

Draft

**TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting
June 11, 2014

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Susan Ellis, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Mile Zelig, Anne Rubin, Sarah Imboden (7:13 P.M.), Denis Collet (7:18 P.M.)

Absent: Karen Schneller-McDonald

Guest: Gouled, student at Bard College from Ethiopia

CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM: Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. A quorum was present by 7:13 P.M.

MINUTES OF THE MAY 14, 2014 MEETING: Denis Collet noted a correction in the page 4 discussion of Solar Energy opportunities that only about 20% of residential sites have adequate solar exposure for photovoltaic installations. The minutes were approved as amended with a motion made by Jane Ferguson and seconded by Mike Zelig.

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES REVIEW: Mike Zelig reported on the following discussions:

- 1) *Lot line alteration application on Feller-Newmark Road:* Dean and Linda Kent presented a lot line alteration application for 10 acres from the estate of John Feller's 139 acres to be attached to adjacent 93.29 acres owned by the Kents. The Planning Board required letters of first refusal from Scenic Hudson and the Town of Red Hook, which were presented. Mike noted that the 10 acres were under conservation easement, which would be continued on the Kent parcel. The Planning Board declared itself Lead Agency, approved a Negative Declaration under SEQRA and set a Public Hearing for June 2, 2014. CAC members discussed whether or not the proposal had any relationship to the Preserve at Lakes Kill property. Mike thought that it did not.
- 2) *Montgomery Place application for approval of tree removal to restore historic viewshed :* Montgomery Place is proposing to remove trees, mostly ailanthus, an invasive species, to restore the historic 1920's viewshed of the Hudson River. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is agreeable if trunks and limbs that are cut are left to prevent erosion on the slopes to the River. The

Planning Board had asked that there be an assessment for bat habitat, and Erik Kiviat of Hudsonia advised that it is likely to be habitat for the Indiana bat, so that tree removal should take place during the winter.

- 3) *Windmill Lodge Proposal*: Rosemarie Zengen is proposing to construct a two story building with living quarters for her family on the first floor and 4 guest rooms on the second floor. The proposal plans for a 25' right-of-way agreement for a driveway to Metzger Road. Planning Consultant Michele Greig noted that a 95' frontage would be required, or a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Mike noted that this discussion is a preliminary stage for the application.

Mike Zelig reported that another item of interest at Planning was the presentation by the Dutchess Land Conservancy of a map of all the easements held by the Conservancy in Red Hook.

Denis Collet joined the meeting.

Anne Rubin asked if the Conservancy map would be put on the Town website and suggested that the CAC send a note to the Planning Board with that request. Laurie Husted asked if Mike would follow up on that. CAC members discussed whether or not there is a separate map of Scenic Hudson easements. Sarah Imboden thought that Scenic Hudson partnered the funding of many of the easements with Dutchess Land Conservancy, who then did the maintenance and inspection of the easements. Laurie added that she just had an annual inspection visit for an easement with Winnakee Land Trust. The reviewer has before photos and adds yearly photos from the inspection walk. It was a very thorough process.

ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE: Denis Collet said that progress on energy issues is slow, but steady. Supervisor Sue Crane has expressed interest in what opportunities are available for adding solar installations on the Highway Garage. Denis noted that the engineering plan for the Highway Garage did include specifications to allow for the additional load. Denis spoke with Councilwoman Brenda Cagle about what programs are currently available, and didn't find any that the Town would qualify for with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) at this time.

Brenda and Denis talked about considering Power Purchasing Agreements which certain contractors could provide, that would not require money to change hands. Denis went to Purchasing Agent Ted Kudzy and asked what he knew about Power Purchasing Agreements that wouldn't require upfront investment. Does it give the Town the opportunity to select a contractor without going through the bidding process? Denis contacted Jeff Irish of Hudson Solar, who said that he is not currently interested in municipal projects, as he has enough residential installations, but for \$1,000 fee would

prepare a bid package. That is where Denis has gotten, but still doesn't have a plan. He needs to talk with Supervisor Sue Crane to find out who would participate in developing a plan. Brenda Cagle said that she would speak with Ted Kudzy and Denis asked to be invited to the meeting, as Ted has indicated interest in Power Purchasing Agreements. Denis contacted Astrum Solar, who did the roof for his studio, but they do not do municipal projects. They don't have the financing to put the money upfront for that size project. They will do leasing agreements where the customer purchases a block of power which is projected over the life of the lease (20 or 25 years), but doesn't own the equipment. Denis added that the formula formula for Power Purchase Agreements is slightly different.

Consolidating Power: Denis continued with another idea of consolidating power. There is enough area on the Highway Garage roof to produce more power than they use. Denis spoke with Pat Courtney Strong who works with NYSERDA Energy Smart Communities. She indicated that there are incentives on a municipal scale that the Town might be able to tap into. If there is aggregation of all the Town properties, the scale would be more interesting to Power Purchasing Agreement vendors. Laurie Husted asked if it would be an opportunity for intermunicipal cooperation. Denis reiterated his opinion that if it would lead to an increased use of renewable energy, not just a means of reducing rates, then he would encourage the CAC to support it. Laurie asked if the best person to contact would be Jeff who is the regional representative in Pat Courtney Strong's office. Denis answered yes, but concluded that the CAC needs to reach a consensus about how much the CAC wants involvement in this. Anne Rubin asked if Denis has come across any examples of communities where residents and businesses have been able to look to the municipality as a source of power. Denis has not seen any progress in this region that would pursue the vision that he sees. There is legislation in other parts of the country that enables virtual net metering. It would be a major accomplishment if the pressure was on the Public Service Commission (PSC) to force the utilities to accept virtual net metering. Laurie asked Denis if he would watch for information on available grants. Denis asked to have help on the Subcommittee with a division of labor to move the process forward.

Grid Parity: Denis has looked at Grid Parity and explained the concept to CAC members. To achieve Grid Parity, the total cost of solar operation and installation needs to meet the ability to compete with what the customer is paying at current utility rates. To calculate Grid Parity, take the life expectancy of a solar installation as 25 years, the cost to support and maintain it, divide it by the megawatt hours it will produce to get the cost per kilowatt, and compare it with what it would cost to buy the same amount of 25 years of utility power. If it is the same, there is Grid Parity; if the cost is less than the utility it is a better deal. New York has the 2nd highest utility rates in the continental US. Denis noted that with incentives, solar energy can be produced at Grid Parity.

FORESTS AND WETLANDS FOR FLOOD PLAIN MANAGEMENT SEMINAR JUNE 16, 2014: Laurie Husted has not had a response that anyone would plan to attend the seminar at the Farm and Home Center in Millbrook on Monday, June 16 from 6:30 – 9:30 P.M. Anne Rubin might be able to go, but suggested that it be forwarded to Karen Schneller-McDonald, as she would get the most out of it to share with the CAC. Members who might be available will connect for a car pool. Anne also suggested that Nancy Guski of the Tree Commission be notified.

TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE: Laurie Husted has been notified that the Town will receive bike racks as part of the County bus shelter give-away. The sphere on the Town Hall bike rack as needed to be removed to repair the artwork that was deteriorating.

SIDEWALK GRANT PROPOSAL: Laurie Husted reported that Councilwoman Brenda Cagle took the application for the grant to Poughkeepsie today.

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DUTCHESS COUNTY: Laurie Husted reported that she just received an e-mail from Zywia Wojnar at Cooperative Extension. She had heard that the CAC had applied for a County grant in 2010 to do a project with organic waste. She wants to apply for a County initiative for alternative ideas on solutions to organic waste disposal, and wants a letter of support from the CAC. Laurie asked for more specifics about the ideas that she is proposing, and thinks that it may include biodigestion and composting. CAC members agreed that Laurie could write a letter in support of the theory of a County effort.

GREEN BUSINESS CHALLENGE: Laurie Husted introduced Gouled, a student at Bard College who is from Ethiopia and is working with Laurie on the Green Business Challenge. Gouled has been researching Green Businesses in Westchester County to see how they have formed their Green Business community. He would like to see how it could be replicated in the Red Hook area. He is working on a badge project and has categorized five areas – water, land use, outreach (how the business communicates with its customers and the community at large), energy and transportation. Since Red Hook has no established “Green” practices, he will focus on restaurants and retail to see how they can be encouraged to go “Green.” Anne Rubin asked how the Westchester model would relate to Red Hook in the water sector, as they probably have sewer systems, whereas Red Hook only has septic systems, a significant difference. Gouled said that his focus would be starting with reduction of water use issues, not specifically waste water issues.

Gouled is also looking to find other communities that are more similar to Red Hook, but have a Green Business network. He is following the Climate Smart Communities

Model. Sarah Imboden asked if Climate Smart Communities actually put out a model or if Gouled is taking the suggestions from the Environment and Climate Action Plan, and asked that the CAC have a copy of what Goulet is following. Denis asked if it would be time to look at Red Hook's Environment and Climate Action Plan and see how it fits into the process. Gouled has it on his reading list, but Laurie noted that he has only 7 more weeks to work on it his project, so goals are limited. Sarah suggested that even if it is difficult to find information on comparable plans, that Red Hook should go ahead to create a pilot plan and work to get local business involvement. Laurie and Gouled are focusing on a Phase 1 of simple actions and small changes that would begin to have a green impact. Gouled also is looking for products to encourage homeowner participation, such as aerators for faucets to reduce water consumption, products that are readily available at local stores. Laurie noted that Gouled would be meeting with the Red Hook Chamber of Commerce on Friday to discuss how to approach businesses.

Laurie asked Susan Ellis as a retail business person what she could advise about potential actions that could be taken at her business locations. Susan rents from antiques and collectibles centers where management rents the premises. She suggested that it would be better to focus on food establishments, given the time available; some improvements require the involvement of landlords, and individual dealer practices would need to be addressed with a group of separate dealers. She did note that some of the centers already require or encourage dealers to use compact fluorescents for booth lights. Laurie suggested that perhaps an innovative solution could be developed for the 5 or so similar centers, such as a way to have a buying cooperative so that more environmentally green products could be purchased more reasonably for the shops. Anne Rubin said that she has previously proposed cooperative purchasing initiatives for all retail businesses, and found that as in Grid Parity for energy, there needs to be an equal or lesser cost for them to work.

Jane Ferguson suggested that first there needs to be a survey of what would work for businesses. CAC members further discussed ideas of needing a survey of businesses about how they buy, how to approach a purchasing cooperative and how to set up distribution. Anne Rubin suggested looking to Northeast Cooperatives to see how large a group would be needed to get a discount. Sarah added that even if cooperative buying is hard to achieve, encouraging businesses to qualify for a Green Business badge by promising to buy unchlorinated or recycled products would be a step; the cooperative may need to be a second phase.

Laurie concluded that she and Gouled would report at the next meeting, and the next step would be speaking with Kim Gomez of the Red Hook chamber about who are the businesses who would be likely to work with the project. Then volunteers would go door-to-door to businesses, give them some ideas and see what they would support.

Sarah said that the pitch should be what can we do to help the businesses. Anne suggested that a write up in “Chronogram” or “About Town,” or any other publicity would help.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, July 9, 2014 at 7 P.M. At Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary