



ONEIDA COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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ANTHONY J. PICENTE, JR.
County Executive
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Commissioner

Climate Smart Communities Task Force Meeting 1
July 8, 2024 at 9:30 AM
Oneida County Department of Planning
Union Station 321 Main St.
Utica, NY 13501

Attendance

Noreen Hartung	Housing Director, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA)
Allison Cox	Planning Director, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA)
Ed Stevens	Director, Oneida County Emergency Services
Chris Henry	Assistant Engineer, Oneida County Department of Public Works
Shaun Kaleta	Director of Economic Development, Oneida County
Joshua Olbrys	Executive Director, Oneida Herkimer Solid Waste Authority (OHSWA)
John Adams	NYSERDA Hub Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County
Matt Baisley	Commissioner, Oneida County Department of Public Works
James Genovese II	Commissioner, Oneida County Department of Planning
Kristin Campbell	Chief Planner, Oneida County Department of Planning
Amy Heiderich	Senior Planner, Oneida County Department of Planning

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting opened at 9:36 AM by James Genovese, the Climate Smart Communities Task Force Coordinator. Participants introduced themselves.

James gave a brief overview of the CSC Program. There are many reasons for being a certified CSC including providing the County with the ability to increase resiliency and energy efficiency and also helps to score additional points on certain grant applications. Oneida County passed a resolution in 2019 to register as a Climate Smart Community (CSC) and in 2022, passed a resolution to form the task force and assign a coordinator for the task force. These actions are mandatory to achieve certification. Oneida County cannot progress with the certification until the task force was created and met.

Oneida County has already completed several actions on the path to certification and most likely has completed many more actions the Oneida County Planning Department may be unaware and have not documented. The goal of this Task Force will be to assist in identifying some of these actions and provide documentation for submission to the NYS DEC to become a certified CSC.

Organization

The Task Force meetings are needed to review actions within the program that Oneida County can then use to achieve to gain Bronze Certification. There was discussion of how often to meet. Members agreed that one meeting per month, in the beginning, would be beneficial to discuss actions, documentation, and work to get the CSC actions completed. Once the group had a handle on activities then the task force could reduce the meetings to quarterly. The meeting day and time will be decided via Doodle Poll. All agreed that the Oneida County Planning Department Conference Room will work as a central location for meetings.

Climate Smart Communities Program Overview

There was discussion about Oneida County's participation in the program and additional partners on the Task Force. Amy provided a handout with links to several websites, including the CSC page where documentation about requirements for each action is available. If there is an action that other departments or agencies have done or will be completing the Planning Department will let the individual know exactly what documentation is required to get points for the action.

There was a discussion about additional members and sources of information. Hamilton College Environmental Science Program may be a good place to recruit assistance since the program requires a senior thesis. The students would be able to do some of the legwork in a greenhouse gas emissions inventory or writing a plan.

It was noted that Rich Fox from National Grid might be a good partner for joining the Task Force. National Grid has several programs that can assist in achieving actions, which are continually evolving.

Participants were given a spreadsheet with all potential actions showing which have been accomplished. The group started from the beginning and went through the actions and status of each action. For all of the action items, any documentation should be sent to Amy Heiderich – aheiderich@ocgov.net. The OC Planning Department will review and communicate exactly what documentation is needed to be submitted for points.

What are the criteria? For example, there are timers on the lights in the emergency services building. For items like lighting and other building efficiency measures, it is based on a total square footage of all County-owned buildings. Information will be provided at the next meeting.

Certification Activities

There was discussion on specific items in each category. Partnerships with other entities include working with neighboring communities and entities. Oneida County works with the Oriskany and Sauquoit Creeks Commissions. Oneida Herkimer Solid Waste Authority (OHSWA) handles recycling for five surrounding counties and green waste for Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

Greenhouse gas emissions inventory – the DPW can pull together the information needed to input into the emissions tool calculator and National Grid has all the available information for Kilowatt hours and Therms for any building that has a National Grid account. At this time, Oneida County

does not find it feasible to conduct a community GHG inventory. Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) mentioned that they have contracted with Steve Darman at Social Science Associates to look at ACS data that should have an emissions component. If this is the case, there may be an opportunity to complete this emissions report. The NYSERDA study will be circulated once it is complete, expected at the end of July.

