

Draft

**TOWN OF RED HOOK
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Minutes of meeting
October 11, 2017

Members present: Chairwoman Laurie Husted, Susan Ellis, Julia Solomon
Mike Zelig, Jen Cavanaugh, Lori Urbin, Denis Collet

Guest: John Deckoff (resident considering membership)

CALL TO ORDER / QUORUM : Chairwoman Laurie Husted called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M. A quorum was present with all current members in attendance. Laurie introduced John Deckoff as a guest who has filed a letter of interest with the Town Board to serve on a Town Committee.

MINUTES OF THE CAC MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2017: Laurie Husted asked if there were any comments on the minutes of the September 13, 2017 meeting. CAC members noted that they had made comments about the Greenway Grant and the Fuss and O'Neill grant. Secretary Susan Ellis said that she had amended the minutes as requested and resubmitted them as approved minutes. Laurie tabled continued discussion until the end of the meeting.

SOLAR ZONING LEGISLATION: Denis Collet circulated a copies of a draft proposal of a Local Law to Amend the Zoning Law Regarding Solar Energy Systems. He noted that at the last Town Board meeting it was the intent of the Town Board and the Energy Subcommittee to approve schedule the Public Hearing on Solar Zoning. The Town Board could not agree to set the Public Hearing, as there was concern that some revisions had not been sufficiently publicized. The Town Board wanted to have review and recommendations from the CAC before it was put before the public.

The Issues :

- ◆ The impact of ground mounted systems on viewshed, and the desire to minimize their visibility. The intent is to promote solar installations as a part of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Town Comprehensive Plan.
- ◆ The Town does not generally regulate farmlands. They fall under the authority of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. If the area of solar installation is less than 10% of the farm use, it is not subject to regulation, with the exception of determining if it will be ground mounted or not.

- ◆ *Solar Farm proposal* : The Town Board is aware of CAC concerns that the proposed Solar Zoning Law is too restrictive in some cases. However, there is a timeline that needs to be met. The Town needs to make a statement that it must have some Zoning Law in place, so it is willing to accept this draft in the context that it is raised.

The Town just received notice that it has a timeline that has started for approval of a Solar Farm project application that has been pending. The State provided a calculation of the costs of upgrading the connections to Central Hudson with 3 phase lines and other improvements, for which the Town has 90 days to raise its share. The costs came in below the projected costs in the application development.

Another concern is that the Town is planning to contract with an equity investor who will take on the construction project and manage the Solar Farm for 5 or 6 years at a fixed price, earning the tax credits and rebates. Then the investor would offer it to the Town at a discounted price, whereby the Town could continue producing solar electricity and collecting the revenue.

About 200 residents could draw their electricity from the Solar Farm. To entice owners to sign up, there needs to be perhaps a 10% reduction in the electric cost, plus the benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. What Denis would like is to have a consensus from the CAC with some narrative stating that while we think that it may be more restrictive than necessary in some cases, the Town really needs the Solar Zoning in place. Denis described process and resources used to develop height and location restrictions.

Lori Urbin summarized that the task is to prepare the Solar Zoning draft for the Town Board to pass and to present to the public for comment. Denis agreed. The CAC discussed the issue of determining how to address treatment of prime farmland or important farmland soils.

John Deckoff asked about the availability of investors willing to undertake the Solar Farm project. Denis said that issuing the RFP with contract details will answer that. The work done on the feasibility study gave the Town details of the upfront costs. The Town funded a CESIR evaluation for \$35,000.

Denis continued the discussion on the Solar Zoning Law and handling properties with special circumstances. Mike Zelig noted that he found provisions for special use permits, which would give flexibility to accommodate special circumstances.

CAC recommendations to the Town Board re: Solar Zoning regulations :

CAC members decided to recommend that the Town Board proceed with holding a public hearing on the draft of the Local Law. Such regulations are important to have in place to manage increasing efforts to establish more and expanded solar energy installations. The increase in solar energy production would reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, in keeping with the goals of the Town Environmental Climate Action Plan (E-CAP).

The Vote: All 7 current CAC members were present and voted aye.

INVENTORY FOR LED STREETLIGHT CONVERSION: Laurie Husted asked how the inventory for the number of streetlights to be converted is proceeding. Jen Cavanaugh replied that she has only been out for about 4 hours in the field. She has two interns, Elizabeth and TJ. It will take awhile due to school schedules. They have over 300 lights to do. Since a ladder is required, Jen could use help.

LETTER TO LOCAL BUSINESSES ABOUT WASTE REDUCTION: Lori Urbin had submitted her letter to the Red Hook Chamber of Commerce for inclusion in their e-mail bulletin. The CAC had asked for a link to it. Kim Gomez told Lori that she had wanted to do some rewording, but hadn't had time.

HUDSON VALLEY GREEN EXPO: Denis Collet announced that there will be a Hudson Valley Green Expo combined with the monthly Hudson Valley GREEN DRINKS at SUNY New Paltz. Laurie Husted and Jen Cavanaugh are planning to go.

MINUTES OF THE CAC MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2017: The minutes of the September 13, 2017 meeting were approved with amendments by a motion from Jen Cavanaugh and seconded by Julia Solomon.

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

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday November 8, 2017 at 7 P.M. at Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Ellis, Secretary