

**Monroe County Climate Action Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
via zoom**

March 4, 2021 (3:30 – 5:00 p.m.)

Drafted: March 5, 2021

Approved: April 1, 2021

Members: John Botelho, Fred Ancello, Matthew O'Connor, Sue Hughes-Smith, Kathryn McArdle, Leah Wirley, Helen Frank, Liam Smith, Michael Yudelson

Absent: Karla Boyce

Staff: Mike Garland, Tina Stevens, Joe VanKerkhove, Patrick Gooch, Clement Chung, Yasmin Guevera, Ana Liss

Guests:

Welcome, Introduction and Announcements (Co-Chair O'Connor)

Meeting called to order at 3:34 P.M. by Co-Chair O'Connor.

Approval of Minutes (Co-Chair O'Connor):

1. Minutes from the February 4, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved. Motion by John Botelho; seconded by Mike Yudelson.

Climate Action Plan Update (Joe Vankerkhove / Bergmann Associates):

1. Joe VanKerkhove gave a recap of Bergmann Associates recent activities for Phase 1 of the Climate Action Plan: contract has been executed, data gathering has begun, and internal task force has been formed. That group includes: Joseph VanKerkhove, Michael Garland, Clement Chung and Yasmin Guevara (DES); Thomas Polech (DOT); Bill Johnston (Airport); Robert Franklin (Finance); Patrick Gooch (Planning) and Doug French (Parks). Bergmann will work alongside their sub-contractor, Michael Baker. Mike Yudelson asked for a timetable of deliverables. Joe stated there will be a report to the committee every month from Bergmann that will recap their progress. It is hoped the County operations plan would be available in draft form in the fall and finalized before the end of 2021. Mike Garland stated that any documents that require committee review will be shared. Including intermediate milestones.

Legislative Update (County Legislators Ancello, Boyce and Yudelson):

1. C-PACE Program (Loans for businesses for energy improvements): Review by the Monroe County administration continues by Law, Finance, and Environmental Services.

New Business:

1. Flyer distributed via email for a CEC seminar on March 10 at 6:30.
2. The committee received its first email from a Boston College student, Kyle Rosenthal, regarding waste collection and composting services. Monroe County Department of Environmental Services will respond. Discussion was held regarding communities and neighborhoods who have Refuse Districts, and the New York State requirements for establishment of a taxing district. Organic collection will be discussed as a component of Phase 2 of the County's Climate Action Plan.
3. Clem Chung updated the CAP on the CSC (Climate Smart Communities) program. The first two actions that need to be taken are the appointment of a coordinator and a Task Force. It was suggested that the CAP Committee serve in the role of Task Force. Clem volunteered to take on the role of Coordinator.
4. Clem has done research and benchmarking with other counties in NYS who have a CAP and are members of the CSC program.
5. Monroe County plans to aim for Silver certification which three other counties have achieved.

Ana Liss, Director, Monroe County Planning and Development and Executive Director of COMIDA and MCIDC, presented on the Monroe County IDA and Solar Projects.

1. Western New York and the Finger Lakes Region have been identified as potential relocation areas for individuals affected by Climate Change. Our area has abundant fresh water and is likely to forego the worst extremes of weather or climate disasters. This is something that Monroe County is paying attention to and might be pertinent to this groups' work related to the climate action plan.
2. Industrial Development Agencies (IDA) and COMIDA (County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency): IDAs were established in the early 70's to "level the playing field" in promoting industrial development that preserves or creates jobs and investments.
3. Tools the organization has at their disposal to meet these needs include: property tax abatements, sales and use tax exemptions, and mortgage recording tax exemptions. In return, there is a guarantee of jobs created by the recipient. To obtain a PILOT (a Payment In Lieu of Taxes) agreement, jobs must be increased 10% over the life of the agreement. Additionally, COMIDA has a 100% Local Labor policy that includes the ten county surrounding area.
4. COMIDA's Uniform Tax Exemption Policy standard term is ten years; longer time frame requires additional approvals.
5. Renewable energy projects typically receive incentives from New York State, including grants.
6. Developers for solar are investigating upstate due to land availability. Summer 2020, saw the first two solar projects presented to COMIDA for assistance:
7. Green Eagle Solar / Mendon Renewables: \$8,000,000 project receiving \$2.1 million in NYS grant assistance; scheduled for completion 3/31/21. COMIDA awarded the project \$428,000 in incentives, no jobs created.
8. Green Eagle Solar / Clarkson Renewables: \$8,900,000 project receiving \$2.3 million in NYS grant assistance;
 - a. Scheduled for completion 5/31/21. COMIDA awarded \$516,000 in incentives.
9. All taxing jurisdictions, the County, towns, and school districts, have a say in incentives as the increased property value is removed from the tax rolls for the term of the agreement.
10. Sue Hughes-Smith dispelled the rumor that power collected here is sent downstate as being not true, the power grid does not allow that to happen.
11. Despite the economic downturn, there is still economic development happening, specifically development by three companies that are leading the way to making the area a Hydrogen Fuel Cell Innovation Hub. The area possesses the talent, infrastructure and assets to draw for innovative clean tech businesses. Sue Hughes-Smith asked if there were opportunities for discussions with these businesses around sustainability. Ana stated the County was currently undergoing an extensive update of the County's Comprehensive Plan (last update was in 1970s) and environmental and sustainability concerns would be incorporated. The SEQR process is a part of any project and the Climate Action Committee could play a role as well.
12. Liam Smith shared this link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1toqsvoYix3XPrCYKs5Ou8D360c6A8iho/view>
13. Matt O'Connor asked about other projects: Ana mentioned the hydrogen hub, two major optics/photonics/imaging expansion projects, and two proposals from Amazon.
14. Matt also asked about end-of-life requirements in solar contracts. Ana stated when the incentives run out, the relationship with the project ends. Pat Gooch added that most municipal codes include end-of-life stipulations.
15. Kate McArdle mentioned that REDC has developed sustainable standards for development and has a framework in place that includes Environmental Justice guidelines.

Public Forum:

1. No public comments or requests to speak were received.

New Business:

1. Next meeting is Thursday, April 1 at 3:30, via Zoom. Link will be sent out one week prior.

Motion to adjourn by Mike Yudelson; second by Kate McArdle. Meeting adjourned at 4:45 PM.