the 765KV route, known as the Moses-Adirondack Smart Path Reliability Project, *John Tenbusch suggested that the topic be assigned to the Conservation of Resources Committee; Vice-Chair O'Shea made that assignment.*

Emily Sheridan asked what would be the impacts of this upgraded 765 KV line on plans for the **Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Collaborative**. According to its Web site, this "region is a unique diverse bioregion that connects **Algonquin** Park to **Adirondack** Park through the Frontenac Arch and surrounding lands."

Sue Rau asked about landowners in the vicinity of the proposed large-scale solar projects; Pfotenhauer reported that any land sale would be "willing seller – willing buyer"; no eminent domain would be used.

There was a question about the environmental considerations of large-scale battery storage that may be proposed for these electricity-production facilities; no conclusions were drawn.

Questions were asked about the feasibility of using the current Ogdensburg solar site, or the GM site, for expanded solar production. No conclusions were drawn.

Tiernan Smith reported that there has not been given sufficient consideration for the ultimate decommissioning costs for these facilities. No conclusions were drawn.

Jason's final slide included a number of Web-based resources; **please see attached**.

Vice-Chair O'Shea thanked Jason for his presentation. A five minute recess was called

5. **Approval of the Minutes of the May 2020 EMC Meeting:** The meeting minutes for May 2020 were unanimously approved (Rau/Bennett).
6. **Report by the Representative of the Board of Legislators:**
Nicole Terminelli reported:
 - She was asked at a BOL meeting if the EMC would have a recommendation about large-scale solar projects.
7. **Reports by EMC Members on Conversations with County Legislators:** None.
8. **Report of the Committees:**
 - a. **Executive Committee:** No report.
 - b. **Conservation of Resources Committee (CRC):** John Tenbusch reported that the Committee held an informal meeting; there was discussion of concentrating its focus on two topics: reducing the use of single-use plastics; climate change.
 - c. **Environment + Economy Committee (E+E):** John Tenbusch reported that the Committee held an informal meeting; there was discussion of the fish ladder concept in Madrid
 - d. **Invasive Species Committee (ISC).** No Committee meeting was held

e. **Watershed Management Committee (WMC).** No Committee meeting was held.

9. Report of the Staff: Tenbusch reported:

- Planning staff are working on the paperwork required before a Release of Funds can be requested for the recent CDBG housing rehabilitation award. This paperwork includes the development of an Environmental Review Record for the program.
- Planning staff are working with the North Country Housing Council to re-start the existing CDBG projects (septic tank replacement; homeownership assistance) and the Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Program (aka the “Lead grant”).
- Work on the 2020 Decennial Census continues, despite the COVID-19 shutdown. Funds that had been set aside by NYS to assist Complete Count efforts have not been allocated.
- The Earth Day 50 archive project was announced during April. It will be continued through the end of the year.

10. Unfinished Business: None.

11. New Business: None.

12. Announcements:

- Emily Sheridan announced that there will be a Webinar series on the Great Lakes Action Agenda; these will be held on June 30th, and on July 11th.
- John Tenbusch announced that the EMC will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021. He suggested that EMC members think about how we should observe the occasion.

13. Message to the Board of Legislators: Whalen and members of the EMC suggested that EMC members thank the Board of Legislators for supporting Earth Day in St. Lawrence County.

14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Patrick Whalen

Secretary

Minutes drafted by John Tenbusch

Web links:

<https://rev.ny.gov/> (Reforming the Energy Vision)

<http://www3.dps.ny.gov/W/PSCWeb.nsf/W/PSCWeb.nsf/All/D12E078BF7A746FF85257A70004EF402?OpenDocument> (Article 10)

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/NY-Sun>

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterCaseNo=17-F-0598&submit=Search> (NYS Department of Public Service site for North Side Energy Project)

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterCaseNo=19-F-0461&submit=Search> (NYS Department of Public Service site for Rich Road Project)

<https://nypa.gov/power/transmission/transmission-projects/smartpath>