

Draft

TOWN OF RED HOOK

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting

January 11, 2012

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Karen Schneller McDonald, Sarah Imboden, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Susan Ellis, Denis Collet (7:21) Absent: Zoie Riel, Anne Rubin

Guest: Councilwoman Brenda Cagle

NEW CHAIRWOMAN: Former Chairwoman Brenda Cagle announced that Laurie Husted has been appointed Chairwoman for a one year term. CAC members congratulated Laurie.

CALL TO ORDER/MINUTES OF DECEMBER 14, 2011 MEETING: Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:20 P.M. The minutes of the December 14, 2011 meeting were approved with a motion made by Sarah Imboden and seconded by Laurie Husted.

BARD COLLEGE STUDENT INTERNS: Laurie Husted reported that she has checked with Bard about the student interns and has no answer if the CAC will have them; they may have applied for and chosen other internship positions.

Denis Collet joined the meeting.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM: Councilwoman Brenda Cagle gave an update on the Town Conservation Easement Tax Abatement Program. She said that the Town Board is having discussion about deleting the program. There are only 6 or 7 participating landowners. Some applicants went to the Town Assessor, and he did not agree with the expected reduction in tax assessment. Brenda noted that of about 11 applications, only 3 were filed as requests; the rest were part of Planning Board requirements for site plan approvals. She noted that the Conservation Easement Tax Abatement Program originally was intended to encourage landowners who wouldn't qualify for agricultural exemption to conserve open space. Brenda asked the CAC if members thought that the Town should revise the Program to make it worthwhile. Karen Schneller-McDonald said that the Winnakee Land Trust has criteria for evaluating conservation easement parcels. Sarah Imboden said that it would take time and effort to redo the ordinance.

Brenda Cagle said that it would be possible to assess how many units of development have been given up through the easements. Laurie Husted asked if it would be possible to have the Assessor look first at a proposed conservation easement to determine how much a landowner could save, before the landowner committed to an easement. Laurie also asked about the impacts on taxes; Brenda replied that any reductions in taxes on conservation easement properties have to be made up in the taxes of other landowners.

Public Hearing: Brenda Cagle reported that there would be a public hearing on the Conservation Easement Program on February 14, 2012 at 7:45 P.M. Sarah Imboden said that it would be a shame to drop the Program. Jane Ferguson suggested a motion for the CAC to recommend that the Program be refined instead of dismantled. Karen Schneller-McDonald said that she would be interested in looking at how particular parcels were qualified and how they relate to an open space plan. Laurie Husted asked Karen if she would check into that. Karen said that she would speak with Lucy Hayden and get Winnakee Land Trust's take on it. Jane Ferguson asked about the Town's Conservation Fund. Brenda Cagle replied that there is more than \$710,000 from mortgage filing fees.

NEW CAC MEMBER; RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS: Laurie Husted noted that there is a position open for a new CAC member and asked others to think of who might be a candidate. She asked CAC members to consider what topics they would concentrate efforts on. Karen Schneller-McDonald and Susan Ellis are interested in watershed and wetlands, Sarah Imboden would do waste issues, Denis Collet would do renewable energy.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CAP): Laurie Husted reported on the final CAP for Energy Manager Anne Marie Hirschberger. The final comments were due on January 10, 2012, and some more came in. Laurie brought up marketing the CAP and asked Denis Collet if he saw other ways to promote it as he reviewed the renewable energy section. Denis asked if Anne Marie could be given that direction. Laurie noted that she will be working with the CAC until March of 2012.

Denis Collet left at 8:10 P.M.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE: Karen Schneller-McDonald reported on a conference about "Watershed Management on a Shoestring Budget" that she attended on December 15, 2011. There were about 120 people in attendance, and many speakers for general discussion and workshops. Karen said that there was discussion of the Sawkill watershed in Ulster County, where a group of community members is doing bio-monitoring. All the different watershed groups inspired Karen to consider that the CAC should work to establish one on the Sawkill Creek watershed in Red Hook. She added that the conference discussions were weighted towards urban areas and stormwater management, but that wetlands should be equally important.

Susan Ellis noted that a few years ago, the CAC and other municipal committee members from Milan and Rhinebeck had met, at the invitation of Sheila Buff of Milan, to discuss formation of a watershed group to be named SAND. The intent was to cover issues for the small watersheds of Northern Dutchess County that were not included in the existing County watershed groups. There was a lot of interest, but the idea did not move forward. Karen said that there are more sources opening up for funding watershed management projects, and that a grant would be a good focus for a watershed group. Brenda Cagle suggested that the Intermunicipal Task Force for the Town is winding down its work on the Centers and Greenspaces Plan, and she would ask if they would be interested in watershed management as a next project.

Karen Schneller-McDonald left at 8:30 P.M.

RECYCLING CENTER: Councilwoman Brenda Cagle reported that the Town Board has put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for bids to haul off all the dumpsters at the Recycling Center, as well as do the fee per bag garbage collection and all municipal waste. Currently there is no contract, and Brenda noted that the metals are the only recyclable that brings in any money. Brenda spoke with Recycling Coordinator T J Hackett, who said that a load of metal brings \$400.00

In her review of the RFP, Brenda spoke with CAC members and added a suggestion to Purchasing Agent Ted Kudzy that the RFP include a notice that single stream or dual stream haulers would be given consideration. Brenda added that single stream supposedly increases the amount of recyclables collected. Laurie Husted noted that Ulster County is doing single stream and has issues with it. There was discussion of differences and options in contracts; Brenda said that presently the Town is paying \$150 per 30 yard container for hauling, but co-mingled recyclables are hauled free.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday February 8, 2012 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary