

Town of Pompey ECC Minutes -DRAFT

Date: July 1, 2025

Time Meeting Called to Order: 7:02 P.M.

Attendees in-person: Chair: Phil George, Deputy Chair: Kathy Bertuch, Adam Scalise, Craig Dennis, Beth Aust, Pauline Drexler, Martha Viglietta

Attendees online: None

Absent: John Herrington, Stan Gorman

July1 Recording Secretary:

Beth Aust

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

The June meeting minutes were approved without change.

Updates (Chair):

Monthly Communications - Paulie will write the next article for the "Planet Pompey" blog. <https://www.townofpompey.org/blog>

Continuing Business:

Earth Day - Tree cost (\$36 pp): ECC members paying back Paulie. ECC members covered the cost of the 500 trees given to the community.

Fall Contest - will revisit. (pumpkin carving, snowman) will revisit in the near future.

New Business:

Tree City USA

Leanna Nugent, Community Forestry and Natural Resources Educator from Cornell Cooperative Extension, gave a presentation on the Tree City USA program at the June Town Board meeting. The Town is interested in pursuing a Tree City USA designation, and the ECC will support this effort. Several others have expressed interest in helping, including Bill Lipe and Ann Christmas.

David Skeval from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County was present at tonight's ECC meeting and provided an overview of the program and its potential benefits for the Town of Pompey. These benefits include access to grant opportunities, support for green infrastructure projects, improved tree management (including addressing invasive species such as the Asian longhorn beetle), and promoting community tree stewardship.

Adam emphasized the importance of biodiversity in tree plantings as a safeguard for the community's tree canopy. Craig proposed replanting areas affected by the loss of ash trees.

To achieve the Tree City USA designation, the Town must meet four key requirements. The ECC will help document how the Town already meets these requirements, assist in developing any missing elements—such as the required ordinance—and support the application process, which opens in the fall. Bill Lipe and Ann Christmas will help draft the necessary ordinance.

Dave also shared information about the CommuniTree Steward Program, a volunteer service initiative through Cornell Cooperative Extension that provides training in tree biology, identification, planting, and maintenance for young trees, helping to educate and engage community volunteers.

The group discussed the program's benefits, raised questions about requirements and grant eligibility (including for public vs. private land), and clarified ECC's potential role as the Town's Tree Committee. Dave will follow up to get answers to these questions.

Paulie will take the lead on coordinating the Tree City USA effort for the ECC. ECC will continue to review for a possible application this fall versus next year.

DEC Grants for Climate Smart Communities (Dave S./John)

Leanna Nugent also gave a presentation on DEC grant opportunities at the June Town Board meeting. These grants are available to municipalities for eligible climate change mitigation, adaptation, planning, and assessment projects. The Town has asked the ECC to review potential projects that might align with this grant program and make recommendations accordingly. The current grant application deadline is July 31, 2025.

John has agreed to lead this effort for the ECC, with support from Leanna Nugent of Cornell Cooperative Extension. David Skeval from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County attended tonight's ECC meeting and provided an overview of the DEC grants and their requirements.

The ECC group discussed possible project ideas. Martha shared that she spoke with John Shaneen from the Planning Board, who recommended that the ECC coordinate with the Highway Department. The ECC can help review and advise on potential projects, but the Highway Department would be responsible for submitting the grant application.

While the current deadline is July 31, 2025, there may be future rounds of funding and additional opportunities if the timeline for this round is not feasible. The group acknowledged that the application process may be complex, but agreed that preliminary discussions should begin.

The ECC will reach out to B.R. Way, the Highway Supervisor, to discuss possible project ideas and feasibility. Craig suggested exploring a grant application for "live blade" or "live edge" snow plows—a technology that improves snow removal efficiency and performance, and may reduce salt usage.

Norbut Solar Project

The ECC members received and reviewed the complete Solar Project application packet, which includes seven PDFs and two additional linked files. Members also reviewed the May 2025 Onondaga County Planning Board

meeting minutes and the Town of Pompey Solar Law.

The proposed project is an Industrial Tier 3 Solar Facility located on Sweet Road, with access points on Broadfield Road. This site is **not** included on the ECC's recommended solar site suitability list.

The project requires a variance before it can proceed. It is scheduled to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on June 9, and it will likely take at least two months for a variance determination. Until the variance is granted, the project cannot advance. The Town of Pompey Zoning Board will hold a public hearing on July 14. The Town Board will have the final authority on this project's approval.

The ECC discussed the project's potential benefits and concerns. Adam noted that the NYS wetland maps (NYS Wet Mapper) may underestimate actual wetland areas, so wetland boundaries on the property should be verified in the field.

Beth pointed out that, according to the Town's Solar Law, the total coverage of all structures on a lot, including Tier 3 ground-mounted solar energy systems, shall not exceed 50% of the lot area. Additionally, it shall not exceed 50% of any prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance as defined by state or federal law. Based on the application, the entire site is 101.68 acres—if all of it qualifies as prime or important farmland, the maximum allowed disturbance would be about 50.8 acres. However, the applicant indicates that 64.71 acres would be disturbed, exceeding the 50% limit.

The application also states that the project would be located at 00 Sweet Road (Tax IDs 03.-1-17.6 and 03.-1-7.17) and is intended to generate renewable energy for the community's benefit. The ECC raised the question of how exactly this project will deliver renewable energy to the local community, and what tangible benefits Pompey residents will see, such as local energy use, cost savings, tax revenue, or community energy access.

The ECC also shared additional concerns regarding the proposed project. Members discussed the risks associated with solar battery storage, including potential fire hazards and overall community safety. There were also concerns about the proposed project site being located within an area of archaeological significance, with an archaeological trail potentially passing through the site. Additionally, members noted that the significant loss of trees cannot realistically be offset through replanting due to the scale of removal proposed in the application.

According to the application, the site currently has 47.28 acres of forested land, which would be reduced to 17.43 acres after project completion—a net loss of approximately 29.85 acres of forest. The Solar Law requires that tree removal be minimized or offset through replanting on-site; however, the application indicates that the trees removed would instead be disposed of in a NYS-approved landfill.

Adam noted that a New York State wetland jurisdictional determination may be necessary to confirm if any areas on the site qualify as regulated freshwater wetlands under the Freshwater Wetlands Act.

The committee discussed and agreed that the Town's Solar Law should be reviewed and updated, including provisions for solar battery storage.

The ECC will continue to review the application and compile a list of questions and recommendations. ECC members will forward to Kathy. Kathy will draft a consolidated list and compile it into a single document for submission.

Next meeting date & time: August 7, 2025 at 7 pm

Meeting time adjourned: 8:30 PM

Minutes written by: Beth Aust