

Locally
Owned &
Operated

Tompkins Weekly

Your source for local news & events

Volume 8, No. 27 • May 5-11, 2014 **FREE**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...



City and town collaborate on sustainability planningpage 2

Shared Services Under Review

By Emily Thomas

The Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) addressed the shared services study required under the state budget tax freeze during its April 24 meeting, which also included a report from the cable committee and an update from the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) for the EPA.

Herb Engman suggested a different approach. “At some point you need to have a sagebrush rebellion against stupid state mandates, and this is one of them,” he said. He noted that if the Ithaca City School District significantly exceeds its tax cap—as it will do if the proposed \$113 million budget is approved this month—it will be difficult for neighboring and overlapping tax districts to

show a 1 percent reduction.

“I’d rather just say let’s forget the whole thing and tell [the state] Tompkins County is not going to play their game,” Engman said.

Town of Caroline Supervisor Don Barber said that the state fails to listen to municipalities. “We might as well be talking to ourselves in the corner. I’m very pessimistic about what is going to come out of this. In case you haven’t heard

the governor, we are the problem,” he said. “This problem is much bigger than we’re talking about—this is hoarding of the wealth by a few.”

He added, “We have to create a community in Tompkins County that keeps our wealth here. This is very serious. Local governments are under attack.” Barber called the tax freeze and property-owner rebate plan a “scam.”

City, Town Partner on Sustainability Plans

By Eric Banford

Nick Goldsmith has been the sustainability planner for the Town of Ithaca since 2012, also working with the Town of Dryden during that time. Now Goldsmith has shifted his focus from Dryden to the City of Ithaca, where he will help implement the city's and the town's respective energy action plans.

The Ithaca partnership was formed with a two-year grant from the Park Foundation, which will fund half of the staff and program costs. After the end of the grant period, the city and the town will maintain at least the current level of staff for sustainability work. "We are trying to institutionalize sustainability," says Town of Ithaca Supervisor Herb Engman. "This inter-municipal collaboration will allow both the town and the city to make progress towards that goal."

Goldsmith grew up in Ithaca and enjoys applying his knowledge of sustainability and energy to his hometown. He has a master's degree in energy management and a Certificate in Environmental Management from the New York Institute of Technology. He previously worked at Taitem Engineering conducting energy audits and energy analysis.

As sustainability coordinator, Goldsmith will focus on three major areas: transportation, buildings and energy sources. "My strategy in the beginning will be to find the overlap in the city's and the town's action plans, and out of that subset tackle the actions which are achievable in the short-term, have the biggest impact and have a feasible implementation cost," he says.

To reduce Ithaca's carbon emissions related to transportation, the goal is to get people out of single-occupancy vehicles and into carpools, buses, biking or walking, says Goldman. Way2Go, Ithaca Carshare, Zimride and TCAT are viable alternatives that could be expanded. Completion of the Black Diamond and other trails will make walking and biking easier for everyone.



Photo by Eric Banford

Nick Goldman is sustainability coordinator for both the City and Town of Ithaca.

Deciding when to invest in emerging technology is difficult, but by combining their resources, investing in a fleet of electric vehicles and charging stations becomes feasible for the city and town. A change in the law now allows municipalities to piggyback on each other's bids, making it possible to buy in bulk at a discount.

As for energy use in buildings, Goldsmith suggests that energy audits, followed by implementation of audit suggestions, will play a big part in reducing energy use. "Also, looking at the possibility of more advanced building codes could be another strategy," he says.

"Where is our energy coming from?" asks Goldsmith. "Is it from fossil fuels? Is it from renewables? The city already sources 100 percent of its energy from renewable sources via renewable-energy credits, and the town is looking into the best way to also do this. This is a good, short-term solution until we can get more renewables actually installed."

As for installing renewables, Goldsmith notes

that the Solar Tompkins project (www.solar-tompkins.org) helps businesses and individuals take advantage of bulk purchasing of solar panels, coordinated contracts with installers and a streamlined application and funding process to purchase and install panels.

Both the town and city may add even more momentum to this successful program. Goldsmith is going to set up tours of homes with solar panels. "We're trying to support the Solar Tompkins program as much as we can to boost the solar market," he says.

The Town of Ithaca will release its Comprehensive Plan soon, says Goldsmith, and sustainability is a key component. There is some great stuff around land-use planning, which will help on the transportation side, making things denser so there are more people to bike or walk. The city is also making sustainability a key theme in their plan," he says.

"We really have top-down support from the town and the city. I'll be working out of the mayor's office and the supervisor's office, which is important for two reasons. One is that it shows people that it is important to the municipalities. The other is that it reflects the cross-departmental nature of it. We're trying to institutionalize sustainability, to make it a part of the organization," Goldsmith says.

According to Engman, "Both the city and the town have their energy-management plans for internal operations, the city has already completed their community-wide energy action plan and the town is very close to being finished. So we knew that within a few months of the beginning of this year we would have to start the implementation stage of those plans. So, in reality, we've changed Nick's position from a sustainability planner to a sustainability manager."

To stay up to date on this project, sign up for the monthly electronic Ithaca Sustainability Newsletter at <http://tinyurl.com/k486cx6>. For more information, contact Nick Goldsmith at ngoldsmith@town.ithaca.ny.us, or call 273-1721, ext.136, or 917-270-1683.