

Draft

**TOWN OF RED HOOK**  
**CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting

September 12, 2012

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Susan Ellis, Mike Zelig, Anne Rubin, Karen Schneller-McDonald, Denis Collet (7:20 P.M.), Zoie Riel (7:22 P.M.) Sarah Imboden (8:10 P.M.)

Absent: Dr. Jane Ferguson

Guests: Councilman Harry Colgan, Leo Wiegman and Ed Norton representing Energize NY, Melissa Everett, Director of Sustainable Hudson Valley

**CALL TO ORDER/QUORUM:** Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7: 15 P.M. There was a quorum.

**MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 8, 2012 MEETING:** The minutes of the August meeting were approved with a motion made by Mike Zelig and seconded by Laurie Husted.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

*Energy brochures:* Anne Rubin reported that the energy brochures have arrived. Laurie noted that the CAC has to decide where they would be appropriately placed.

*Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Summer Camp:* Laurie Husted announced that the CAC has received a thank you letter from a camper.

**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES REVIEW:** Mike Zelig reported that the minutes of the August 20, 2012 Planning Board meeting were largely devoted to opposition to The Preserve at Lakes Kill subdivision proposal. The public hearing was continued and the Planning Board expected to continue it at the September meeting. Residents object to the lack of site distance for what they consider a dangerous intersection for the private road proposed for the project. There has been a calculation that the subdivision would generate 100 car trips a day. Residents also object to approval of a waiver for a cul-de-sac that would allow 11 lots instead of 3. They also took issue with the impact of 11 houses on potential agriculture.

Mike noted that the principals of the project were not in attendance, but all other concerned parties were allowed to speak for the hearing. Mike added that Anne Rubin made some good points at the meeting, speaking about run-off from the project and whether or not it had been addressed properly, as there would be impervious surfaces created. Anne Rubin noted that she also said that the septic was an issue. Mike said that usually the developer is required to post a bond to assure that the septic is maintained properly. Anne said that the point she was making is that septic system performance often runs from object failure to below par. She added that the distance between the proposed community septic and the

wetlands feeding the Lakes Kill (which feeds into the Sawkill Creek and into the Hudson River) is not adequate. Laurie Husted asked if a community septic might be safer than 11 individual septic systems. Anne said her issue was that with any infrastructure there would be unknowns, and that the proximity to the wetlands would allow any failure to impact the watershed. Laurie asked what the buffer requirement would be; Mike said that normally the buffer is 100' from surface water or wetland boundary. Even if the buffer would be 200' for a community septic, both Anne and Mike felt that would be inadequate. Anne felt that the argument should be made for fewer houses, because there are few options on the complex site to situate houses to meet environmental criteria. Anne further noted that other impacts would be creation of lawns and associated use of fertilizers and pesticides. Karen Schneller-McDonald said that then Anne was indicating that the proposed plan was overload for the area, and that she would like to review the plan. Mike noted that the next Planning Board discussion would be at the meeting on Monday, September 17, 2012. Susan Ellis added that the CAC could certainly make comments on the issues of impacts on the wetlands with the run-off and septic system.

*Denis Collet and Zoie Riel joined the meeting.*

**HYDROFRACKING:** Laurie Husted reported that the Town Board asked the CAC to comment on the Zoning Review Committee's recommendations about zoning regulations in regard to hydrofracking operations. She noted that the biggest concern of the Town is likely to be what comes through the Town from other areas. The Town of Sharon, Connecticut passed a Road Preservation Law to prevent damage that would be caused by large numbers of industrial trucks, such as would be required for hydrofracking. Though the Town may not have control over traffic on State Highways, she would like to review what the Town of Sharon has done.

Zoie Riel noted that she had just heard that there was an increase of 4% of upstate New York residents who approved of Hydrofracking due to high costs of gas. Karen Schneller-McDonald added that she and Anne Rubin had been asked to give their presentation on Hydrofracking to the Town of Schawangunk, but the event had been postponed and finally they were notified that someone from the local CAC would do it, because the Supervisor of the Town wanted an "unbiased" presentation. Karen said that she attended the presentation and learned that the presenter is a biologist that works for Chesapeake Gas and Oil. She and many others at the meeting asked a lot of questions. Though the presentation described the development and procedures for Hydrofracking, it did not address all the impacts. Karen said that the description was upbeat and indicated that if there are good regulations of the process, that there wouldn't be any problems. Her reaction was who would be paying the cost of the regulations.

*Leo Wiegman, Ed Robins and Melissa Everett joined the meeting at 7:35 P.M.*

**ENERGIZE NEW YORK PRESENTATION:** Leo Wiegman introduced himself and Ed Robins of Croton energy Group and Melissa Everett of Sustainable Hudson Valley. They attended to present their efforts with Energize New York and look for CAC support. Leo Wiegman said that on this particular outreach project funded by the State, Croton Energy Group is partnered with Sustainable Hudson Valley.

*Background of Energize NY:* Leo Wiegman described the beginning of Energize New York as a group of Northern Westchester communities banding together as a consortium to apply for grant funding to roll out an energy efficiency program for homeowners. There are now 14 towns in the consortium that received funding to promote Home Performance With ENERGY STAR using available state programs to help homeowners with financing, using Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified contractors and based on the latest building system science developed at the National Energy Lab and major universities. Home Performance With ENERGY STAR treats the whole house as a system and considers the whole envelope and all the utilities, not just the furnace or air conditioning.

As the Northern Westchester Consortium received funding for establishing its program, it realized that the State had made less than 1% penetration into the Home Performance market in the last 20 years. The Consortium told the State that they could double the numbers if the State would fund a grant of 2.6 million dollars. Most of that money would be used for building an outreach program relying heavily on word of mouth, aforementioned state financing, BPI contractors and the Home Performance With Energy Star model. To summarize in a title, the Consortium decided to call the program Energize New York. The first resource that they planned to bring to the table was to work with existing community groups, so that the program would have a local credibility. They would ask the municipality to nominate someone, perhaps the CAC, to be the liaison with the Energize NY program. Much of the funding was devoted to building a web site, [energizeny.org](http://energizeny.org), and creating a “tool kit” of short videos about home energy performance. The videos are technically correct 2 minute bites that can be accessed through the website.

Leo Wiegman continued describing the Home Performance With Energy Star Program as treating a building as one unit with different components, with most of the work that is done in weatherization assistance being air sealing and insulation to produce the greatest impact. The air barrier and thermal barrier should be in the same part of the wall to avoid moisture problems. Leo said that the idea of energy efficiency is about using physics and science to make your house more comfortable for your lifestyle. Anne Rubin asked what standard the program looks to achieve, perhaps net zero? Leo replied that net zero would be great, but most homeowners are not prepared to undertake that effort. The basic goal is to determine the energy use per square foot of the building and what reduction can be made for the situation.

*Reasons to undertake the Home Performance With Energy Star Program:* Leo added that the most common reasons that people weatherize their home are to reduce energy waste and make the home more comfortable. From a public benefit point of view, a good reason to undertake the Program is to create and keep good local jobs. Leo noted that every 1 million dollars spent in a weatherization assistance program generates about 11 local jobs, though in Northern Westchester County they are finding the number of jobs to be 13 - 15. The work will increase the resale value of the home and benefit the municipality when the home sells by an increased assessed valuation. A final reason is the reduction of carbon emissions through the reduction of energy use.

*Dutchess County Experience:* Leo Wiegman spoke of Dutchess County data from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). From 2001 to 2009, Dutchess had about 1% participation, which increased some through 2010, and considerably through 2011 into 2012. Leo

noted that 3 condominium buildings totaling 186 units in Beacon and Poughkeepsie took advantage of the Program. There were 26 homes that did in 2011 and 25 in the 7 months of 2012. So Dutchess County already has momentum.

*Cost to Homeowner:* Leo spoke of the average cost to homeowners. Of the 364 total upgrades, (178 houses) in Dutchess County, the NYSERDA data shows an average cost of finance of \$12,700 for the homes, \$10,000 for the condos. The projected savings per homeowner was \$1,000 per year (more for condos). Karen Schneller-McDonald asked if it would be correct to assume that for new construction that the cost of updating would be reduced. Leo Wiegman replied that he could make that assumption because State energy codes keep advancing in requirements. He added that while newer homes generally are more energy efficient, State energy codes are only a minimum requirement. Variations in the cost per project did not necessarily follow square footage. Leo noted that some of the larger, older homes may have more substantial construction features that reduced the cost per square foot, whereas the condominium units may have had no air infiltration reduction features. The information packet that Leo prepared for the CAC includes names of local residents who had projects done through the NYSERDA programs and who could be contacts for information about the results of the work. Susan Ellis discussed her experiences with a contract that was not completed and had to be corrected and completed with another contractor. She did it to reduce energy use, with a goal of making an investment that would pay back in savings within a range of 10 or so years, though she did not feel that would happen, given the miscalculations of the first contract.

*Choosing an energy contractor:* Leo Wiegman said that this brought up the issue of how to choose a contractor. As a State funded program, Energize NY can't say to choose one contractor over another. The Energize NY program can allow individuals who have had experience with the program to go in and answer questions about a contractor that would produce ratings for a contractor. Energize NY took a list of all the contractors working in Northern Westchester and told them that if they had done at least 5 energy contracts in the area within the last year, Energize NY was going to have their clients answer questions. From the questions, Energize NY was able to develop a rating system, with 5 being a good score, and one being a bad score.

Denis Collet noted that one of the problems with the Building Performance Institute is that it is a bit like having the fox guard the henhouse; there is no separation between the person doing the analysis and the contractor doing the work. Anne Rubin asked if a client could have one contractor do the energy audit and choose another for the work. Denis said that could be done and Karen Schneller-McDonald suggested that the Energize NY program could set up the distinction. Leo Wiegman said that there were two possibilities. NYSERDA decided to try to increase the number of people taking part in the program by making the Home Performance Assessments free for clients making less than double the average income for the county. That means that the contractor making the assessment would receive a check from the State for the assessment when the client commits to a contract for the work. If a client skips the free assessment and hires a building analyst to do an assessment, then the client can take that information to a contractor and choose which recommendations to follow through with. Leo added that under the NYSERDA energy assessment program, that the contractor who does the audit owns the data, so a disadvantage is that the customer will have a report, but not access to taking the data elsewhere. Denis Collet noted that the best way to do an assessment is a CSF50 blower door test for an objective

analysis. The analyst should give the client a report itemizing the energy savings options and projecting the cost and payback.

*Financing and Applications:* Leo Wiegman said that first a client should fill out a one page application for an assessment reservation, which can be done online at [energizeny.org](http://energizeny.org). NYSERDA sends back a reservation number, which is the ticket for the free assessment. Then the client chooses a contractor, has the assessment, discusses the options and decides on a contract. Leo advises that at the time the client applies for the assessment reservation, he/she should also fill out the credit application to Green Jobs-Green NY. The State has three different kinds of financing, the best deal being 2.99% interest to the homeowner, with the cost and interest less any rebates paid back over 5, 10 or 15 years through monthly addition to the utility bill. Karen Schneller-McDonald noted that then homeowners are paying back as they save on the energy costs.

*Expansion of Energize NY:* Leo Wiegman reiterated that the Energize program started with a website that was targeted to the 14 Towns of Northern Westchester and is expanding. In January, they expect to ask for funding to cover the 7 county mid Hudson region. Laurie Husted asked if the Town wanted to work on a list of local contractors and getting them rated, what would be the timeline. Leo replied that since it is likely that most of the contractors working in Westchester County also work in Dutchess County, he would recommend looking at the Westchester rating list. As Energize NY expands, they would hope to be able to gather and provide the information for all 7 counties.

Melissa Everett said that Leo might want to talk about the support system developed for the Westchester towns. Leo said that with the grant money they were able to hire an “energy coach” to speak at local forums. Melissa noted other successful models, such as the 10% Challenge, and said that her efforts in association with the Energize NY program are to get the information and direction out of the retail sales area and into the social norm, where it becomes the “cool” thing to do. She talked about aggregating efforts to encourage neighborhoods or blocks to join together to work on home energy performance, so that there might be increased rebates or discounts on services. Laurie Husted asked what support the Town could get to promote a neighborhood project. Leo replied that if she put together specifics for the question and sent it to Energize NY, they would ask NYSERDA.

*Case Studies:* Leo Wiegman noted that Energize NY asked NYSERDA if they had any case studies from the 3,000 plus home energy performance contracts done over that last 10 years and they said that they didn’t, but added that it would be great if Energize NY did some. Leo presented 3 case studies done with before and after data. Energize wants to do more and longer term case studies, but those done show that energy savings are greater than the monthly cost of financing. If the CAC wants to promote a program with aggregated building analysis, Leo suggested that they ask homeowners to pledge to give their utility bill information, so that case studies would be easier.

Laurie Husted asked what incentives were available for landlords. Leo Wiegman said that Energize NY does not have a means to address that currently.

*The Next Step:* Leo Wiegman stated that if the CAC has any additional information that it wants from Energize NY or questions that it wants Energize NY to bring to NYSERDA, they will be happy to help. The typical next step if the CAC feels that the program would have value to the community would be to

ask the Town Board to adopt a resolution to join the Energize NY program. The Town then would be required by resolution to appoint a liaison between the Town and Energize NY. The liaison would be given information on who has done the program, who might be local sources and sponsors. Leo suggested Lions Club, Garden Clubs, Rotary Clubs as possible sponsors.

The CAC thanked Leo, Ed and Melissa for attending and presenting the Energize NY program.

**CAC WEBSITE:** Sarah Imboden discussed possible changes for the CAC website. She noted that the style and design are under terms of the contract for the Town website. She would like to have a link that goes directly to the CAC website. She is proposing that there be three sub pages – About the CAC, Energy and Climate Action Plan information and Press Releases. She added that it needs chronology and consistency. Anne Rubin suggested adding maps; Laurie Husted suggested including Natural Resources Inventory information; Karen Schneller-McDonald agreed that when you go to the Town website that there is no information on natural features. Anne Rubin added that there is a lot of information from the Biodiversity Committee that should be included.

Sarah asked CAC members to look at the website and give her corrections or suggested additions. Susan Ellis said that the date of creation of the Town CAC was actually 1972, not 1976. Laurie asked Susan if she could make a list of all the important documents and projects of the CAC. Susan suggested that the CAC choose a time frame, such as the last 5 years to concentrate on.

**HARDSCRABBLE DAY, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2012:** Zoie Riel has arranged for an electronic waste collection at Holy Cow parking lot from 9 A.M. – 1 P.M., co-sponsored by Advanced Recovery, Inc. and the Red Hook CAC. Anne Rubin announced that her daughter Samala has produced a power point on Wetlands and their importance, which she will present at Taste Budds. Laurie Husted asked whether the CAC wanted to have a table in the Village parking lot and had ideas in the environmental and energy area that members wanted to present. Sarah Imboden suggested that CAC ask a Bard student to be a “vampire” talking about vampire voltage. She also thought that the CAC should promote the Kill-a-Watt meter to show residents how much appliances actually use.

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

**NEXT MEETING: \*\*NOTE CHANGE\*\*** The next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 17, 2012 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary