

TCLocal Meeting Minutes: July 1, 2006

Submitted by Bethany Schroeder

Roll Call

Jon Bosak, Marty Hiller, Angelika Rumberger, Bethany Schroeder, Simon St. Laurent

Guest introductions

Fred Curtis, Professor of Economics, Drew University

Regrets

Meredith Graham, Jen Maffett, Ed Mikula, Terry Moore, Kate Quinn-Jacobs

Postmortems

June 4: Social Justice Committee of Ithaca Monthly Meeting of Friends (Hector Meetinghouse on Perry City Road, 11:45 a.m.)—Due to poor turn out, members elected to postpone the presentation until late summer or early fall. Members did take away TCLocal brochures.

June 22: Brief TCLocal presentation and screening of “The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil” (Ithaca College, Center for Natural Sciences, Building #23, Room 112, 6:30 p.m.) Jon’s presentation and the film were well received by a small audience.

June 26: Presentation to Mayor Peterson and interested Council members and staff. Jon had at least one particularly skeptical Council member in the audience, but a few participants stayed afterwards to share ideas and to express admiration for the TCLocal project in general.

June 27: Peak Oil discussion group (Autumn Leaves). We had several new members and a lively discussion. The group will try working within the framework of a selected reading each meeting, but for now this will be the only structure imposed on the meetings.

Upcoming TCLocal events

July 12: Presentation to Tompkins County Environmental Management Council

July 18: Peak Oil discussion group (Autumn Leaves, Ithaca, 7 p.m.) — *Bethany et al.*

Articles

Ithaca Times: An article of questionable focus with several misconstrued points was published in the June 28 issue. Bethany has begun to work with the editor to rectify misconceptions and perhaps to write another article from TCLocal’s perspective.

The Great Turning site (<http://thegreatturning.net/Tompkins.php>): We were invited to post and provide links to this site. TCLocal’s documents can now be viewed from this link.

The Underground Collective: In an ongoing effort to educate the community about the issue, Bethany published another peak oil article with this quarterly paper.

Interviews

KDNK, Carbondale, CO (Jerome Osentowski, director of CRMPI, see crmpi.org): Bethany spent an hour on the air with the host of a program historically devoted to energy and permaculture issues. Some members of the Carbondale community are in the early stages of peak oil

planning, and they wanted to hear about our strategies and some of what we've accomplished up to this point.

WHCU, Ithaca (Dave Vieser): Jon did a brief radio spot with WHCU in the early morning hours prior to his presentation at City Hall.

Orion: Seth Zuckerman contacted TCLocal for information about relocalization efforts. He interviewed Bethany (Jon had a last-minute conflict) for an hour, asking questions about peak oil, our efforts to gather supporting data for relocalization, as well as international peak oil activities. Zuckerman is attempting to interest his editors at Orion in a relocalization article; if successful, he'll contact us in the fall.

TCLocal ad in the Ithaca Newsletter Alternatives publication

We'll use ideas from the brochure, along with our logo. Jon will develop the ad.

Research progress reports

Kate (inserted from email)

Psychosocial: Have done enough exploring in this area to come to the following initial impressions:

1) Nothing in the conventional sector quite fits, because most sociologists aren't looking at how society responds to the end of life as we know it. If anyone is aware of a branch of sociology that does, please let me know. Not unlike financial advisers who take limitless growth and free market capitalism as givens, and therefore can't advise you on post-carbon investment strategies, mainstream sociology and psychology simply isn't working in the right paradigm to address this issue.

2) Some peak oil and environmental activists, however, are attempting to delve into this area, but (of course) it's not very scientific and since we've never been here before it's all conjecture. These include:

- * Joanna Macy, a systems theorist and Buddhist monk, who brings 30 plus years of anti-nuke and environmental activism experience to the table; her work on despair and empowerment has a great deal of crossover for energy descent, but is focused on the needs of activists and how activists respond within the larger community,
- * The Cultural Creatives, sociologists whose work centers on examining American sub-cultures, particularly the 50 million Americans who aren't advocating the status quo,
- * Richard Heinberg, who advocates "lifeboat" communities,
- * Rob Hopkins, who integrates Macy's work with peak oil on his website TransitionCulture.org from Kinsale, Ireland,
- * David Korten, whose recent book, /The Great Turning/, pushes the discussion a step further by examining the roots of empire and how that frames our self-concept; Korten makes an interesting contribution in bringing evolutionary psychology to the conversation.

3) Although there isn't much precedent for studying the psychology of energy descent, there is for societal collapse due to other factors, such as war, regime change, currency devaluation, and natural disasters. Have been trying to keep to fairly recent examples of this, so I've been spending time (with few results) researching the psychosocial responses of the following:

- * the damaged electrical grid in Iraq post US-led invasion in 2003-present, responses to rationing, rolling blackouts and power scarcity.
- * Russia & Cuba after the fall of the Soviet empire in the early 1990's,
- * the Argentinian currency collapse of 2000,
- * the U.S. response to Katrina in 2005.

Would also like to look closer at Haiti (which has devastated its side of Hispaniola through Easter Island scale deforestation) and the global depression of the 1930's.

The general problem I'm finding is that there doesn't seem to be much out there on how the "experience" of these disasters has played out for average people. So looking for coping skills or identifying cultural shifts or psychological profiles of surviving populations is difficult.

Home Preparedness: There is a lot of good information out there on this topic. I continue to work on PreparedTompkins.org, adding to the posts regularly. Have long-term PT.org projects underway that will be useful to TCLocal: developing a food calculator tailored to our local area as well as a preparedness calendar for home use.

Water Update from Risa: Bethany has that.

Catholic Worker Presentation: Still haven't gotten a definitive response from the CW group yet - typical!

4-H Presentation: Theresa George has offered to put the TCLocal prez on the 4-H agenda this fall. Theresa saw the prez at Sustainable Tompkins and wants to "do something."

Water report

Risa Sokolosky attended a presentation about the commercialization of regional water resources. She brought back many resources, as well as contact information, which Bethany will archive in the event that water becomes a TCLocal research area.

Marty

Has worked on methane research recently, including humanure. Discussed issues related to purification and whether it needs to be used on site or put it in a tank to be used locally. Could a tractor be run off of it? Town is looking at methane to generate electricity. Also looking at the economics of forest

gardening.

New topic suggestion: landscaping with food plants.

Simon

Not finding much documentation under the sorts of circumstances we're up against. Trying to make human connections, such as interviewing officials. Looking for information on road degradation—finding information about fixing roads, but unable to get information about what happens when you let roads go. A Highway school program is offered at IC every year; will endeavor to get admitted into the class.

Fred (Curtis) recommended looking at using spent tires in augmenting road construction. Simon is worried about bridges; recommends finding an engineer to consult with us. We'll need a triage list of most important resources.

Angelika

Interviewing orchard owners and has started finding articles. Described for TCLocal members polyculture management and organic techniques for growing apples.

Bethany

Has begun to post articles, but much as others have learned in their searches, is unable to find many germane resources. TC Department of Public Health will send annual report as soon as it's available which, for the near future, will remain in hard copy only. Hoping to interview a disaster management specialist who consults with TCLocal about potential resources.

TCLocal site

Metadata review: discussed sort issues, date entry, name page search upgrade. Interface suggestions: tabled.

Action Item review

Simon will get instructions on PDF to Jon. ASAP. **Jon** will choose a style guide by the time of the next meeting. **Marty** will get the Small Farms and CU Extension mail list contacts to Jon.

Other business

For those who don't have time for the entire Joseph Tainter tome, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, Jon recommend an article by Tainter, available on the TCLocal site at http://www.tclocal.org/tmp/audm_y2VFjtainter-1996.pdf.

Fred Curtis distributed copies of his article "Eco-localism and sustainability" (*Ecological Economics* 46 (2003) 83-102).

Next meeting

September 9, 5-7 p.m. Dinner plans TBA.