

Concerned About the Public Impacts of Gas Drilling, Tioga County Takes Action

A facilitated effort is underway in Tioga County to address natural gas drilling impacts and opportunities. A small working group assembled in early March with concerns about what gas drilling might hold for the public sectors of Tioga County. Members of the group recognized that these greater community concerns were either not being addressed or were being addressed piece meal by several public, not-for-profit and private organizations. This now formalized initiative, known as Tioga Investigates Natural Gas (TING), is an attempt to coordinate and streamline these fragmented activities. The purpose of TING is to address public sector impacts and opportunities related to natural gas drilling, not individual legal or lease-holder concerns. The intent of this effort is not to stop or hinder gas companies.

TING is designed to aid Tioga County in a coordinated approach to identifying and addressing public sector concerns through the use of a Steering Committee and stakeholder subcommittees. The TING Steering Committee - with input from numerous local and national sources - has identified impacts, issues and opportunities associated with the development and production of natural gas. The TING Steering Committee is forming subcommittees and matching identified issues with appropriately aligned stakeholders. Subcommittees will then investigate, research and provide recommendations to the TING Steering Committee. Through a designated liaison, stakeholder subcommittees report regularly to the TING Steering Committee. Those groups with authority to implement subcommittee suggestions and recommendations will be encouraged to follow through with agreed upon actions.

The TING Steering Committee currently includes eleven representatives from Tioga County including: the Legislature, Planning, Soil & Water Conservation District, Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP), Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Council of Governments, Environmental Management Council, a business representative (appointed by the Chamber of Commerce) and members at large. County Planning Director Elaine Jardine provides staff support.

Recently formed subcommittees include: Roads and Infrastructure (Temporary Chair, John Schumacher); Water Quality (Chair, Hans Peters); Workforce Development (Temporary Chair, Andy Fagan); and Public Safety (Chair, Dick LeCount). Other issues identified to date where stakeholder subcommittees might focus efforts include: business opportunities, employment, local economy, taxes, education, and housing. Other environmental concerns to be addressed include additional water issues, soils, landscape, and pollution.

The TING Steering Committee is encouraging the collaboration of public agencies, municipal officials and private groups, as well as interested individuals to address the myriad of public sector issues associated with natural gas drilling. Subcommittee members are being identified and recruited based on the issues identified. Membership of stakeholder subcommittees is intended to be inclusive and dynamic.

For more information about TING contact the Tioga County Planning Director, Elaine Jardine: By mail: 56 Main Street, Owego NY 13827; By phone: 687-8257; By fax: 687-1435; By email: jardinee@co.tioga.ny.us.