



Broome County Environmental Management Council

Debra A. Preston, County Executive

Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC)
Notes from meeting held on Wednesday, February 13th, 2013 at 4:30pm
Exhibit Room, Broome County Library
185 Court Street, Binghamton, NY

Present:

MAL: Bill Heaviside, Karen Ciatyk, David Bradstreet, Julia Hoover, Dylan Horvath, Marley Urdanick, Chris Burger and Alex Urda

CAC Reps: Andre LaClair (Fenton)

Staff: Beth Lucas

Others: Wayne Jennings

1. The meeting was **convened at 4:30 pm**. Andre moved and Alex seconded the motion to approve the January minutes. All in favor, motion approved.

2. Announcements /Privilege of the floor/ Items of Interest

- Beth mentioned that the Broome County Planning Department is holding several Community meetings for the County-wide Comprehensive Plan. The meeting dates are February 19th at Chenango Town Hall, March 12th at Windsor Middle School and March 27th at the Endicott Visitors Center.
- Beth mentioned that the City of Binghamton will be holding a public open house to gain input for the development of their Comprehensive Plan at 49 Court Street, during First Friday on March 1st.
- Beth mentioned that the City will be having a public meeting about the North Chenango Brownfield Opportunity area coming up sometime in April. She will keep members posted as further details come out.
- Beth reminded the group that the Broome County Hazard Mitigation Plan is posted for review on the Planning Department website www.gobroomecounty.com/planning/hazardmitigation.
- Beth circulated a document about zoning for wildlife and diversity. Those interested can request a copy from her.
- Andre gave an update of some information that he obtained during a recent business trip to Texas that several bans have gone into effect recently in the area. Also, there is news out of Pittsburg that nontoxic fluids are being developed for hydraulic fracturing using food based ingredients.
- There was a brief discussion actions to incorporate natural gas resources into local use and infrastructure.
- Alex mentioned that there are grants available through the Constitution Pipeline. If there are projects that the EMC would like to accomplish as part of the work plan, perhaps this would be a source of funding.

3. Committee and CAC Updates

- Fenton CAC – Andre reported that the CAC will revisit the moratorium on outdoor wood boilers. The moratorium was put into place while the statewide regulations were developed. Now that those regulations are in place the group will review the information and make recommendations to the Town. There was a brief discussion about the content of the state regulations.
- Vestal CAC – Cindy was not in attendance so there was no update.
- Natural Resources Committee –The group continues to work on the Open Space Plan.

4. Membership and Administrative Items

- Membership appointments were not listed on the Legislative agenda for February. Beth anticipates that they will be on the March agenda and will keep the group posted as it goes forward.

5. Support Letter for Continued Federal Funding of the Southern Tier Streamgage Network

Beth circulated a letter that she drafted along with a notice regarding which streamgages are in danger and a factsheet about the USGS streamgage program. The letter is prompted by a recent notice that was circulating that stated that budget shortfalls may result in a shortage of funding for the maintenance and operation of the local streamgages, including those in Windsor, Binghamton and Vestal. This is concerning due to the importance of the streamgages for flood forecast and warning as well as hazard mitigation and watershed planning. (See attached draft letter).

Due to recently obtained information, the gages have received funding for the coming year, however, there is still a need for a continued funding stream, so that the local communities can be secure that this equipment will be on hand when needed. The letter will be modified to make this a stronger component. It was also suggested that the letter include a reference to the flooding events in 2005 and 2006 as well, not just 2011.

Andre made a motion to adopt the letter with the proposed amendments. Chris seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed.

6. Water Resources and Natural Gas Development

- Beth confirmed that Mike Lovegreen from Bradford County Conservation District would be able to address the group at the meeting in April. The group discussed additional ideas for topics of discussion related to this issue.
 - Dave mentioned that Cornell Cooperative Extension is currently working on the development of an educational program regarding well testing information for property owners: what to look for/test for, issues associated with chain of command, and how to go about getting your well tested. Beth mentioned that this is an issue that she was interested in bringing before the EMC for a while. Dave will keep the group posted as this moves forward.
7. The meeting was **adjourned at 6:00 pm**. The next meeting will be held on **March 13th, 2013 @ 4:30pm**.



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Debra A. Preston, County Executive

February 21, 2013

Congressman Richard Hanna
110 Genessee St., Suite 130
Auburn, NY 13021

Congressman Hanna:

The Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC), the County's citizen advisory committee on environmental matters, would like to express support for continued and permanent federal funding for the maintenance of the Southern Tier's critical streamgage network. We were alarmed to hear that funding for the continued operation of these gages might be discontinued this year. Local streamgages at Binghamton, Windsor, Vestal, and in surrounding counties generate vital data used by local, state and federal agencies to predict when flooding will occur, allowing for advanced warning and preparation for disasters. Early flood warnings give businesses and residents in flood-prone areas time to secure their properties and move to safer locations before flooding begins. Without a permanent funding line established for these gages, the loss of this essential equipment is continually looming from year to year. Therefore, we urgently request that the Federal government make a firm, long-term commitment to funding this critical system.

At only \$215,000 for gages in the Upper Susquehanna watershed, the funding for continued operation and maintenance is a minimal and justified expense. The Susquehanna River Basin is one of the most flood-prone areas in the country and there is no question that flooding will continue to impact our communities. According to the County's recently updated draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, over 60,000 people in Broome are estimated to live in the floodplain, making them vulnerable during these disasters. In September 2011 flooding associated with Tropical Storm Lee devastated Broome County communities and our neighbors. While the economic losses were great, we were lucky no lives were lost in the County during that disaster, due in part to effective evacuation procedures and warning systems based on streamgage data. Damage during this event alone totaled into the hundreds of millions due to property loss, economic impacts and infrastructure damage. Furthermore, the Hazard Mitigation Plan states that there is potential for damage on the order of over a \$1 billion during events of this nature. Without early and accurate information provided by the gages, the ability to carry out orderly and efficient response would be limited and these costs would have been exacerbated. This is not to mention costs of a similar magnitude associated with additional flooding events in 2005 and 2006, only a few years earlier.

Broome County's municipalities are committed to protecting their residents and businesses, but this cannot be done overnight. Streamgage data is vital for long-term monitoring required for watershed and hazard mitigation planning that helps to minimize the impacts of disasters. As Broome County's advisory board on environmental matters, the EMC values this planning for the maintenance of public safety and the health of our natural resources. This data is essential to develop a clear picture on which we can base informed policy and programming decisions. As data shows, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. Therefore, the importance of river and stream level monitoring has only increased. A continued record of water level data over time allows us to understand how the watershed changes along with external influences such as climate, land use, and water consumption, among others.

We strongly urge you to consider the essential value that the streamgages have provided to local, state and federal agencies serving Broome County and the surrounding areas. We ask that you work to secure long-term funding for the ongoing maintenance and operation of these gages, enabling us to focus on protecting our communities and preventing the impacts of disasters, without fear of losing one of the most valued tools in these efforts.

Thank you,

Bill Heaviside

Bill Heaviside
Acting Chair

BH/bal

Cc: Debbie Preston, County Executive
Jerry Marinich, Chair of the Legislature
Aaron Martin, Legislative Clerk



Broome County Environmental Management Council

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February 21, 2013

Senator Charles E. Schumer
15 Henry Street, Room M103 607-772-6792
Binghamton, NY 13901

Senator Schumer:

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February 21, 2013

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
James Handley Federal Building
100 S. Clinton St., Room 1470
PO Box 7378
Syracuse, NY 13261

Senator Gillibrand:

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