

Draft

TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting

September 14, 2011

Members present: Chairwoman Brenda Cagle, Susan Ellis, Sarah Imboden, Denis Collet, Karen Schneller-McDonald, Laurie Husted (7:55P.M.) Absent: Anne Rubin, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Zoie Riel

Guests: Energy Manager Anne Marie Hirschberger, Rich Schiafo (Climate Action Plan Director for the City of Kingston)

CALL TO ORDER: Chairwoman Brenda Cagle called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. She introduced new CAC member Karen Schneller-McDonald to the members and guests. She also introduced former CAC member Rich Schiafo as Director of the Climate Action Plan for the City of Kingston.

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 10, 2011 MEETING: The minutes of the August 10, 2011 meeting were approved with a motion made by Denis Collet and seconded by Sarah Imboden.

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES REVIEW: Sarah Imboden reported on the Planning Board minutes for August 1 and August 15, 2011. The most relevant issue was the application for and approval of a special permit for construction of a garage/studio in the flood fringe zone of the Sawkill Creek. The studio will have a bathroom connected to the existing septic system. CAC members discussed possible issues with the situation. The Planning Board has required that the owners address the elevations and flood proofing to reflect the 100 year flood level. Susan Ellis noted that having a bathroom in the accessory building meant that potentially it could be used for residential purposes, adding that some of the current special permit requests have been for accessory apartments. Denis Collet said that if the septic system arrangement meets Health Department regulations, the CAC would have no need to comment. Brenda Cagle asked Sarah if she would check on that; Sarah will call the Planning office.

RUTH OJA ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND: Brenda Cagle reported that a donation has been received for the Ruth Oja Environmental Scholarship Fund. She asked Secretary Susan Ellis if she would write a thank you note to Ruth Oja, who made the donation.

SOLAR MEMO: Brenda Cagle asked Denis Collet if he did have a chance to review the solar siting memo. Denis will do that. He asked if Brenda wanted the answer to the about information for putting a display in the Town Hall lobby for the new solar panels. Denis said that the least cost situation would be engaging Locus Monitoring, who provides the current display. They have a package which is an online service and costs about \$2,500. It would allow a display which shows continuous updates and requires a dedicated laptop or PC in the lobby attached to the display website. Denis estimated that it might cost \$4,000 - \$5,000 total. Brenda asked why it would be so much more expensive than the current display. Denis replied that the new equipment would use different inverters, noting that the current display is not really expressing the improvements that have been made. Brenda asked if Denis would recommend taking down the current display. Denis said that he would not, but would recommend thinking about getting the budget large enough to include the new system. He feels that

the advertising is important to the message that we are trying to put out to residents about solar power. He added that it would be possible to have a volunteer to collect the information and upload it to the CAC website.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CAP) UPDATE: Brenda Cagle noted that Rich Schiafo (Climate Action Plan Director for the City of Kingston) was in attendance for the discussion of the Climate Action Plan update, and Energy Manager Anne Marie Hirschberger would review her outline of the current status of the Plan.

Reduction goals: Anne Marie began with the Reduction Goals, stating that her research and discussions have indicated that a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 15% below 2005 levels by the year 2020 is reasonable and aligned with ICLEI Climate Action recommendations. She added that about 160 cities have signed on to that goal.

CAC members discussed the goal. Brenda Cagle said that she assumed that the Town Board would have to adopt that goal as a part of the CAP. She added that perhaps it would be better if the CAC asked that it be adopted as soon as the CAC agrees. Anne Marie agreed that it might be the better way. Other CAC members offered different opinions about the goal. Denis Collet felt that it was too conservative and unrealistic in a negative way, as those targets might be easily achieved with market and economic driven reductions in use. He suggested that it was not an aggressive enough target to really encourage the public to significantly change their energy use habits. Sarah Imboden asked Rich Schiafo what Kingston is doing with their goals; he replied that Kingston hasn't decided yet for its CAP. Anne Marie agreed that it would be good to be more aggressive, but noted that feedback from Northern Westchester Energy Action group is that reductions are very difficult to achieve. Denis added that changes in building codes, insulation requirements, quality of materials, car mileage, etc. are all independent of what our efforts are, so that technically if the CAP did nothing, the carbon footprint per capita would probably go down. He said that the CAC needs to have a discussion of what is real effort versus "riding the wave." Anne Marie said that the Town of Bedford has chosen a goal of 20% by 2020, and Red Hook can, too

Rich Schiafo asked if the CAC has looked into how much energy reduction has occurred from the 2005 baseline created for Red Hook, which would be useful. Denis Collet said a baseline is necessary, but that the CAC never got complete information from Central Hudson about energy use by sector, rate class, whether or not commercial, residential or industrial. Laurie Husted and Anne Marie disagreed. Rich Schiafo said that he obtained information from Glynnis Bunt, who is the head of the Cost and Rate Center. Denis asked if she gave Rich information on the demographics. Rich went to get the data on housing - occupied and unoccupied homes. Denis added that we need that demographic information to be able to relate increases or decreases in power use to increases or decreases in population. Rich suggested that the a more aggressive goal be set for Town operations, such as 25% by 2020 and use 15% for the Town as a whole.

Denis said that there are two approaches to be used for gathering information for a proper data base; he feels that there is a gap in information. The Town could go to the community and ask for volunteered information from residents about their energy use, or go to the supplier for gross statistics, as they are reluctant to release potentially personal information. He added that the utility really should be obligated to be transparent. Denis mentioned the Dutchess County survey access map, which should give gross data on type of fuel used that can be matched with census data to determine how many households are using which type of energy.

