

Town of Red Hook Minutes

Special Joint Tree Meeting

Date: Thursday, November 9, 2006
Location: Town Hall Main Room
Time: 8:00 am – 9:00 am

Reason for the Special Meeting:

A Special Meeting was called by Councilman Harold Ramsey and Councilman Sue Crane in response to various citizen complaints regarding Central Hudson's tree trimming and removal practices within the overhead wire zones in Upper Red Hook and the Village of Red Hook.

Participants / Affiliation / Contact Number:

1. Joe Kistner	Central Hudson Tree Foreman	845-486-5217
2. Mike Torcello	Central Hudson (Lewis Tree Service)	845-486-5759
3. John Maserjan (sp?)	Central Hudson	845-486-5282
4. David Dittman	Central Hudson	845-486-5838
5. Brenda Cagle	TRH / VRH CAC Chairman	
6. Mike Temple	NYS DOT	845-486-3390
7. Don Bartles	DCDPW	845-486-2932
8. Sue Crane	TRH Councilman	
9. Harold Ramsey	TRH Councilman	
10. Kathy Stewart	Citizen Upper Red Hook / Red Hook Concerns	
11. Ginger Hagan	TRH CAC Member / Tree Ordinance	
12. Linda Keeling	Citizen of Pitcher Lane	
13. Susan Elias	Citizen Upper Red Hook	
14. Vicky Perry	Citizen Upper Red Hook	
15. Dave Seymour	Village of Red Hook Councilman, tree committee liaison (not in attendance due to work-related business)	

Special Note:

Vicky Perry talked to Joe K. prior to her work day. She related to him our concerns for the Upper Red Hook Hamlet area and our intended visioning plan submitted to the Intermunicipal Task Force.

Harold acted as the moderator. He explained that Central Hudson (CH) and the Village Tree Committee have had a good working relationship. He allowed Joe K. to give an overview then wanted Brenda to express any of her concerns.

Joe K. explained that he is the line foreman for the area east of the Hudson River for CH. Their "Enhanced Trimming" program is intended to clear-out dead branches, diseased and dying trees potentially affecting line service to customers. His position on the "tree slicing" of the Greig-Pitcher Lane trees was validated as the owner gave permission.

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Linda K. referenced that the 50ft. right of way was a Constitutional land taking issue and that recommendations were made in the May 1, 2006 document by the State of New York's Public Service Commission. Cases 05-E-0934 and Case 05-G-0935 entitled: Direct Testimony and Exhibit of the New York State Consumer Protection Board specifying the decreased need for CH to cull trees within the 50 ft. transmission wire zone. Linda K., resident of Pitcher Lane, repeatedly asked for documentation from CH's representatives, but none was presented even though Mike T. had a pile of file folders on the table in front of himself.

Sue Crane wanted some background on the federal mandate regarding transmission lines, county, Right of way (ROW), and state. She had noticed poor trimming techniques on local trees in the town and village.

Joe K. explained a case on Whaleback Road in Red Hook years ago whereby a tree strattling the electric overhead wires was not removed. The homeowner's child climbed the tree, was electrocuted and fortunately survived. The owner requested that the tree be removed.

Mike Temple (DOT) emphasized their obligation to remove hazardous and dangerous trees.

Linda noted that most people would not challenge that posture but there needs to be more communication with the town representatives and any organization removing and/or trimming trees in our community. There needs to be a coordinated effort to inform town representatives (ie. CAC) before work is to take place and prune judiciously with care for the tree's aesthetics.

John M. (CH) referenced the State Law regulating 5 lots or more requiring underground wire installations. He indicated that it is very costly upfront, about 1 million dollars per mile compared to \$220,000 for above ground. He gave the example of the Town of Hyde Park which requested the burial of above ground wires. It was a cooperative arrangement between many business entities (CH, DOT, THP, Cable) also involving government grants.

Kathy Stewart mentioned the Intermunicipal Task Force's meeting next week as it relates to our Comprehensive Plan and invited the representatives to also attend the public meeting.

Harold emphasized that the Town of Red Hook would like to receive notification of CH's tree trimming plan several months prior to the actual work so that our CAC members can review the plan, site search and accompany the actual cutting.

Joe K. reiterated CH's position that letters were sent out to all the Red Hook citizens that CH would be in the area doing tree trimming. He indicated that an arborist makes recommendations and maps the roads. Routine tree trimming is 15 ft. over the top and 10 ft. to the sides. Arborist Joe K., who lives locally, noted that he has lent his 70 ft. bucket to the Village of Red Hook which probably offset the cost to the taxpayer by about \$50 per person.

Kathy S. stressed her wish for coordination, offered her commercial tree spade and emphasized the treatment of street trees even if sick to prolong their longevity.

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Harold emphasized our wishes to work proactively on an agreeable solution to the complaints. He had Brenda explain the CH – Village Tree Committee relationship.

Brenda explained that Dave Seymour and Joe K. have a working relationship of communication so that sensitive areas are treated with utmost care. A tree survey spread sheet was initially created by Cornell students and is maintained by the Village's CAC Tree Committee. She emphasized that the owners are contacted first and that the correct species and size of trees are planted in properly spaced locations. Cooperatively Village staff dig the holes while volunteers plant, mulch, water and trim throughout the year. Town CAC member, Ginger Hagan, has been working on a Tree Ordinance to be presented to the Town Board on Nov. 14th. It was mentioned that some National Grid served towns have a permit process. Through the code, pruning requires they meet with the authority.

Joe K. mentioned the work that they do in the city of Poughkeepsie and their specs.

Harold proposed a tree committee be established under the auspices of the CAC as the overseerer and proposer of a Tree Ordinance.

Mike T. (DOT) referenced a landscape architect when the town is ready to plant trees. Bill Peckam has 20 years experience. He noted that when a State ROW is involved a highway permit is needed. The State is concerned about dead, dangerous and leaning trees. When historic value is involved, they trim to sight distances. Twenty-five years ago, DOT wouldn't put wires underground unless reconstructing the roadway.

Joe K. mentioned the coexisting wires: telephone, cablevision, 2nd and primary lines.

Sue asked when they will be back again. The response was in 3 years.

Mike Torcello (CH) lives in Rhinebeck. He indicated that a study of reliability indicated that the Staatsburg substation is the worse performing. This has grown as trees were not cut back over the years.

Dave Dittman (CH) added that 2 circuits primarily were involved for reliability problems in 2002-3 which involved 105 and 52 tree related outages.

Joe K. emphasized the limitations imposed on the utility as it is responsible for safety and performance.

Linda noted to Joe that he may have not liked the content of the email communications, but it served to get everyone talking at the table. More communication is needed. When work was being done on her road, she asked that a dead tree be taken down. The foreman never contacted me even though I was standing out there.

Joe K. said he would take the tree down, just call him.

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Kathy S. offered the name of George Vengrin, 758-5014, a well known local arborist in Upper Red Hook, who might want to be involved with the tree issue.

As time was nearing the end, Harold, asked those involved to sum up what they felt where we need to go from here:

1. Susan Elias would like information on the underground studies.... Mike T. (DOT) was agreeable to finding this information through a national study.
2. Kathy Stewart would like to see tree planting phasing and trees planted along trails.
3. Linda thanked Harold and Sue for organizing this joint meeting. She noted this is a step in the right direction in getting everyone to cooperate, inform one another of their intentions and plan to plant street trees within our community that will have a long term positive impact on the drive-ability of our roads and further beautiful our environment. She is requesting that Brenda receive documentation from CH on their arborist's report and mapping strategies of work done so that immediate corrective planting actions can be taken to off-set the disfigured tree trimming.
4. Brenda mentioned that National Grid has a 10,000 trees program and contact program.
5. As an aside Mike T (DOT) mentioned that their Delta System 2/1 program let's the trees burn down rather than trim over time.
6. Sue thanked all the participants and looks forward to future cooperation regarding street trees under the wires and looks forward to the town's tree committee's oversight involvement. She distributed copies of the participant list to everyone.

The meeting ended at 9:00 am. with participants talking informally with one another afterwards for a few minutes while the seniors entered for their exercise program.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling, Secretary
November 14, 2006
Minutes requested by Harold Ramsey