



Minutes – Friday, January 26, 2024
Video Conference
9 am to 11 am

Attending: Chuck Schwerin, Shelia Out, Aimee Dailey, Hailley Delisle, Dave Bradley, Gerri Wiley, Ingrid Zabel, Dan Lamb, Tom Hirasuna, Janelle Bourgeois, Marie McRae, Brian Eden, Dominic Frongillo, Holly Hutchinson, Don Hass, Jaden Beck, Alice Green, Irene Weiser, Fernando de Aragón, Hilary Swartwood, Leon Porter, Margaret McCasland, Martha Robertson, Nick Goldsmith, Dan Lamb, Duncan McNelis, Terry Carroll, Rod Howe, Naweed Kawusi, Anna Kelles, Peter Bardaglio

2024 TCCPI Priorities – All

The steering committee has proposed the following priorities for 2024:

- *Advocate for state climate and clean energy policies*
- *Strengthen climate resilience*
- *Support the Ithaca Green New Deal*
- *Work on improving equitable multimodal transportation options*
- *Continue to grow the 2030 District*

The group discussed these recommendations and shared thoughts about how to move forward.

- Steering committee is hoping these priorities provide a framework to guide our work and discussions for the coming year
- The turn toward advocacy for state climate and clean energy policies represents a new direction for TCCPI
- Peter has been spending a lot of time on this activity – as soon as last session ends, organizing for the new one begins, but it really picks up in December in anticipation of the new session opening in early January
- Meeting on regular basis with coalitions that TCCPI is involved with: NY Renews, Renewable Heat Now, Climate Can't Wait, etc. – also, beginning in January lots of virtual lobby meetings with individual legislators in Albany and engagement in social media campaigns
- Important that TCCPI be involved in this work as effort to implement 2019 climate law and recommendations of Climate Action Council
- Peter asked Dominic Frongillo to talk about his work with Elected Officials to Protect America, where he serves as co-founder and executive director
- Dominic: Working in NY on Climate Change Superfund Act, which would require fossil fuel companies to pay for climate damage inflicted on NY and strengthen climate resiliency in local communities

- Right now taxpayers on hook for covering cost of this damage and upgrading infrastructure
- Comptroller survey reveal that 55% of local municipal expenditures related to fixing climate damage and strengthening climate resilience
- Have been organizing letter from 100 local elected officials in support of Climate Change Superfund Act and calling on Governor Hochul to include it in her executive budget
- Activity includes press conference in Albany, media interviews, and op-eds
- Peter: Basic principle involved: you make a mess; you clean it up – state just getting hammered with these extreme weather events
- About time fossil fuel industry held accountable for this damage – also especially important in context of state projecting \$4 billion budget deficit this year – way to help close budget gap
- Brian Eden has also been involved in this effort – group meets weekly on Zoom
- Brian: We used to have to travel to Albany to meet with people there -- now lot easier with Zoom but we still need to get people to Albany to show our strength
- Whole bunch of opportunities coming up for folks to be in Albany – if you haven't done this before, not as difficult as you might imagine – nothing beats being there in person
- NY Renews legislative package this year includes Climate Superfund – other two bills include NY HEAT Act and Just Energy Transition Act
- Latter aimed at developing plan for closing of fossil-fuel power plants and focuses on frontline communities affected by emissions from these nearby plants
- Brian: We need to find ways to pay for cleaning up these communities if we're going to transition to better future
- Governor included in her budget one of main pieces of NY HEAT Act, ending the so-called “100-foot rule” under which rate payers picked up tab for new gas connections
- Now developers have to cover this cost, which should slow down expansion of gas infrastructure and encourage them to install heat pumps instead
- Peter reminded group that because events in Albany move so fast now he has agreement with steering committee that he'll be signing TCCPI on to any organizational letters circulating that are climate-related
- So much going on and it's critical that we join with other organizations to back these very important bills
- Peter keeps track of these sign-ons and other advocacy activities and shares that list with steering committee each month
- Second priority is to focus on strengthening climate resilience of our communities – as example, just recently city received significant funding from FEMA for flood mitigation
- Outside of Ithaca municipalities are working to deepen and expand ditches and culverts in response to increase in extreme precipitation events

- Tom Hirasuna: Almost everything we do now is connected to climate resilience – as part of Climate Reality – Finger Lakes, we’re working with other chapters across state on climate resilience and other issues
- At federal level, our work focused on Farm Bill, trying to protect provisions related to small and medium-sized farms
- Peter: Development of local food network another example of climate resilience – smaller farms much more sustainable way to move forward than large industrial farms that predominate now
- Ingrid Zabel: In very early stages, but PRI starting to think about how its facilities, including Cayuga Nature Center and Museum of the Earth, could serve as resilience hub in extreme weather event – for example, museum could be cooling center during heat wave for West Hill
- Talking with Rebecca Brenner at Cornell – expert in disaster preparedness – she organized meeting with PRI and Southside Community Center to see how two organizations could collaborate on this effort
- Working with Rebecca’s students in two of her courses this semester to start thinking this through
- Dave Bradley: Need to do much better job at generating renewable electricity – in spite of fact that NY provides some of largest subsidies in nation, progress has been very slow – nowhere near meeting CLCPA goals
- Wind power projects, in particular, have run into lots of obstacles – could cut costs of offshore wind in half by moving them closer to shore off coast and in Great Lakes but lots of opposition to doing so
- Brian: Working with Beyond Plastics and NY Is Not Disposable to cut down on use of plastics, which has expanded tremendously in recent years – fossil fuel industry looking for ways to take up its extra capacity
- Package Reduction Act aimed at lessening use of plastic Sen. Harckham & AM Glick making this top priority in current session
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) seeks to shift cost of disposing or recycling plastic to companies that produce it – a lot of municipalities losing money on recycling
- Dominic: Recent report from Brown University found that \$72 million from fossil-fuel related dark money groups has been funneled into disinformation campaigns and astroturf groups to opposed offshore wind projects
- Support for IGND third proposed priority for 2024 – great that Rebecca Evans has been able to bring another staff member on board, Savannah Vega, to help roll out some of initiatives they’ve been discussing, including incorporating equity with Justice50
- Rebecca has persuaded City to bring 10 more buildings into Ithaca 2030 District: four fire stations, police station, Youth Bureau, GIAC, and main offices of Water & Sewer and Streets & Facilities – over 320,000 sq. ft. – brings district total to over 900,000 sq. ft.
- One way Ithaca 2030 District will be supporting IGND going forward

- Fourth priority is supporting development of equitable multimodal transportation options
- Dawn Montanye: One of top priorities in this area is reduction of car dependency – have to do more than just turn to EVs
- Need to drive less and choosing shared transportation options, looking to enhance transit – need to build up system now and shift transportation lens – more dedicated bus and bike lanes
- Also need to take into account land use planning and housing to improve access to public and shared transportation
- Lifestyle changes need to be encouraged, too
- Fernando de Aragón: Reducing extreme dependency on automobiles crucial – 60% of our trips are only 2-3 miles long – tremendous potential to use bikes more
- We have good transit system that needs strengthening – Bikeshare in place and doing well – doing everything possible to bring Carshare back this spring
- ITCTC will be developing long-range transportation plan over next year – will be opportunity to provide input
- Dawn: Also Transportation Equity Coalition wrapping up its transportation equity needs assessment – what are needs and barriers to providing people access?
- Peter: Not just question of developing effective multimodal transportation system, but also about making it more equitable
- Addition of ten new city buildings addresses our fifth priority, to continue growing district – we’ll also continue building the performance dashboards and working with property members to improve energy and water performance of their buildings, and sharing ways they can reduce their carbon footprint
- Also four of our buildings took advantage of NYSEG gas kicker program to install heat pumps and move off natural gas for heating and cooling

NYS Climate and Clean Energy Legislation: Prospects and Challenges – Anna Kelles
Assemblymember Anna Kelles represents the 125th District, including Cortland and Tompkins Counties. She has been an outstanding champion for climate and clean energy issues. She shared her perspective on the new legislative session and the possibilities for progress on these fronts.

- Conversation with Anna took place while she was on plane waiting to fly to DC to speak at screening of documentary “Fashion Reimagined”
- Focusing today on Fashion Act, Climate Superfund Act, NY HEAT Act, Just Transition Act, and Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act
- Sustainability and Social Accountability Fashion Act is Anna’s bill – not part of package
- Everybody wears clothes but right now you couldn’t be socially responsible even if you wanted to
- Every part of global supply chain needs to be transparent and there needs to be accountability
- Act would require all brands with gross revenue of \$100 million or more that want access to NYS market must comply with state regulations
- All brands would have to map out their entire supply chain and measure GHG emissions through supply chain and impacts on water quality

- Also labor provisions regarding prevailing wages, unions, and child labor
- All of tools required to track metrics already in existence and used by industries – not reinventing any wheels with this legislation
- Have to demonstrate they're making substantive improvements in these areas or else they're subject to fines up to 2% of their gross global income – that creates fund that can be used to offset negative impacts
- European Union taking steps to regulate this global industry – has never been regulated before – only major industry that isn't – responsible for up to 8% of all GHG emissions
- Second highest industry in use of child labor and fifth highest in use of slave labor
- Want to make sure brands don't just pass costs of complying with new regulations on to manufacturers
- Can find out more about bill at thefashionact.org
- Anna concerned that cap-and-invest will turn into cap-and-trade – pre-proposal open for public comment looks like cap-trade-and-invest (CTI)
- Puts lot of emphasis on secondary market of trading allowances – allows nonobligated entities to buy allowances at public auctions – also allows obligated entities to buy up to 25% of allowances available at any auction, which could be sold in secondary market
- Has now introduced bill that outlines program of just cap-and-invest – meant to be counterpoint to pre-proposal
- Some, including governor, are arguing that polluters already being held accountable under cap-trade-and-invest – climate superfund a kind of double dipping – creates another fee for same polluters
- Climate Superfund focuses on which companies were biggest polluters from 2000 to 2018 and damage they did then – retroactive
- Will assess one-time fee and use those dollars to build infrastructure specifically for adaptation – can pay fee in 24 annual payments
- CTI is forward looking, not retroactive – forces companies to pay for GHGs they're continuing to emit – faster they transition to clean energy, fewer allowances they'll have to buy
- CTI makes exceptions for energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries but doesn't put in place guardrails for these entities – provides allowances for free so companies not forced to move out of state
- Not only are these allowances provided for free but there's no documentation required and there is no claw-back mechanism
- We also need to stop investing in natural gas infrastructure – aim of Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act seeks to end \$336 million of \$1.6 billion state provides annually in tax subsidies, grants, and like
- Complementary to Climate Superfund – in both cases fossil fuel polluters held accountable – can't continue subsidize very industries that are generating pollution that is cause of climate damage
- NY HEAT Act takes on another way in which we've been subsidizing the fossil fuel industry: the PSC rule that says any building constructed within 100 feet of road can get free hook-up to the main gas line courtesy of ratepayers
- Encourages expansion of natural gas infrastructure – amounts to \$200 million annually
- Bill would end this practice and also hold utility costs of LMI households to 6% of their income

- Just Transition Act requires PSC and NYSERDA to carry out study of how to best convert closed fossil-fuel power plants to renewable energy infrastructure
- Plan has strong labor protections and would be subject to extensive public hearings across state

Q&A

- Martha Robertson: Where should we focus our efforts? A lot to take in and act on
- Anna: Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package includes most of these bills – NY Renews coalition consisting of more than 100 organizations (including TCCPI) is pushing for passage of the package
- Fashion Act is Anna's top priority but she's very involved in supporting the other bills – is working to educate other legislators about them, how they fit together, and why they're important
- Need to listen to what opposition is saying about why we can't do something and then figure out messaging to counter the arguments
- Needs support of TCCPI to identify why we're being told no, and then to pivot with counterargument – as climate leaders, we need to get better at this
- Dominic Frongillo: We have 100 elected officials signed on in support of Climate Superfund and would love to coordinate with you
- Anna: Please get in touch with my legislative team to set up meeting
- Martha: Where is Speaker Heastie on these bills?
- Anna: He's very thoughtful about environment -- Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus has about 77 members and Heastie pays close attention to where they stand on issues – also Upstate Caucus has about 75 members
- Important to have champions in both groups to be effective
- Peter asked Anna to talk about work she and Sen. Lea Webb are doing together on Cayuga salt mine
- Anna: Needs to pass quickly to make sure it is in place before any sale of mine goes through
- Bell Station one of most effective campaigns seen in Albany because it was sharply focused and had very clear message
- Just want transparency and accountability in situation with salt mine – letter writing campaign and coordinated calls to governor over next couple of weeks best way to achieve this
- Should be our community's top priority – current situation holding Cargill liable for only \$3 million in damages unacceptable
- Asking for independent evaluation about what Cargill should be required to pay if there is mining catastrophe there
- Protecting our environment and natural resources fundamental to responsibilities of legislature
- Environment fundamental to everything we are – it's our habitat – we are either parasites or stewards: we have a choice
- Messaging is critical – we have to get savvier at this – industry devotes lots of resources and has become very effective at opposing and neutralizing anything that affects their profits
- This is why it's so important that every single person in environmental movement feels empowered to take credit for victories we achieve – that it was their accomplishment – and that we take the time to make sure this happens before moving on to next thing

- Big corporations need to tear down these wins and neutralize them – they've already won in red states and don't have to worry about them – they're focused on stopping wins in blue states like NY and CA
- Need to foster sense of personal pride among people in environmental movement in victories we've achieved and not let them get torn down by oil and gas companies – we have to celebrate and protect what we've already won and stay vigilant
- When people feel empowered they engage – when they feel hopeless, they disengage