Karen Schneller-McDonald said that since Denis is talking about reducing the cost of energy in a household, which would be a consumption issue, that it would be something that could be measured. She added that her question is whether or not the Energy Group of the CAC has information on what % of greenhouse gas emissions comes from different kinds of sources. Anne Marie replied that intern Lindsay Chapman had provided some of

that data, with the Municipal Sector data being the most accurate. Karen added that she was asking what kinds of energy use contribute the most to greenhouse gases, not who is using it. She wanted to know what she could do that would produce the best result of reducing carbon footprint; she asked if that is the type of information built into the program, to help the homeowner pick and choose. Anne Marie replied that is why the plan is designed to show all the different suggestions, including showing the cost of making changes and the savings that would be realized. Anne Marie added that the Energy Group would prioritize the suggestions. Karen suggested that this would be a better focus of effort than worrying about percentages of reduction. Susan Ellis added that the goal is a good thing, but the program needs to have other means to reach people, as some mind sets do not fall into the pattern of the goal. Some people do not believe in the reality of climate change, and do not respond to the incentive of saving money by reducing energy use. Anne Marie agreed, saying that the Energy Group needs to find ways to promote the goals.

There was discussion of developing a better logo; Anne Marie noted that she hoped to be able to get a graphic designer to help pro bono. Sarah Imboden asked about branding, saying that she has her 10% Challenge sticker in her car and has been asked what it means. Susan Ellis said that meant that the sticker has been successful in opening a dialogue, which is the beginning of making an impact.

Updated timeline: Anne Marie Hirschberger next discussed an updated timeline. She said that after speaking with the new Director at Pace University, they agreed that it would be a better use of time to take September to draft the Climate Action Plan and do the Stakeholder Outreach in October, because he suggested that there would not be such substantial public comment that it would take very long to incorporate it into the plan. Anne Marie added that she wants the Plan finalized by the end of the year, but that it might be better to avoid the holidays and release it in January 2012.

Metrics: Anne Marie returned to the subject of metrics, asking how the Energy Group is going to quantify reductions. She added that it basically would mean doing an inventory every year and measuring the progress from that. Rich Schiafo suggested that the Town needs to do it by energy use every year. Brenda Cagle asked why Central Hudson couldn't give monthly updates; Denis said that it would be important to have data broken down by month to allow analysis of the fluctuation of demand. Brenda added that it should be a part of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to set up the process by which the Energy Group has regular feedback. Laurie Husted added that the Energy Group needs cooperation from the oil suppliers to develop good data on home heating fuel consumption.

Website: Anne Marie Hirschberger asked the CAC to have its website ready to connect for information on the Climate Action Plan (CAP). She suggested that it be set up for postings, rather than a new page. Laurie Husted suggested that there is a company that helps small communities with this.

Implementation: Anne Marie asked the CAC to think about who would be responsible for various sections of the CAP, such as Energy, Transportation, Water, School District, etc. For example, Highway Superintendent Theresa Burke might be the Transportation Sector coordinator. The Energy Group would need to speak with those people ahead of time, and Brenda Cagle suggested that it would be a good time to meet with just those people. Denis Collet asked how the CAC would define the stakeholders, suggesting that it might be more realistic to find someone with the time and energy to coordinate a sector of the plan and look for expertise as an accessory resource. Laurie Husted said that ultimately it is the responsibility of the whole community. Denis suggested that there is a difference between accountability and responsibility; it is a practical approach to identify who is accountable and who is responsible. Sarah Imboden said that her impression at the last meeting was that the CAC was trying to make sure to identify a qualified person from each area, so that when the process reaches the point of implementation we would be able to consult those people. Sarah asked how Anne Marie

envisioned setting up the roles. Brenda Cagle suggested that when the CAC sees the draft CAP, it may be more clear. Anne Marie noted that for the Town of Bedford, there is a committee set up for each sector.

Rich Schiafo left at 8:53 P.M.

There was further discussion of coordinating implementation, focusing on the Transportation Sector and the number of separate transportation responsibilities, including the Town Highway Department, the School District, Bard College. Susan Ellis suggested a dialogue with the County LOOP bus system.

HARDSCRABBLE DAY, September 24, 2011: The CAC will staff a table from 10 A.M. – 4 P.M. Set-up will be at 9:30 A.M., and Brenda Cagle asked if everyone could share some time that day. Sarah Imboden can do most of the day; Susan Ellis said that she could work in the afternoon. Laurie Husted will be doing the bicycle raffle and Pedal On project. Anne Marie Hirschberger will be there all day. She discussed having information for the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and a suggestion box for ideas. Brenda thanked Sarah Imboden for writing to get the Dutchess County trolley for public transportation. Sarah will do plastic bag flyers for Hardscrabble Day. Laurie Husted described the Moving Planet activities – the bike decorating, bike rack logo contest and bike raffle.

Karen Schneller-McDonald left at 9:15 P.M.

KIOSK AT RECYCLING CENTER: Brenda Cagle noted that Supervisor Sue Crane really wants to have an information kiosk between the Highway Garage and the Recycling Center. The CAC thinks that it is a good idea. Brenda called Scenic Hudson for some recommendations on types of kiosk structures. Susan Ellis asked if there is a timeline. Brenda replied that Sue Crane is leaving the recommendations to the CAC, though she wants a recognition of the Department of Conservation (DEC) grant support.

Anne Marie Hirschberger left at 9:18 P.M. Denis Collet left at 9:24 P.M.

CAC BUDGET: Brenda Cagle asked for any CAC needs to be covered by the monies remaining in this year's budget. The CAC suggested the cost of one of the bike racks that will be installed in Town, and a recorder for the Secretary's use.

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

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary