

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
27 APRIL 2009**

PRESENT:

J. Pierre Gontier, Chairman, Canaan
Harvey Weber, Copake
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Ed Simonsen, Kinderhook
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz
Ed Nabozny, Greenport
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
Matt de la Houssaye, City of Hudson
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Mark Burch, Stuyvesant
Karen Mort, Ghent
Ed Van Nostrand, CC DOH

REGRETS:

Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Tony LaSalvia, Taghkanic
Theresa Mayhew, CC Coop. Ext.

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Gontier called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and noted that a quorum (13 of 19 members) was present to conduct business. Frances Szasz reported that Dean Vander Schaaff was recovering from surgery and would not be in attendance, but conveyed to her his support for the draft EMC Energy Committee Report.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ed Simonsen made a motion to approve the draft March 2009 minutes and seconded by Melissa Sorman. Vote: All in favor.

NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled EMC meeting would fall on Monday, 5/25/09, which is the Memorial Day holiday. Ed Simonsen made a motion to reschedule the regular May EMC meeting to Monday, 1 June 2009 and seconded by Melissa Sorman. Vote: All in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee Reports

1) Energy Committee

Energy Committee Chairman Ed Simonsen noted that the draft committee report was distributed to EMC members last month with a request to forward suggestions for revisions to the committee, through Ed or Kate Cashen. Kate Cashen noted that there were no significant revisions suggested, only minor formatting changes. Also changed was the section dealing with the extension of the Bottle Law, which was supported by resolution of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and was enacted in the 2009-10 NYS budget, from a recommendation to a recognition of the BOS support. Roland Vosburgh emailed the revised report to all members. Ed Nabozny noted that the county's website has an announcement that Columbia and Greene Counties have a request for proposal out now for shared transportation services. Ed Simonsen explained that Phase II of the Energy Committee Report makes recommendations on transportation issues including park and ride and a survey of traffic patterns as an independent issue.

Frances Szasz made a motion to approve the Energy Committee Report and forward the report to the BOS Planning, Economic Development, Tourism, Transportation, and Agriculture (PED) Committee and seconded by Mark Burch. Chairman Gontier requested a roll-call vote. Vote: All in favor.

Chairman Gontier thanked the committee for their work to produce the report. Ed Simonsen said that he thought the EMC had done a tremendous amount of work in the last two years, including the recommendation of siting a temporary air monitoring station in the county and the Energy Committee report recommendations.

Roland Vosburgh will email the adopted Energy Committee Report to the BOS PED Committee so that they will have time to review it prior to the formal presentation to the BOS PED Committee at their 26 May 2009 meeting.

2) Cascino Farm, Town of Copake Update

The discussion of the recent NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets (NYSDAM) letter to the Town of Copake re: the "farm" status of the site plan application for the Cascino property on Rt. 22, first raised at the March 2009 meeting, continued and the following points were raised:

- Town of Copake officials, Bob Sacks (Town Board) and Linda Gabaccia (Planning Board) are willing to meet with the EMC to discuss the Town's concerns. The consensus was to consider inviting the Copake officials to a future meeting and then deciding how to proceed vis a vis NYSDAM and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), however, no decision on scheduling any potential speakers was made at the meeting.
- Chairman Gontier clarified some confusion over press articles which left the impression that local town environmental matters must be funneled to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) through the EMC. This is incorrect, as all local government officials have the ability to present any matters directly to the appropriate BOS committee. He also reported that the BOS Planning, Economic Development, Tourism, Transportation, and Agriculture (PED) Committee had already been approached about taking a position on behalf of the Town of Copake and against the NYSDAM finding that the Cascino application is a farm operation and the Committee declined to take a position on what is viewed as a "local" town issue.
- Among the possible suggestions as to the proper role of the EMC in this matter were:
 - Avoid the specific Town of Copake/NYSDAM controversy and taking sides in the issue and focus solely on generic policy issues, e.g. NYSDAM should coordinate with other state agencies when ruling on Ag District appeals under the Ag & Markets Law to the Commissioner of NYSDAM.
 - Address specific local issues when there is a clear county-wide environmental issue or impact.
 - Advise the BOS to recommend to NYSDAM that they should take into account an applicant's past compliance record with environmental and local land use regulations when issuing their finding under Ag & Markets Law, under the public health and safety aspect.
 - Bring to light issues that are not being addressed adequately by other involved regulatory bodies.
 - Recognize that state agencies have divergent mandates and that protection and encouragement of agriculture is a priority in NYS, but that state agencies should still cooperate and coordinate on enforcement issues.

At the suggestion of Ed Simonsen and Chairman Gontier, the discussion was adjourned to a future meeting.

Chairman Gontier noted that in the absence of Water Committee Chairman Tony LaSalvia, there was no report tonight. Roland Vosburgh reported that he had received the CD of the Copake Ground Water Resources and Study and Protection Plan but not yet contacted Data Processing to have this linked to the EMC website. He recommended the EMC website have links to any town website which has one of these water studies.

NEW BUSINESS

Melissa Sorman reported that the Gallatin Resident's Association had a guest speaker from Mid Hudson Energy Smart who described grants for residential energy conservation and she will suggest that the Town of Gallatin organize a meeting on energy savings.

Ed Simonsen recommended the March issue of Scientific American for an article on alternative energy sources. Chairman Gontier noted that the NYSERDA website provides help to residents to calculate savings and break-even points from various alternative energy sources.

Ed Simonsen announced that Fran Martino, heading up the Kinderhook Watershed Alliance, had offered to speak at a future EMC meeting.

Kate Cashen announced that refreshments would be served to honor the retirement of J. Pierre Gontier as EMC chairman for the last 18 years. Chairman Gontier was surprised and expressed his thanks to all the members over the years including their energy and accomplishments.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner