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**TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting
October 8, 2014

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Mike Zelig, Sarah Imboden, Dr. Jane Ferguson, Jen Cavanaugh, Susan Ellis (7:30 P.M.)

Absent: Anne Rubin,

Guests: Councilwoman Brenda Cagle, Kathy O'Connor, Karen Schneller-McDonald

CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM: Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. A quorum was present. There was no meeting in September and Laurie noted that Karen Schneller-McDonald had resigned from the CAC and Jen Cavanaugh had been appointed as a new member.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW CAC MEMBER: Laurie Husted introduced Jen Cavanaugh as the new member of the CAC. Jen served as Chairwoman of the Town of Clinton CAC, and said that she has a background as an environmental engineer, working on water quality, stormwater drainage and compliance projects for a firm that operates mostly in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. During her two year tenure as Chairwoman of the Clinton CAC, Jen reported that the CAC reviewed and commented on most Planning Board applications, prepared an Open Space Plan, Farmland Protection Plan and Biodiversity Plan. The CAC also concentrated on education projects, including producing a “Welcome to Clinton” packet for new homeowners with information such as how to handle garbage and septic systems.

MID HUDSON REGIONAL REUSE CONFERENCE IN NEW PALTZ: Kathy O'Connor from Tivoli reported on the August 20 meeting at New Paltz to facilitate a network among municipal reuse programs, featuring the Town of New Paltz Zero Waste Action Plan and Sustainable Materials Management program. She noted discussion of the Finger Lakes Reuse Program, which is a terrific model in the Ithaca area, and that New Paltz has reduced its waste by about 50% and increased sales and revenues from diverted materials.

The host of the conference was Laura Pettit, director of the New Paltz Reuse Center. Lindsay Carille, Deputy Commissioner of Solid Waste for Dutchess County introduced

April Denby as the County Recycling Coordinator. Lindsay Carille would like to have a county by county reuse center referral list. Sarah Wormer has been working on this for a long time, and now is joined by Rob Jameson, who works with Mass Mosaic, a hub for interconnecting services to share information on what we want to recycle and reuse. Rich Schiafo with Hudson Valley Regional Council said that the Region 3 Counties meet every 3 months and he would be interested in being used as a resource for the regional reuse program.

Wendy Toman, the Recycling Coordinator from Gardiner was there and reported that she had just joined the group in April. At that time the Gardiner program was \$20,000 in the red, and by this August meeting, the program was \$10,000 in the plus. She worked all angles, and a large topic of the meeting was identifying sources within the community that are resources to purchase recyclable items.

Laurie Husted asked about the hours that the Centers were open and the number of employees, as well as their full or part time status. Kathy and Sarah Imboden answered that New Paltz has 2 full time, and up to 15 part time employees. Kathy added that both the new Paltz and Gardiner centers are very neat and organized; she would go back.

Kathy reported that the Town of Yorktown called in to note that they are adding a textile recycling program. There is a huge cost for landfilling textiles, and the CAC should look at potential new solutions, as thrift stores, Goodwill and Salvation Army only take a fraction of what is disposed of. Tivoli did a pop-up Sunday exchange for gently used clothing.

Laurie thanked Kathy O'Connor for her informative report and suggestions of new options to pursue for reuse and recycling. Laurie added that the CAC Waste Subcommittee has been simmering, but that now waste materials and regional connections are coming to the forefront, she asked if members would be ready to pursue some of the ideas. Sarah agreed that it would be good to choose from all the information one or two good ideas to focus on and seek additional volunteers. Kathy said that she would like to invite Laura Pettit or Wendy Toman to advise the group. Sarah added that the Subcommittee had discussed the Terracycle idea for the school, which they thought could go forward if there were a few people willing to help. It would be educational and interactive for the students and if someone would coordinate deciding what products, such as chip bags or juice cartons, and get boxes and labels from Terracycle, the boxes ship free to Terracycle when filled. Kathy drives to Danbury to take #5 plastics to Give Me Five pick up center.

Kathy O'Connor left the meeting.

HUDSON RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE ANNUAL WATERSHED CONFERENCE: Karen Schneller-McDonald reported on the October 7, 2014 conference with the theme of “Building Local Capacity for Watershed Restoration: Investing in Wastewater and Stormwater for Sustainability and Resilience.” She highlighted important points of discussion.

- ◆ Brian Rahm from the NYS Water Resources Institute at Cornell University spoke of the need to determine appropriate wastewater management style based on the infrastructure and environmental character of the municipality. He emphasized green infrastructure for stormwater and wastewater management, which Karen said would be the system closest to replicating natural systems. For septic and decentralized systems, a big issue is who pays for upgrades and repairs. Karen added the nyswri@cornell.edu website as a resource for further information.
- ◆ The second discussion by Lauren Valle of John Todd Ecological Design and Robert (Skip) Backus of Omega Institute gave very specific examples of innovative waste water treatment from very small systems to very large systems. The John Todd Ecological Design firm has developed many of the green management systems, and Robert Backus described the operation of Omega's Eco-machine wastewater treatment system. Karen Schneller McDonald noted that both referred to “12 Principles of Ecological Design,” which promote use of microbes and a large variety of plants for treating municipal wastes. They gave an example of an 100% green infrastructure wastewater system constructed in Peoria, Illinois to treat combined sewer overflows. The result included an improvement in river water quality and creation of a downtown wetland water park at a cost of \$150 million dollars, whereas an estimate of a conventional treatment system had been \$500 million dollars.
- ◆ *Stream Ecology* : Fran Dunwell of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program discussed how watershed tributaries affect fisheries. She discussed impacts of sedimentation after storms burying aquatic vegetation and damaging fish nursery and spawning habitat. Emma Rosi-Marshall from Cary Institute spoke about the effects of pharmaceuticals and personal care products that are showing up in the water supply. Emma is working on several studies to determine the impacts on stream ecology, including one showing that stream bacteria quickly develop resistance to antibacterial soaps, and one showing that synthetic estrogen can cause fish populations to crash. Karen noted that most of these chemicals are not removed by standard wastewater treatment, suggesting that there needs to be a look at out-dated systems and new solutions for these pollutants.
- ◆ Dan Shapley, Riverkeeper, gave an overview of an inventory between Albany and

Yonkers of the problems in the tributaries to the Hudson River. He documented combined sewage overflows, sewage treatment plants, publicly owned sewage collection systems, stormwater outfalls, agricultural run-off and septic overflows. These inputs often make the quality of the tributary waters worse than that of the Hudson River.

- ◆ Rob Lane from the Orange County Water Authority and Regional Plan Association presented a soon to be released Hudson Valley Watershed Management Design Guide. It highlights best practices for watershed management at 3 scales, the landscape scale, streets and public spaces scale, and small sites/specific buildings scale. It distinguishes from rural to urban settings and determines the appropriate practices for the context. Karen recommended that the CAC get a copy. Laurie Husted asked if Orange County might plan a training class for Planners and CAC's.
- ◆ A consultant working with the Hudson River Watershed Alliance is producing an interactive system for mapping sewer and stormwater outfalls that will be on their website soon. Since Dutchess County is included, the Town can access the information and tailor it to the needs of the Town's watersheds.
- ◆ Russel Urban-Meade at Chazen Companies presented his study of using rainfall and soil data to calculate the safe density for individual septic systems. Based on his model, as a general guide for Dutchess County with about 40" rainfall per year, it requires at least 2.5 acres for wastes from individual septic to be properly processed. Karen noted that there is a real push to have this type of data incorporated in zoning and planning laws for water quality protection. Jen Cavanaugh added that Russel has also developed two model laws to implement this sort of thinking, which is less about the density question and more about appropriate means to protect water.
- ◆ Ann Clark from Clark engineering and Surveying reported on a project in the Town of Hillsdale, where untreated sewage and flooding problems were solved by a new water treatment system. She also recommends requiring water quality testing at the time of sale of a property, which Karen said would bring up the discussion of what number of contaminants should be included.
- ◆ *SUMMARY*: Karen said that the presentations all showed that there is enough innovative technology for solving many of the water quality problems, but the cost will be an issue for small communities. A panel discussion gave information on state funding sources for wastewater infrastructure planning and engineering, but acknowledged that there isn't enough available to cover a fraction of the State's infrastructure needs.

The CAC thanked Karen for her detailed report and recommendations. Laurie Husted said that she would pass on the information handouts to Anne Rubin.

SUBCOMMITTEES: Jen Cavanaugh asked about particular projects that the CAC is currently working on. Laurie Husted explained that following the completion of the Environmental and Climate Action Plan, the CAC developed 4 subcommittees for water, solid waste, energy and transportation. Sarah Imboden added that each Subcommittee is following relevant issues and looking for opportunities to get grants or assistance for specific projects. Laurie noted that there are two grants that have been applied for involving the Transportation Subcommittee, one for trails and one for sidewalks. If the grant for the sidewalks is approved, there will be a focus for the Subcommittee to support that. Laurie is currently looking for an opportunity for the Water Subcommittee, as there is a Bard College professor who is interested in the water quality of the Sawkill Creek and in contacting the CAC about a water testing program.

Karen Schneller-McDonald reported that since the salamander migration project that was done in the Spring, she has been following up speaking with other towns and would like to see a project for a public presentation of information gathered about salamander ecology. She spent the summer tracking vernal pools to learn more about the salamander life cycle. She has photos and documentation, and found that one vernal pool that was too deep to walk in at springtime actually completely dried up. Her question is that though there is the well organized salamander migration project, but no follow-up throughout the year, how can salamander habitat be protected without knowing where they have dispersed after the vernal pools dry up. She would like to get more people interested in the project and offered to do a power point presentation of her information. There would still need to be more information for the data base. Laurie mentioned that there would be a meeting on the Biodiversity connectivity grant that Red Hook received, and she can raise that point.

ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE: Denis Collet noted that he was very impressed with the Climate March, and felt that it was a tipping point for the recognition that humans are responsible for increasing climate change, and we need to do something about it. It will take time for the consciousness to translate into policy and practices.

Denis reported that the Tivoli Energy Workshop was basically a sales pitch for solar installations.

NIAGARA WATER BOTTLING COMPANY DISCUSSION OF PURCHASING COKERTOWN SPRINGS WATER COMPANY: Brenda Cagle reported that Niagara Water Bottling Company is discussing with Town Planner Michele Greig and a Town Board representative about their interest in drawing up to 1,000 gallons per day from the Cokertown Springs. This would generate 100 truck trips through Red Hook per day to haul the water to a proposed Kingston Bottling Plant.

INTERMUNICIPAL TASK FORCE: Laurie Husted noted that there is still no CAC representative for the Task Force Friday meetings. Sarah Imboden agreed that she could cover some meetings while she is between jobs. Brenda Cagle explained that the Task Force is currently finished an Historic Resources Protection document that is awaiting adoption. The Task Force meetings also serve as an informal forum for residents to discuss concerns with municipal officials outside of Town Board meetings which have a long agenda.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 P.M.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at 7 P.M. at the Town Hall

Respectfully submitted

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary

