

Local lawmaker, 25, picked to talk at UN summit

Caroline board member part of climate change delegation

By *Tim Ashmore*

Journal Staff

Town of Caroline board member Dominic Frongillo, one of a handful of local lawmakers younger than 25, has been leading Energy Independent Caroline since its creation in 2006.

Frongillo will take his concern for climate change a few levels beyond Caroline when he and 21 other delegates selected by SustainUS, a national not-for-profit, give a presentation at a United Nations summit in December in Bali, Indonesia.

SustainUS chairwoman Erin Kenzie said the selection committee was searching for a diverse, active group of participants to discuss what policies should replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Frongillo called the group's presence an attempt to show the rest of the world that the United States government's recent concern, or lack thereof, on global climate change does not reflect the feelings of young people in the country.

"I want to have a direct voice in international policy that will decide our future," Frongillo wrote in an e-mail. "In 2006 I attended the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development. I saw first hand international policy negotiations and I saw an opportunity for youth to inspire our leaders to action."

Frongillo is one of those young leaders. In 2006 he was elected to the Caroline Town Board; he was 23. He has played an integral part in Energy Independent Caroline; participated in "Powershift 2007," the first national youth climate change summit; attended "Pathways to a Sustainable World Conference" in Rochester; and has held other leadership roles on committees in Tompkins County.

Frongillo said Energy Independent Caroline has been working for the last year to determine what it would take to make Caroline completely energy independent. He said one wind turbine of two to three megawatts could power the town, and the group of volunteers is looking into what needs to be done to make that happen.

Kenzie said she is aware of the work Frongillo does in Caroline and said the global-local

detachment is something she hopes SustainUS can mend.

”There's a disconnect between people who are involved locally and the people who are involved at an international level, and both ends of the spectrum could be better informed if they were more in touch,” Kenzie said.

Frongillo has been involved with SustainUS in the past and said he thinks the SustainUS group will provide a voice on climate change for young people.

”We fully intend to use our position as young people - people that have to live with the consequences (of climate change) - to make our voices heard,” he said. “The vast majority of young people want to take climate change seriously and want to act now.”