

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
22 FEBRUARY 2010**

PRESENT:

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Karen Mort, Ghent
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Jamie Purinton, Ancram
Harvey Weber, Copake
John Adams, Canaan
John Dax, New Lebanon
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
Ed Van Nostrand, CC DOH
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

REGRETS:

Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz

ABSENT:

Phil Leonard, Clermont

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

VACANCIES:

Town of Stuyvesant (nomination received)
Town of Greenport (nomination received)
City of Hudson

GUESTS:

Louise Bliss-Kenneally (Greenport nominee)
Mr. Kenneally
Kathy Schneider (Stuyvesant nominee)
Ellen Jouret-Epstein, Columbia Land Conservancy

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm and noted that a quorum (12 out of 19 members) was present to conduct official business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft November 2009 EMC minutes were reviewed (December 2009 and January 2010 meetings were cancelled). *Harvey Weber made a motion to approve the draft 11/30/09 EMC minutes as presented and seconded by Dan Marcus. Vote: All in favor.*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Simonsen noted that the issue of outdoor wood boilers (OWBs) would be discussed later. He noted that all members had received a copy of the 2009 EMC annual report and attached was a paragraph description of the EMC which was prepared at the request of a consultant working for the Town of Copake. He was pleased to report that Commissioner Ken Flood supported the membership of the CC EMC in the NYS Association of EMCs (NYSAEMC) at a cost of \$75.00. Roland Vosburgh will handle the application and voucher for this membership. Finally, he distributed copies of the Part 617 SEQRA regulations and encouraged all members to review and be familiar with it.

SPECIAL SPEAKER

Chairman Simonsen introduced Ellen Jouret-Epstein. She thanked the Council for the invitation to speak and distributed copies of several of the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) conservation area brochures as well as a copy of the CLC report on strategic priorities entitled "Conserving Our Heritage- Shaping Our Future" and the Conservancy News fall/winter 2009 edition. Also provided was a copy of the county map showing protected lands for 2009.

She covered the following issues in her presentation:

- CLC completed a strategic planning process looking at available GIS layers and developed criteria for designating lands of critical importance for protection. They discovered that the strategic plan and the map showing protected lands were very compatible.
- CLC operates nine public conservation areas
- CLC has a long history of working with local governments regarding land use planning, e.g. helping local officials identify the values of lands within their municipality
- CLC created her position (she was hired in late 2008) to more actively work with local governments on land use issues. She has been involved with reviewing comprehensive plans, attending local meetings, collaborated with the Kinderhook/Stuyvesant/Stockport trail committee, the Rt 9 and 9H Corridor study committee in Kinderhook, county and town ag & farmland protection planning, the North Bay (City of Hudson) Recreation Area project and biodiversity planning.
- CLC is co-sponsoring a water resources meeting for this spring where Steve Winkley with NY Rural Water Association will be speaking on the local NYRA prepared groundwater resource and a groundwater specialist will also speak on some Dutchess County studies.
- CLC would like to act in the role of a convener; to bring towns together since no other group has the staff or program focus to do this.
- CLC would like to advance the concept of conservation subdivisions in the county and does not currently have a good example of a completed conservation subdivision in the

county. There are several towns with regulations, however. The development pressures have not been as large on Columbia County, so that may explain the lack of good examples. She said the county is in a good position to support economic development and smart growth through conservation subdivisions. CLC's goal is to partner with towns to help plan conservation subdivisions and is able to offer assistance for a few consultations at no charge. Assistance for the entire process is being offered at a rate of \$35.00 per hour.

- She stated that we need to start looking at the county as a whole but it may not yet be the right time. No towns currently have open space plans and the pieces are not being pulled together yet.
- She described a "good" conservation subdivision regulation as one that identifies the town's criteria, there is a good inventory of town resources, and reviews how a parcel would be developed, e.g. does it strengthen hamlets and preserve agriculture. Also important to remember that property owner has rights and the town has goals.
- She thought that the major challenge facing the county was to secure economic development for jobs without "giving away the store." She further thought that the county was not facing a huge residential development threat nor were there significant threats to water resources currently. She believes that more regional approaches are called for but to be successful it requires public and political support.
- To highlight regional approaches, CLC will host a county wide trail conference in 2011 drawing on some of the successful regional trail projects in the county.

The general discussion that followed highlighted the current trend for population aging and decline in numbers, cost of energy, water availability for both residential and agricultural uses and how these forces might impact future development. Ms. Jouret-Epstein invited anyone interested to attend the NYRWA meeting to report on the Hillsdale ground water resource study next Monday at the Hillsdale Methodist Church on the corner of Rts 23 and 22 at 7:00 pm. She noted that CLC will be getting more web based tools and brochures available over the next year addressing land use planning.

Chairman Simonsen and all the members thanked Ms. Jouret-Epstein for the excellent presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

- 1) *OWBs*: Chairman Simonsen distributed copies of the proposed Copake OWB regulation. Harvey Weber provided copies of the EMC recommendations to the Copake Town Board.
- 2) *2009 Annual Report*: It has been distributed to members.
- 3) *Speaker Series*: hold until next meeting

- 4) *Compost*: hold until next meeting
- 5) *Bag Tax*: hold until next meeting

NEW BUSINESS

- 1) *Regional Environmental Planning*: Chairman Simonsen said that this is a big issue, which the speaker began to address tonight and the discussion should continue.
- 2) *Town Comprehensive Plans*: Chairman Simonsen said that the assessment of local comprehensive plans is designed to understand the level of environmental awareness at the local government level and identify town comprehensive plans that are weak and which towns might benefit from help. Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus that reviewers should prepare written summaries for their findings. The possibility of a spread sheet for presenting all the information was suggested. It was suggested that some issues transcend towns and should be addressed by the county government. Other opinions expressed were that the county provides no guidance and the message to local governments is “whatever you want to do is ok”, that municipal home rule holds back efforts to plan and protect resources on a regional basis, and that a “more muscular county Planning Board” is needed. One topic suggested as a lead item for a regional approach was transportation. Chairman Simonsen stated that the Council should reach out to any supervisors who wish to discuss regional issues and he will take up this idea with Commissioner Ken Flood.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Minutes prepared by:
Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner