

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
24 AUGUST 2009**

PRESENT:

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Harvey Weber, Vice Chairman, Copake
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Karen Mort, Ghent
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
John Dax, New Lebanon
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Mark Burch, Stuyvesant
Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Ed Van Nostrand, CC COH

REGRETS:

Dierdre Henderson, Chatham
John Adams, Canaan
Ed Nabozny, Greenport
Dean Vander Schaaf, Livingston
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

VACANCIES:

Town of Ancram
City of Hudson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and noted that a quorum (requires 10 out of 19 members) was not present to conduct official business. Four voting members arrived after the call to order so that by 7:15 pm there was a quorum (12 out of 19 members).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Two comments were made about the draft July EMC minutes. Frances Szasz again summarized her reason for abstention on the vote regarding the Columbia Land Conservancy. Scott Stackpole wondered if his pending appointment had been mentioned at the meeting. *Dan Marcus made a motion to approve the 7/27/09 minutes as presented and seconded by Kate Cashen. Vote: All in favor with Scott Stackpole abstaining (one vote).*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Simonsen reported that he, Frances Szasz, and Karen Mort met with Commissioner Ken Flood on 8/19/09 at the behest of Chairman Simonsen to discuss how best to present

information and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Many ideas were discussed during the meeting. One suggestion that was offered was for the EMC to prepare a short (no more than one page) quarterly summary of issues which could be supplemented with more detailed background information. The members were positively impressed with Commissioner Flood and he expressed support for EMC ideas for sponsoring speakers around the county and providing appropriate staff support. Commissioner Flood is looking to the EMC for very specific recommendations for county government. Frances Szasz was very encouraged by the meeting and concluded that the BOS was seeking cooperation and independent thinking with the EMC. She urged the EMC to implement the quarterly briefing approach. Karen Mort also found the meeting productive and noted that Commissioner Flood wishes to attend a future EMC meeting. Chairman Simonsen added that Commissioner Flood supports maintaining a good EMC archive as well as natural resources inventory.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

OLD BUSINESS

- 1) *EMC Reporting Process:* Chairman Simonsen reminded members of the cover letter he prepared that was sent with the EMC Energy Recommendations to the BOS. He asked for comments on whether that cover letter was adequate or required additional language. He noted that the EMC should make a distinction in the presentation (e.g. cover letter) to the BOS when purely information is presented versus when recommendations are presented. There was consensus that the material presented to the BOS on energy should be viewed as recommendations, not purely information. Kate Cashen thought that the EMC's presentation to the BOS would depend on the issue, some would be only for their information while others would request the BOS take some kind of action. Bob Kessler emphasized the value as well as responsibility of each EMC member to go back to their town board or city council to report on EMC issues and recommendations, since members represent their community on the EMC. Recalling the brief discussion about conservation advisory councils (CACs) at the town level at the last meeting, Mr. Kessler said that all towns should have a CAC. Chairman Simonsen asked whether or not the members, collectively, represent the county. Bob Kessler thought that the EMC does not represent the county per se, because our role is purely advisory, but he felt the priority is to strengthen the connection from the towns and city to the BOS committee and from there to the full BOS. Frances Szasz agreed that the EMC role is to influence the BOS through the BOS committee. She noted that several towns had created CACs in years past (Stuyvesant, Kinderhook, Chatham, Livingston, Taghkanic, Gallatin, Copake, and Hillsdale (per R. Vosburgh recollections)) especially in reaction to major nuclear power plant proposals in the region in the 1970s. She thought that now is a time when towns could benefit from having CACs advise on town level environmental issues.

Harvey Weber explained that Copake has a Conservation Resources Committee looking at natural resources and an Environmental Committee looking at energy issues, especially outdoor wood boilers (OWBs) and that these groups were involved with advising the town on the material collected during the annual town cleanup day last spring (recently the scrap metal was sold). Melissa Sorman said that she was told she was a member of the Gallatin CAC, but she has yet to attend a meeting or learn anything more about the CAC. Dan Marcus supported the idea of brief, periodic reports to the BOS so that they know the EMC exists. Ed Van Nostrand also added his support for members to keep their town boards briefed. Frances Szasz noted that CACs did not catch on in Columbia County as they did in other counties due in part to the potential for political antagonism between CACs and town boards. She recommended that the EMC get more information about CAC establishment and how they are functioning around the state. John Dax thought that towns with active CACs would probably post their activity on their town's website. Mr. Dax and Chairman Simonsen both reported that they make monthly reports to their town boards on EMC matters. Bob Kessler suggested the EMC use active CACs to bring local issues to the EMC/county level. Scott Stackpole thought it would be helpful to understand the recent history of information flow between towns and the EMC at the county level.

- 2) *Outdoor Wood Boilers (OWBs)*: Chairman Simonsen reported that material was distributed at the last meeting (extra copies were available at the August meeting) and he again encouraged members to go online and do some research on the topic of OWBs. Chairman Simonsen asked for ideas on how to proceed with this topic, e.g. any recommendations. Dan Marcus thought that a county wide moratorium on new OWBs was called for and should be addressed in the county building code, but others noted that it is the responsibility of local governments to implement the state building code. Harvey Weber reported that the Copake town board is investigating a response to OWBs, perhaps a moratorium on new installations and possibly a committee to prepare recommendations. Chairman Simonsen reported that the Kinderhook town board had enacted a 6 month moratorium on OWBs to study the best approach. Mark Burch thought that the EMC could approach this either of two ways: 1) individual EMC members advising their town boards, or 2) the concise briefing paper on the topic distributed by the EMC to the BOS. Harvey Weber thought that information on OWBs could be posted on town and county websites. Dan Marcus volunteered to prepare an abstract on OWBs summarizing the Attorney General report information and email it to members for review. This would be an informational piece urging town boards to start thinking about the OWB issue and not include any EMC recommendation to restrict, regulate, or ban OWBs. Chairman Simonsen thought that the collective voice of the EMC was more powerful than individual member voices. Scott Stackpole wanted any presentation to recognize variations in town codes. Dan Marcus said the abstract would be done in broad language. Frances Szasz suggested that more attention might occur if the topic were release after the November elections and closer to colder weather. Others thought that having the topic discussed before elections was more effective. Dan Marcus said he would use the

Attorney General report on OWBs with its focus on the negative aspects of OWBs. John Dax pointed out that the Attorney General's report did not categorically condemn OWBs. There was some data which showed that some OWB models may be more clean burning than some indoor wood stoves. Karl Gabosh recommended the EMC conduct a workshop on OWBs at the September meeting. Mark Burch suggested Judith Schreiber, the lead research scientist on the Attorney General report as a potential speaker for either the EMC or the general public. Consensus was that an OWB speaker should be for one of the county-wide events. The members agreed to make OWBs the primary agenda item for the September meeting with a goal of developing the briefing material.

- 3) *Speaker Presentations:* Chairman Simonsen reported that Deirdre Henderson was coordinating this effort. Bob Kessler added that he spoke with Gretchen Stevens, scientist with Hudsonia about a potential speaker/topic. She suggested she could speak about habitat mapping or biodiversity. He was referred to Deirdre Henderson with this idea.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1) *Air Monitoring Data:* Chairman Simonsen thanked Mr. Vosburgh for forwarding the link to DEC's website which members can access to view the Stuyvesant air monitoring station data. There was a short discussion about the particulate levels being recorded as well as the issue of mercury emissions from the Lafarge Cement Plant in Ravena.
- 2) *Article 47 Powers & Duties:* Even though the EMC has been very busy over the last year or more, Chairman Simonsen explained the importance of the members becoming familiar with the Article 47 powers and duties of the EMC. He wondered if the members would want to set aside a meeting to go through each of the powers and duties and prioritize work items. Bob Kessler instead suggested that a small committee undertake this review and present recommendations to the full EMC. He also asked if anyone knew why EMCs were created in the first place. Frances Szasz explained that in the 1970s, DEC wished to push county governments into funding and establishing planning efforts on behalf of the environment and who could work cooperatively with DEC and this was done with Article 47 and in the beginning, state funding was available for certain EMC and CAC activities. (These state funds were abolished in the mid-1990s: R. Vosburgh note). Chairman Simonsen asked for any volunteers to work on an Article 47 priority list.
- 3) *Format of Minutes:* Chairman Simonsen explained that he thought the minutes should indicate which towns/city did not have an EMC member appointed and not just those in attendance and regrets. He believes that it is important to keep reminding people of vacancies so that they will be filled. He views vacancies as disenfranchising those communities. ***Mark Burch made a motion to include a list of vacancies in each meeting minutes and seconded by Harvey Weber. Vote: All in favor.*** Chairman Simonsen reported having spoken with Hudson Mayor Scalera about the city's vacancy and will be sending the

mayor a copy of Article 47. Bob Kessler also reported that Ancram Supervisor Dias promised to make a nomination in the near future after speaking with BOS Chairman Baer.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm. The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, 28 September 2009.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner