

Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization (I O) Meeting Minutes 8/28/19

Attendance: Roxanne Marino, Jennifer Karius, Liz Thomas, Ann Koreman, David Sprout, Tony DelPlato, Darby Kiley, Joseph Wetmore, Tee Ann Hunter, Hilary Lambert, Ronny Hardaway, Deborah Dawson, Michael Boggs, C.J. Randall, Tom Vawter, Michael Murphy, Lynn Leopold, Grace Bates, Jackie Cassaniti

The minutes and financial report were adopted, the dues letters were sent out and some money has already been received; as of August 2019 the I O has \$49,835.06.

At the TCCOG meeting in July Liz Thomas proposed that there should be a Tompkins County staff person to “coordinate and advance water quality work being done throughout the watershed”. That person would hold a paid position and possibly recreate the role of the Water Resource Planner in Tompkins County that was discontinued years ago. A letter to the Tompkins County Legislature was created in early August by Liz Thomas with the help of Roxy Johnston and Tee Ann Hunter and has received positive views. The letter can be seen online in Tee Ann’s email to the I O from August 22nd.

A positive letter from Tee Ann was sent to the watershed municipalities (munis) about what the I O has done in the last year, asking for the continued help of the members and other munis around the lake.

A letter written by the Tompkins County Waters Resources Council (WRC) HABs subcommittee requesting Tompkins County fund a staff person dedicated to water quality management was read to the members present and a unanimous vote of acceptance was taken by the members present. This will be sent to the munis in Cayuga and Seneca Counties via I O members; Michelle Wunderlick and Tony DelPlato, respectively.

The Advisory Committee (AC) will meet on Thursday, August 29, 2019, from 2-4 at the Ithaca Town Hall. There are 40 people signed up for the PAC, a little over 1/2 will attend this inaugural meeting. It will be run by Kathy Bertuch from Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board. Please come with project ideas. Tom suggested that the Restoration and Protection Plan (RPP) be looked at again for “recommended actions”.

Grace said some munis can get federal help, ex. Monroe County can get help from Congressman John Katko. Jennifer added that there are a lot of Great Lakes Grants, and the DEC is creating opportunities for grants, also WQIP and Comprehensive Plan help. On the front of the I O website; cayugawatershed.org there is a link to Jennifer’s material and where the funding for the present grant is coming from. Michael Murphy asked if there is a list of projects that have already been done on the website; that will be added.

Hilary spoke about attending a Central NY presentation by Meredith Perro, she spoke about a “feast of grant opportunities”; and there were many under each heading. Liz said there is too much to do for a small muni, Tee Ann suggested “project partners”.

Hilary also spoke about helping to see if there are more effective ways to organize the I O. She is from CLWN, a non-profit that has a small role in the present grant, the public participation part. She went to other places to see how they were organized: 1. Upper Susquehanna Coalition, 23 soil and water districts and how they operate and share resources; 2. NYS DOS, they know what works; 3. Chesapeake Bay organizations, make up of hundreds of groups!, 4. Owasco Watershed Organization, she got their founding documents and learned their strengths and weaknesses; 5. Finger Lakes Institute’s Lisa Cleckner, who helped rebuild the Seneca Lake I O.

She suggested the I O look at “River Network”, an organization she knew when she did environmental work in Kentucky. They help any waterbody organization to form a better group to work more effectively. (They held a “river rally” in Cleveland in June.) She said they helped out groups with problems at Hanford on the Columbia

River and problems on the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. She handed out a “status report survey” from them for the I O to look over with the results that the members present thought the River Network was too big to help the I O, and what was the cost. Joe asked if the survey could be customized to our organization; and Tony wondered if he should answer as an I O member or a representative of the Village of Interlaken? (Tee Ann said and a member of the I O.)

Tom said we have an organization, we should use what we have, Lynn added that we should know the I O’s history, Michael Murphy said that new members don’t know the history and it should be put on the website, he said the questions on the survey couldn’t be answered by new members. (Ex. What part will the AC play in the I O? Tee Ann said it is only temporary to help find projects.) Tee Ann said we should review the bylaws of the I O at the next meeting to see where we are now. Hilary said the I O will be in a different place in 5 years. Lynn said we may be in crisis mode because of the HABs and other problems.

Tee Ann said that a facilitator might help the I O through this rebuilding process. Deborah asked the name of the project: “The 2017 Restoration and Protection Plan”. Tee Ann wondered who would supply staff for this updated organization and Michael Murphy asked if there was grant money for staffing, Tee Ann said most likely not, and if there was, it would probably require a match. Owasco Lake Organization has a facilitator because they add a fee to water bills, Tompkins County doesn’t do that.

The fee structure of the I O needs to be updated as well; small munis pay the same as large ones (\$900); the lower fee should stay the same and the larger munis should pay more. Liz said Ulysses sees the value of help from CSI and pay a \$6,000 fee to them. If charging a fee, what is the product? The application for the current grant was received in 2015 and put into effect in 2019. Tee Ann would like administrative help for I O work. We are not as rich as the Lake Champlain and Lake George organizations and Governor Cuomo said there should be no special lake districts. We need someone to talk to higher level officials, ex. NY Senator Gillibrand wants national recognition for special areas, (the Erie Cana is one). There may be some way to get help because we are known for eco-culinary tourism and for the second year in a row, the Finger Lakes was voted the best wine district. Deborah said when Seneca Lake didn’t want the incinerator they got Senator Schumer’s help through the wine growers as they said it would ruin their business. Jennifer said the HABs are threatening our lake.

The I O Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was held on 8/29/19. There were about 25 attendees. After an introduction by Tee Ann Hunter, Katheen Bertuch, Program Manager and Environmental Manager for the Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board conducted the meeting. She talked about the history and goals of the I O and what they hope to accomplish now with the help of the AC. She would like munis to submit project ideas that will then be assigned to one of 10 action categories. She would like to get at least 20 projects that will get ranked and prioritized. Out of the 10 categories she has picked 4 to work on the soonest, they are: stormwater management and erosion control, forestry and silviculture management, wetland and riparian corridor management, and regulatory management. She asked members of the committee to sign up for at least one of these categories.

Submitted by Jackie Cassaniti