

**TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting
May 12, 2010

Members present: Chairwoman Brenda Cagle, Susan Ellis, Laurie Husted, Zoie Riel, Denis Collet, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Anne Rubin

Guests: Councilwoman Micki Strawinski, Larry Thetford

Chairwoman Brenda Cagle called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. At 7:15 P.M., The CAC joined the Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing on the variance requested for a photovoltaic array installation proposal by Carlos Gonzalez of Spring Lake Road.

ZBA Chairman Nick Annas called the public hearing to order and detailed the request for a variance from the zoning requirement of a 60 foot set-back from the property line for free standing photovoltaic installation. He noted that the request had been adjusted to 30 feet and that visibility of the proposal was the only issue of the variance. He added that there was no need for a variance if the project was placed beyond the 60 foot set-back, and there would be no conditions required.

Nick read a letter from the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) supporting the variance and the importance of making allowance for the needs for siting of renewable energy systems, as a continuation of the Town's measures to address climate change and promote energy conservation. ZBA member John Douglas asked the CAC about the Town photovoltaic grants. Laurie Husted answered that American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money is funding the new New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) grant. John also asked if Laurie knew where NYSERDA's basic funding came from, and she answered from the public benefit charge on electric bills.

Denis Collet of the CAC read his own letter to the ZBA in support of the variance and consideration for renewable energy systems. He added that the engineering study performed by Hudson Valley Clean Energy followed the standard practice for determining optimum siting for photovoltaic systems.

Harold Fivelsdal and Thomas Grieb, property owners across the street from the proposal expressed their objections to the visibility of the proposed solar array and asked for denial of the variance or adjustments to mitigate the visibility. ZBA Chairman Nick Annas proposed a continuation of the public hearing at the site and set a date of Thursday, May 14 at 4:30 P.M., asking all interested parties to attend.

The CAC proceeded to move to resume its own meeting. ZBA member John Douglas stepped in to inform the CAC that there is a group of residents that want to propose restrictions on wind and solar energy sitings. The CAC continued the discussion of issues in renewable energy siting. Anne Rubin said that the CAC needs to educate the public and put the current proposal in the context of what is

already permissible. Zoie Riel asked if there would be a potential to increase the solar array to cover the neighbors' electric needs. Denis Collet noted that if we accept aesthetic criteria as a legitimate reason to deny renewable energy sitings it would be detrimental to progress in reducing carbon emissions. He added that the real impact would be on the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, which tries to make renewable energy affordable, but will be constrained by objections.

MINUTES OF APRIL 14, 2010 MEETING: For the minutes of the April meeting, Brenda Cagle wanted to distinguish that under the CENTERS AND GREENSPACES discussion, the 5 subsections were mostly LEED standards. Laurie Husted noted that in the 4th paragraph of that discussion, environmentally constrained lots should read environmentally constrained areas. She added that in the 2nd paragraph of the NYSERDA Grant Update that Purchasing Agent Ted Kudzy, not the Energy Subcommittee, would put out the Requests for Proposals. The minutes were approved as amended with a motion made by Laurie Husted and seconded by Zoie Riel.

RUTH OJA ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP: Zoie Riel presented an additional application for the scholarship. CAC members will need to review and do a vote by e-mail, so that the award can be announced at the June 3 high school awards night.

FOIL REQUEST: Brenda Cagle reported that Denise Barton gave the FOIL files to her and that the answers have already been sent to the person requesting them. Brenda noted that Denise has needed to resign from the CAC and that all her contributions to the CAC have been much appreciated.

VERNAL POOL SURVEY: Brenda Cagle reported that the Vernal Pool Survey is finished for this year, though not all scheduled could be surveyed. The CAC needs to pull together to be prepared to make the project more complete next year. Michael Klemens will put together the results of the work done, and hopefully have additional suggestions and help for improving the work next year.

PSYCHOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP: Laurie Husted attended the workshop at Norrie Point Environmental Center, and said that the message hasn't been effective so far on climate change. There was discussion about how to improve it.

EARTH DAY EVENT AT "GREEN FAIR" AT THE DUTCHESS COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS: Brenda Cagle reported that a lot of people stopped when she was at the CAC booth. The "toad abodes" were an attraction, and the CAC ran out of materials. There were pamphlets on lawn reduction, and backyard wildlife habitat information from the National Wildlife Foundation. Brenda noted that a riding lawnmower produces the same amount of emissions as 14 cars for the same amount of time used.

WATERSHED AWARENESS MONTH: July is Watershed Awareness Month, and Sheila Buff has suggested doing a film festival on a weeknight in July at the Elmendorph Inn. Anne Rubin asked if it could include the 1st part of the aquifer

presentation; she could condense it to 20 minutes. She noted that the suggested movie, "Flow" (For the Love of Water) would take about an hour. The CAC asked Anne to bring her presentation to the next meeting to see if it would fit in.

INTERNS/VOLUNTEERS: There has been no response to notifications for an intern position. Laurie Husted will see if a Bard summer student would be willing to work 60 hours for \$600. Brenda Cagle asked CAC members to develop a list of volunteer opportunities that could be posted at the High School for students who need to fulfill community outreach requirements. Zoie Riel suggested putting out a flyer, and noted that she wants an intern to expand the waste audit program. Laurie will ask if a student is interested.

HABITAT PROTECTION: The CAC has worked on biodiversity and vernal pool projects, and needs to put the information together to present to the Town Board. Anne Rubin noted that the original intention was to have the Biodiversity Maps be the official habitat maps. Brenda Cagle agreed that yes they could be, and if the CAC gets more funding, they will be upgraded to complete more areas. Anne Rubin suggested asking the Town of Hyde Park for advice about how they have handled theirs, and asking Hyde Park CAC Chairwoman Emily Svenson to speak about wetlands at the next CAC meeting.

Brenda noted that Hudsonia was supposed to give feedback to the Biodiversity projects, but that money ran short. Brenda asked Larry Thetford if he could access the Biodiversity Mapping money left from the Town. She will ask Andrew at Hudsonia if \$600 - \$800 would be enough to cover a report.

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION: Brenda Cagle reported that the Red Hook Village Trustees are looking for groundwater protection information and guidelines. Anne Rubin is willing to give the presentation that she developed on aquifers. She will find out what their schedule will be. She also thinks that the Village of Tivoli should be invited.

Brenda Cagle noted that Phoebe Prentice has asked if the Town can help with advice in working to improve the environment of the Village pond. She owns one of the houses beside it. The pond often has an algae bloom because of receiving drainage with excess nutrients.

MEETING DATE: There was discussion of whether or not the first Wednesday of the month would be a good meeting date for all members.

Brenda Cagle asked CAC members to be proactive in seeking a member to replace Denise Barton, whose many contributions will be missed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, June 9, 2010 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary