

Draft

TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting

November 14, 2012

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Sarah Imboden, Anne Rubin, Zoie Riel, Denis Collet; Dr. Jane Ferguson, Susan Ellis, Karen Schneller-McDonald Absent: Mike Zelig

Guest: Ross Gould

CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM: Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. A quorum was present. Laurie introduced guest Ross Gould, who works for Environmental Advocates of New York.

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2012 MEETING: There was no CAC meeting in October. Instead, CAC members Laurie Husted, Susan Ellis, Sarah Imboden and Karen Schneller-McDonald attended the Environmental Management Council meeting for the 2012 Dutchess County State of the Environment Report. Susan Ellis noted that the September meeting minutes had not been approved due to the change in meeting plans for October. CAC members were asked if they were prepared to approve those minutes and Chairwoman Laurie asked to table the approval to give members a chance to review them.

UPCOMING DATES: Laurie Husted announced two upcoming events.

Wetlands Workshop: Hudsonia LTD. will hold a Wetlands Workshop on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at 6 P.M. at the Field Station at Bard College. CAC members planning to attend will meet at the Town Hall parking lot to car pool.

Tour of UCRRA Recycling and Compost facilities: The Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency will host a tour of its Recycling and Composting Facilities on Monday, November 19, 2012. Laurie Husted encouraged CAC members to go, and the CAC discussed who might have interest and be available.

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES REVIEW: Mike Zelig was not present to give the summary of planning discussions.

WATER GRANT: Laurie Husted asked Karen Schneller-McDonald to present information about a water grant proposal. Karen had asked Laurie if the Town would allow the CAC to apply. Laurie noted that she and Anne Rubin had worked on a proposal that the Town Board decided it did not want to apply for. Laurie spoke with Councilwoman Brenda Cagle, who told her that there is already a GREENWAY Grant proposal for another committee, but the CAC can likely apply as well and could get in-kind labor.

Karen noted that her question was also whether or not the Town would agree to match half of the grant. She added that also the Town has to pay the costs up front, and then be reimbursed by GREENWAY. Karen said that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) funding cycle is passed. Karen continued that the GREENWAY Grant proposal would require a resolution by the Town Board. There are 4 date cycles for a year; February 13 would be the next workable deadline.

What the CAC would propose for the GREENWAY Grant: Karen said that if the CAC agrees to apply for the grant, it needs to decide what actions it will propose funding. Anne Rubin suggested that the CAC consider the Aquifer Protection Ordinance, which was first looked at in 2008, and which the Village of Red Hook has been ready to support. Karen said that she has two concerns about concentrating on the Aquifer Protection Ordinance; one is isolating it from other watershed protection measures, because the aquifer can't be protected without consideration of other watershed protections. Anne replied that she knew that the CAC had spoken about this, but she wanted to clarify that the central aquifer which provides the drinking water feeds the Sawkill Creek and the watershed more than the Creek feeds the aquifer. While a whole watershed protection plan would be the best option, she feels that it is more likely that there would be success in focusing on the Aquifer Protection Plan. Anne said that the ordinance that the CAC considered, and which was reviewed by hydrologist Russell Urban-Meade, does consider surface water conditions. Though it does not have a specific wetlands section, it deals with all non-point source pollution by special permits and prohibitions for activities that contribute to all the contaminants that go into the groundwater. Karen said that she would suggest that the CAC alter that a bit, as she feels that Russell's work comes from one perspective and she would like to add an additional perspective to it. Karen also had a concern about the cost of the ordinance, as she had been told that it was expensive, and she has seen other that were doing it at less expense. Anne replied that she thought that it was the cost of preparing the maps that made it more expensive.

Anne noted that the ordinance recommended by Russell to the Intermunicipal Task Force in 2007 was based on the model ordinance developed by the Dutchess County Water and Waste Water Authority. Karen suggested adding watershed management proposals to even a part of the Town and planning for a Phase II to complete it. Anne agreed that this might be the best approach. Karen said that she has seen too many Aquifer Protection Ordinances with a strictly engineering point of view to storm water management, and no ecological watershed management perspective; she feels that it is so important to integrate that with the strong engineering component. Karen's first question with regard to this particular grant would be if the CAC wanted to use it to finish, it is not as if the project has already been started. Anne said that it was discussed by the CAC back in 2008, because the Intermunicipal Task Force had asked for a study and been given recommendations that a higher level of protection is needed for the aquifers.

Jane Ferguson asked what has been completed so far in addition to a study. Anne replied that the study of the aquifers had been done, from which she developed a presentation that she gave to the Town Board in 2008. So far, there has been no money to proceed with an ordinance. Karen Schneller-McDonald said that she would like to see if the CAC could develop an Aquifer Protection Plan for the Town that would be covered in the cost of the proposed grant.

Denis Collet noted that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requirements for grant administration put a heavy burden on staff and it may not be worth it if there is a lot of administrative cost. Anne Rubin asked how the CAC would figure out the potential administrative costs. Denis replied that project management would look at the scope of the work, the duration of the project and projected exit strategy. Denis noted that for the Solar Panel Array Grant, New York State Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) is requiring that the Energy Committee show the savings that have been achieved since the installation of the solar panels. So Denis and Councilwoman Brenda Cagle spent 3 hours with Jeff Irish of Hudson Valley Solar working out how to read the electric bill. Laurie Husted said that she would speak with Brenda about potential complications of the proposed grant.

Karen Schneller-McDonald said that before the CAC can go ahead with the proposed grant there has to be a resolution from the municipalities. Karen suggested that she and Anne get together and work out how the CAC would use the available grant money if it is awarded. They would look toward the February 13, 2013 deadline. Laurie Husted suggested that the resolution be put on the Town Board December agenda. Karen asked if the CAC was in agreement with moving ahead on aquifer protection; all present agreed.

TERM EASEMENTS FOR CONSERVATION: Laurie Husted asked Sarah Imboden to speak about the Committee developing recommendations about the Term Easements for Conservation Program. Sarah reviewed the history of the Committee. Last Spring the Town Board was considering repealing the legislation establishing a program for Term Easements for Conservation, which offered a reduction in assessment for accepted parcels with conservation easements for a term of 8 to 15 years. There was low participation, not many new applications and a lack of completion of assessment reductions. The Town Board formed a committee to study the program and make recommendations about whether or not to repeal the program, continue the program, or develop other strategies. The Committee has 5 members representing the Planning Board, CAC, Agriculture and Open Space Committee, and Zoning Board of Appeals. The Committee looked at similar programs in other Towns in New York to compare and see what works for them. They were interested to see that some towns had a very high participation rate and looked for reasons why that would be so. The Committee looked at all aspects of Conservation Easements, from application fees, to criteria for parcel acceptance, to length of commitment, to assessment adjustments, to monitoring of easements. There was extensive discussion of pros and cons, and opinions about the outcome of possible actions.

The Committee evaluated potential impacts on all property assessments and tax rates for various levels of participation in an easement program. Sarah noted that there was some concern about conflict with the Agricultural Business District. Anne Rubin said that the Agricultural Business District has its own set of incentives and the easement program would more likely cover other landowners who were not covered under it or other programs. Anne Rubin asked if it would be possible to do a cost/benefit analysis. Sarah reiterated that the charge to the Committee is to review the law and recommend whether or not to keep it and they will be presenting their findings and recommendations to the Town Board. Laurie Husted thanked Sarah for her report.

CAC WEBSITE: Sarah Imboden reported that she had given a proposal for the CAC website page to Webmaster Dick Wambach. She had made some modifications, which he said looked okay, but the changes have not been implemented yet.

WASTE: Laurie Husted announced that in addition to the tour of the Ulster County Resource Recovery facility on Monday, November 19, 2012, there may be an additional one to New Paltz.

ENERGY: Laurie Husted reported that the Town Board passed a resolution to participate in the Energize New York Program at the November 13 meeting.

Sarah Imboden announced that she had just received her NYSERDA coupon for an energy audit and just needs to decide upon a contractor. Her only frustration was that there are not many local contractors and choosing one from a distance does not seem a good option if they also have to travel a distance to do the work. Laurie said that she was not sure if a homeowner chose a different contractor or did some of the work by themselves if they could get on bill financing from Central Hudson. Jane Ferguson replied that she thinks so; she has also had an energy audit done. Laurie asked if Sarah and Jane would record their experiences, so that the Energy Committee could encourage neighbors to participate.

Laurie Husted asked Denis to report on the meeting with Hudson Valley Solar to review the Town electric bills with regard to the solar panel input. Denis said that Central Hudson uses an accounting called demand metering, and the Town is considered a commercial demand metered client if there is any point within a 15 minute period where the energy drawn from Central Hudson is sustained above 10 kilowatts. What that means is that when the Town is in that bracket, it is considered commercial demand for three months, and the service charge is double per meter what it would be for commercial non-demand meter (a preferred status). Denis noted that the offset from the solar panels doesn't protect the Town from that spike. The Town has three meters, one for the Recycling Center, and two for the Town Hall. The average use is just under 10 kilowatts; spikes exceeding that occur in summer and winter. The conclusion would be that in the summer, air conditioning contributes, and in the winter strip heaters to deice the roof and office quartz heaters contribute. Denis noted that if there were a way to figure out reducing those usages and keep below the threshold, the Town would save approximately \$2,000 per year. There are two recommendations: to eliminate the use of local space heaters and work on the heat distribution to compensate, and to get an estimate to do closed cell insulation of the roof to help prevent heat loss and ice damming.

Laurie said that she was hoping to hear about energy cost reduction. Denis replied that the Town has saved some energy, but not as much as it should. He said that the work is not done. The Town needs to insist that Central Hudson clearly tell the Town what the charges represent, and work to get off demand billing.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, December 12, 2012 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary