

Draft

**TOWN OF RED HOOK  
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of Meeting  
May 14, 2019

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Sarah Imboden, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Mike Zelie, Denis Collet (7:20 P.M.)

Absent: Susan Ellis, Anne Rubin, Karen Schneller-McDonald, Ross Gould

Guests: Susan Gillespie and Jess Scott from Citizens for Local Power

**CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM:** Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M. A quorum was present by 7:20 P.M.

**MINUTES OF THE MAY 9, 2014 MEETING:** The minutes of the May 9 meeting were approved with a motion made by Laurie Husted and seconded by Mike Zelie.

**RUTH OJA ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP:** Laurie Husted reported that it was disappointing that no student applied for the scholarship. Anne Rubin hand delivered the fliers with information about applications to the science teachers, and Laurie e-mailed them all. One student started an application, but never completed it, though he was called and encouraged to do so. It is the first year that the scholarship was not awarded. Denis Collet asked how else the scholarship was promoted. Sarah Imboden noted that she was frustrated that there was not a list of all the scholarship opportunities for Red Hook and Rhinebeck schools printed in the paper. CAC members discussed that it seems that the Guidance Counselor's office should be responsible for that. There was additional discussion of "marketing" the scholarship – asking science teachers to nominate likely candidates, so that they or parents could be encouraged to apply. Laurie said that she would like a CAC member to take on the project and plan a time line to get ahead of the process next year.

**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES REVIEW:** Mike Zelie reported that there was not much relevant to CAC issues.

**WASTE SUBCOMMITTEE:** Laurie Husted reported that she put in a call to Julian Lesser before the meeting. He said that he took the winter off to become a Master Composter and is finding that it is a more difficult market than he thought. He is

working to proceed with a composting business. The Town of Woodstock made a pledge to compost in their facilities, so they would be the first clients. Laurie added that Julian needs community partnership help to promote this and while she can give him names of possible clients, she thought that she would contact Lindsay Carille, Dutchess County Recycling Coordinator to ask if the County Recycling Plan would include any enforcement of recycling regulations that are mandated by law. Rethinking recycling efforts might be an opening for a proactive project like Julian's.

Sarah Imboden reported that she had investigated options for holding a paper shredding day and found that the company that does the shredding holds most of their events at banks. She contacted them through their website, but has not received a reply. Another possibility would be approaching banks or tax preparers to see if they would consider sponsoring such an event.

**ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE:** Laurie Husted informed Denis Collet that Supervisor Sue Crane is interested in having an energy audit for the Town Highway Garage. Laurie will speak further with Denis.

*Climate Smart Communities:* Laurie reported on the meeting held on Thursday, May 8 with Angela Vincent and Ana Gail Hagerup from Mid Hudson Climate Smart Communities. In attendance were Supervisor Sue Crane, Deputy Mayor of Tivoli Joel Griffith, Laurie, Susan Ellis, Sarah Imboden and Zoie, a student representing the Village of Red Hook. The discussion included the the request from Climate Smart Communities for a pledge of action on seven adaptations to unavoidable climate change, and the suggestion that the group reach out to the Disaster Preparedness Committee of the Town. The group will review the Adaptation Tool Kit developed by Climate Smart Communities.

*Intern:* Laurie Husted reported that the Town approved the use of \$1,000 from the Unified Solar Permit rebate to hire an intern for work on energy issues. A Bard College student has expressed interest.

*Apple Blossom Day - May 10, 2014:* Laurie Husted reported that the day went really well, with 35 new people signing up for the home energy audit. The location was good and Laurie would try it again.

*Transportation:* Laurie Husted reported that she, Brenda Cagle and Paula Schoonmaker had a preview of the proposed plans for a new application for a Transportation Alternatives Projects (TAP) grant to do the sidewalk on the east side of Route 9 from the Town Hall to Hannaford's. Originally the grant request had been for \$249,999, but the new cost estimate is \$800,000. An engineer is looking at it to see if there are errors in

duplication. Sarah Imboden suggested comparison of the recent sidewalk grants done in the Village of Red Hook.

**CITIZENS FOR LOCAL POWER (CLP):** CAC members were introduced to Susan Gillespie and Jess Scott of Citizens for Local Power, who also work at Bard College. Laurie Husted noted that the CAC had reviewed the resolution and proposals from them and heard that they had a good meeting with the Town Board on Tuesday, May 13. Susan G. said that the purpose of this meeting with the CAC was to explore ways to go forward. She felt that Red Hook needs to be playing a leadership role in Dutchess County. Her last meeting with the CAC was the night before the Public Service Commission (PSC) approved the Central Hudson – Fortis merger. Citizens for Local Power is an entirely volunteer grassroots group with a mission to help create a locally based GREEN energy economy. They have been reaching out to communities to bring up issues such as the unfortunate development of the New Capacity Zone requirement for energy providers. They held two public forums that were well attended to explain how the energy grid works. They have done research to understand the New Capacity Zone, which is very complex, and they have found that municipalities are really looking for information. In fact, some would like to hire them to have the resource of someone who has researched energy issues and follow what is happening with utilities and at the PSC and federal level. They have gathered information on steps that communities can take that are positive.

*Community Choice Aggregation (CCA):* Susan Gillespie stated that one of the major ideas that Citizens for Local Power has proposed is the idea of Community Choice Aggregation. CCA is the type of project that enables a municipality, or group of municipalities to aggregate their citizens (there is an opt out provision), so that they can negotiate to buy power. This gives the potential for the CCA to contract for better rates if they have a large ratepayer base, opt for greener energy supplies and put some of rate savings into programs that would encourage energy efficiency or renewable generation. Denis asked what would force the utilities to negotiate with the CCA. Susan replied that New York State would have to pass enabling legislation to grant municipalities the right to do the aggregation. Jess Scott noted that currently the power source and distribution are two separate parts of your energy supply. Your energy company controls the distribution, but consumers have the option of contracting with the energy supply of their choice. With aggregation, there would be greater negotiation for rates. Jane Ferguson asked how many communities would need to join together to achieve the marketing power. Susan replied that reaching out to Kingston and other communities in Dutchess and Ulster County might give a large enough group. Mike Zelig asked if there were enough renewable energy sources available. Susan replied yes, and there would be more. She cited the case of Marin County in California, which signed a multi-year option with a new wind generating company, which meant that they could get funding

for their project. Sarah Imboden asked what impact the New Capacity Zone (NCZ) would have on the options of a Mid-Hudson Consortium for purchasing power, noting that she was not aware of much “Green Energy” production in the NCZ. If it requires that 80% be produced in the zone, it would limit the choices of “Green Energy” sources. Susan Gillespie said that the Energy Service Companies (ESCO) could probably get around that, because they are aggregators who purchase from many different suppliers. Consumers who have chosen to pay a “green fee” on their energy bills are already using “Green Energy.” Susan G. said that a CCA could start by purchasing from an ESCO and then look into new generation opportunities. Susan G. suggested that a customer feasibility study would be a good start. It would take more than just lower rates to interest communities; there needs to be a County- wide effort.

*Solar Energy Opportunities – Net metering and Solar Farms:* Denis Collet said that if shuffling the decks and trying to give more options gives the same infrastructure that exists today in order to lower costs, then he isn't interested. He wants to see the PSC give enabling legislation to municipalities to develop solar farms. As it is now, Central Hudson controls distribution and requires the meter to be on the property that it serves. Susan G. noted that there are two bills under discussion in Albany to promote net metering and community solar, and the CAC should consider pushing for them. Denis said that since there are only 30% of residences with adequate solar exposure, there must be support for opportunities to solarize a community, perhaps using brownfields or other suitable sites to not only reduce costs, but improve distribution and prevent disaster. But it can not be done at this time. Susan G. suggested looking at Freedom Solar Alliance, a group which sources community funds ( not really donations or investments) into a bank account for establishing a large solar project. The alliance has purchased a piece of property near Kingston for just such a possibility. Denis felt that more energy needs to be spent pushing the PSC to do its job. Susan G. said that with the New York Energy Plan and REV process trying to rethink the energy system, the PSC seems to be more open to some of these ideas. But there is more discussion of the market conditions, rather than specific ideas for action. Jane Ferguson thought it hard to believe that in rural counties there is enough rate base. But if cities, and counties join together, there would be enough leverage.

*Transmission Lines Discussions:* Neither the developers nor the PSC have addressed the question about how any of this will support distributed generation. Susan G. cited an example of a transmission line project of Fortis in British Columbia. Fortis B.C. stated a need for transmission upgrades and built enormous transmission towers which lower property values. As a result, rates increased by about 60%, but there was almost no additional energy being transmitted from these wires. It was purely commercial growth, because the company is able to charge out cost out the new transmission on customers' bills. Gov. Cuomo said State needs one billion dollars in new transmission.

Two private developers said that they could do it for 1.2 billion dollars. Boundless Energy has made a proposal that is cheaper and less invasive.

*New Document to review about running a municipal consortium:* Susan Gillespie presented a new document about running a municipal consortium. She said that the CLP is not doing any formal work to develop a Municipal Consortium, but is working with municipalities to assist their efforts. She noted that some of that effort is to encourage unified solar permitting, which Red Hook has done.

*Street Lighting changed to LED's:* Another interest is working on street lights, and Susan G. asked what the CAC members thought about that. Sarah and Laurie said that the Village of Red Hook could use help with that. Susan G. noted that the Town of Rosendale and City of Kingston have done studies on how much they could save, and suggested that there be a joint meeting to discuss it. Other issues raised were if Central Hudson owns the poles and municipalities buy the lights, who maintains them and how to accomplish cooperative purchasing. Denis said that perhaps a private contractor could set up cooperative which would compete with labor costs and contracts. Susan G. noted that Central Hudson will remove their lights gratis.

Sarah asked what a consortium would do if all the Towns are in different situations. Susan G. replied that first it would be a forum for information; then if communities decided to work together, they could make a buyers' cooperative. Jess S. added that if all communities did a lighting assessment it would be helpful, and the others could share their experience. Laurie concluded that the CAC would like to have a program organized for street lights.

Other activities that CLP would be doing is looking for the best opportunities for Alternative Generation. There are also issues about gas production and transmission that will use a lot of capital commitment. Whatever infrastructure is allowed for fracking, consumers will be paying the cost for it for 30 years.

*Grants and Fundraising for Municipal Energy Projects:* Grant proposals need shared goals so that different Towns do not work against each other. CLP has hopes of fundraising to support collaboration. Sarah said that if a few people from Dutchess County, and a few people from Ulster County would meet to agree on goals such as saving money, saving energy and being greener, they might produce a framework for a consortium. Denis felt that putting sweat equity into a joint grant and how to get it done would require some formality with clear objectives and goals. Susan G. said that the CLP and consortium would be two separate entities. The CLP would help a consortium with educational forums, but the consortium needs to have its own agreements. Susan G. added that CLP started with breakfast seminars which had no less than 70 attending.

*What does the CAC want to happen?:* Sarah feels that efficiency/ financial goals need to be stressed first, then sustainability. Denis wants to push for municipal solar projects and make the PSC justify rate increases. Susan G. said that at this time Central Hudson makes it too hard to connect to the grid. New Paltz has proposed a solar site at the New Paltz landfill; Central Hudson will assess the site and tell the municipality how much it will cost to connect to the grid, which negates much of the benefit. Municipalities need to focus more on taking control of their energy future. Laurie said that the CAC needs a check list of suggestions and actions to cut the clutter of often conflicting information.

*Summary:* CLP and CAC members agreed that:

- 1) A meeting to discuss street lighting options should happen.
- 2) CLP and CAC members should talk again about a simple agreement to do fundraising and starting to form a consortium. (Street lighting might be a first project for a collective grant to see how the consortium works.)
- 3) CLP can put together a seminar series. It could include economic issues, what can be done to promote feasibility of municipal projects and how to build on the strengths that make municipalities unique.
- 4) The CAC and CLP should look for concrete, practical projects. (Susan G. noted that the Town of Esopus is planning a solar farm and it should be followed.)

CAC members thanked Susan Gillespie and Jess Scott for attending the meeting and sharing the work of Citizens for Local Power.

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

**NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday June 11, 2014 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary