



St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council

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Approved

MEETING MINUTES

April 20, 2011 7:00 PM

Room 226, County Courthouse, 48 Court Street

Canton, New York

Action items in bold italics

1. **Call to Order:** Peter Skomsky, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.
2. **Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** A quorum was present.
Members present included: T. Cutter, D. Doe, R. Horst, D. Howard, D. O'Shea, J. Rosales, L. Rudiger, P. Skomsky, A. Soutar, S. Sutherland, B. Zimmerman.
Members absent included: B. Flavin, G. Hart, A. Heidenreich, G. Johnson, D. Katz.
Staff: J. Montan, J. Tenbusch. Guests: Robin McClellan. Press: None.
3. **Hearings, Comments from the Public:** P. Skomsky introduced Dr. Philip K Hopke, Professor at Clarkson University where he is Director of the Institute for a Sustainable Environment. Hopke's presentation was titled "Climategate vs. Climate Change: Science, Politics and Public Perception".

Dr. Hopke discussed the details of the "Climategate" controversy, in which several researchers at East Anglia University in England failed to report some confounding data in order to justify their conclusion that global warming is happening now. Hopke discussed three approaches to studying historical temperatures:

- Temperature measurement has records that go back to the 1850s in the Northern Hemisphere. Typically, current temperatures are compared to 30-year average temperatures.
- Analysis of tree rings can enable precise determination of temperatures going back hundreds to several thousand years.
- To determine temperatures before 1850, researchers often analyze the composition of water in ice cores. This method can produce data on climate and temperature going back hundreds of thousands of years, but is not very precise.

Hopke then discussed some basic aspects of climate science:

- Sunlight energy captured in earth's atmosphere warms the earth;

EMC: Everybody Must Care!

- Without any greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the earth's temperature would be approximately minus 25 degrees Celsius (-13 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Carbon dioxide is a problem because it remains in the atmosphere for so long.
- Other "greenhouse gases" (GHGs) are also problems; these include:
 - Nitrous oxide, resulting from high-yield agriculture;
 - Methane (byproduct of oil production; anaerobic decomposition of organic material; livestock);
 - Carbon monoxide, which affects the tropospheric ozone layer.

Hopke noted that one significant source of CO₂ is biomass burning (wood, coal, etc.) for cooking and heating; he reported that over 3 billion people use such fuels for such purposes.

Hopke then asked, "What do we know?" He reported that greenhouse gases are increasing in the atmosphere; that temperatures are rising around the world to historic highs. He noted that the models used to analyze and predict changes in climate have some uncertainties, but he stated that we need to make choices and decisions that will affect our futures.

During discussion after Hopke's presentation, L. Rudiger noted that, as a teacher of science himself, he is aware that Dr. Hopke enjoys a world-wide reputation as a researcher and scholar in the field of climate science; he thanked Dr. Hopke for his presentation.

- 4. Acceptance of Order of Business, Items for New Business, Items for Unfinished Business:** S. Sutherland will have an item for Unfinished Business. The Order of Business was accepted (L Rudiger; A. Soutar).
- 5. Approval of the Minutes of the March 2011 Meeting:** The minutes of the March meeting were approved (L. Rudiger; T. Cutter).
- 6. Report by the Representative of the Board of Legislators (BOL):** No report.
- 7. Reports by EMC Members on Conversations with County Legislators:**
 - T. Cutter reported sending e-mail to Greg Paquin.
 - R. Horst reported speaking with Jim Bunstone.
- 8. Report of the Committees:**
 - a. Executive** – None.
 - b. Education** – B. Zimmerman reported that the Committee had discussed the following:
 - The EMC had concentrated on issues of climate change during the last six months. Before moving on to other topic areas, the Education Committee encourages members to speak to their assigned County Legislators and ask what information they might want/need as they consider the draft St. Lawrence County Climate Action Plan.
 - The Education Committee recommended that EMC members express thanks to their assigned County Legislators for the BOL's approval of a resolution recognizing Earth Day.

- The Education Committee proposed that the EMC turn its attention to issues of water and recreation in the county. As part of this effort, the Education Committee will invite Pat McKeown to speak about eco-tourism at the May meeting. The Committee suggested that the June meeting be held in/near Black Lake. For July, the speaker might be the St. Regis River Advisory committee, or possibly the new Trails Committee. Other possible speakers include Brad Baldwin (SLU) or Michael Twiss (Clarkson).
 - D. O’Shea reported on the recent presentation in Ogdensburg about the Emerald Ash Borer.
 - L. Rudiger noted the potential to develop an educational program dealing with aquatic resources.
- c. **Natural Resources** – P. Skomsky reported that the Committee had discussed:
- Expansion of the Canton Brownfields program to Pyrites.
 - Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days will be May 14th at 9:00 AM in Gouverneur (SLC Fairgrounds) and August 6th at 1:00 PM in Massena (Transfer Station). Electronics and pharmaceuticals will also be collected at these events.
 - The Committee is beginning to look at issues related to underwater generators.
 - The Indian Creek Conservation Field Days are scheduled for May 26th and June 2nd.
 - There is a bill to regulate groundwater removal in the NYS Senate (Senate Bill 3455-2011; Assembly Bill A5318).
- d. **NYSAEMC** – J. Tenbusch reported that the “DEC Update” will be held on June 6th in Albany. A. Soutar is interested in attending, if anybody else is interested to go.

9. Report of the Staff:

- Tenbusch distributed three e-mail communications from Donald Hassig; these included:
 - A copy of a resolution to the BOL authorizing additional cancer prevention education for citizens of St. Lawrence County. This resolution was sponsored by Scott Sutherland.
 - A message asking the EMC to write to NYS Department of Health (DOH) “expressing its interest in engaging in a dialogue with NYS DOH scientists on the subject of POPs exposure cancer risk and risk reduction strategies.”
 - A press release of a letter written by Donald Hassig and Dr. David Carpenter, MD, Director of SUNY Albany Institute for Health and the Environment; the letter is addressed to Commissioner Shah of the NYS DOH. The letter asks the NYS DOH to update the 2011 Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan (CCCP) by emphasizing public education; developing partnerships for public education; include education on POPs as an action item; appoint community-based representatives to a board with the mandate to oversee development and implementation of the CCCP.
 EMC members were asked to read Hassig’s e-mail messages.
- S. Sutherland commented on his support of the resolution authorizing additional cancer education for citizens of St. Lawrence County.

- L. Rudiger suggested that staff from SUNY Potsdam Community Health program or from the Richard E. Winter Cancer Center in Ogdensburg might be appropriate sources of educational material or as speakers on this topic.
- 10. Unfinished Business:** S. Sutherland reported that he had inquired of the County Attorney whether he could, as an *ex officio* member of the EMC, vote; he was assured that he can.
- 11. New Business:** None.
- 12. Announcements:**
- D. O'Shea reported that the Ogdensburg Tree Commission will celebrate Arbor Day on April 29th. He noted that Ogdensburg has received "Tree City" designation for the 18th year.
 - T. Cutter reported that the Canton Tree Commission will be doing tree planting on Willow Island for Arbor Day.
 - J. Rosales reported that he would be doing tree planting on Earth Day and Arbor Day.
 - D. Howard reported that 40,000 trees will be distributed by the Soil & Water conservation District on April 29th.
 - D. Howard also reported that the Envirothon will be held at Paul Smiths on May 12th.
- 13. Message to Board of Legislators:** EMC members were asked to remind their assigned legislators that the EMC is available as an informational resource as the BOL considers the St. Lawrence County Climate Action Plan. EMC members were also asked to thank their assigned legislators for supporting the resolution declaring Earth Day in the County.
- 14. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Thomas Cutter
Secretary

Minutes prepared by J. Montan, J. Tenbusch.

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