The Climate Action Plan resulting from either GHG inventory does not have to be overreaching and could be accomplished with a consultant or any other available assistance. As with other action items, it does have to be a document with value that Oneida County will use to work further through the CSC actions. This is much more difficult to complete for an area with a population of 230,000 plus people.

DPW mentioned that Oneida County has 6,000 acres of forested land that can be used to sell carbon offsets or use them for the County. The Planning Department worked on forest management and will look into the potential. The forested land can be used to sell offsets and create a revenue stream. Several liberal arts colleges in the area will need to purchase offsets in the near future. This should be inventoried.

The Oneida County Office Building will be done with abatement next year. Once that is complete, there are a lot of action items that can be worked on. There is room for improvement in all buildings. The next step for the County Office Building should be replacing all of the windows.

There are green building certifications that can be acquired but they cost a lot of money. Oneida County does not want to invest in the actual certification but can follow some of the principles and guidelines outlined in these certification parameters and create County standards.

Oneida County DPW is working on fleet rightsizing. Once one year of data is collected, the DPW can assess and share the information. A County Fleet Program will determine shared use opportunities by utilizing GPS in all vehicles. Then, an efficiency policy can be set. Currently, the OC Airport has two EVs.

Oneida County is in the process of reviewing its purchasing policy. There may be an opportunity to add sustainable elements such as a green revolving fund and green purchasing policies. The green revolving fund is something the Board of Legislators would have to approve and know where the money is being spent. This has proven successful in other locations to grow the funding to support green projects.

There was a discussion about codes and the lack of enforcement due to officers often covering many municipalities. If Oneida County were to have its own codes Department, it would be housed in the Planning Department. This could provide a level of uniformity and enforcement.

A question was asked if air source heat pumps are also applicable for action points. The PE4 action states geothermal heat pumps. Wood pellets would be applicable since there is a tree planting requirement on the backend that creates a carbon sink with only nitrogen and methane being released.

County-hosted trainings can be a possibility to show municipalities what Oneida County has accomplished, what can be leveraged from other communities, and renewable energy certificates (RECs).

A question was asked about Oneida County industries beating emissions caps and selling credits. This is something that could be added to the County website. Edge should also have good information, especially on their brownfield redevelopment projects.

A question was asked about the requirements for the organics management plan and solid waste audit. OHSWA should have this information. Oneida County Planning will find out what the EPA WasteWise Program is. Oneida County Planning will also determine if we can piggyback actions off OHSWA or another similar entity. This may require obtaining the initial partnership resolution between Oneida County and OHSWA.

For starting a recycling program at the county, Diane Tinelli-Miller at the OC Health Dept would be a good contact. It was mentioned that there is a lack of recycling bins in the office spaces. Completing this action would require a significant amount of additional work for the cleaning crews and increase operational costs.

While all of the actions on this list will drive Oneida County towards certification, one of the largest emissions issues is transportation.

Can Oneida County receive credit for solar that is not on our property? It would be beneficial to speak with Dave Buck from the Oneida County IDA and check their policies.

What qualifies as green building? If the Aud Authority were to build a green building, Oneida County should be the one to get the action points. The same should be true for OHSWA and Water Pollution Control. Oneida County is in charge of all these entities but being separately designated allows them the flexibility to run as a business.

Town of Whitestown Sauquoit Creek projects are items that qualify for action points. Oneida County Planning will determine if that is possible. There was a discussion that this should be allowed due to funding coming in part from the local Oneida County Flood Mitigation Grant Program and Oneida County has sponsored grant applications with Whitestown as a sub-applicant..

A question was asked about whether County-run programs could qualify for points. For example, if MVCAA were to handle a CDBG program.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 AM with an agreement to meet once per month.