

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

MEETING MINUTES

30 NOVEMBER 2009

PRESENT:

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
Daniel Marcus, Stockport
Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Harvey Weber, Copake
John Dax, New Lebanon
John Adams, Canaan
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz
Karen Mort, Ghent
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

REGRETS:

Melissa Sorman, Gallatin

ABSENT:

Phil Leonard, Clermont
Ed Van Nostrand, CC DOH
Ed Nabozny, Greenport

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

VACANCIES:

Town of Ancram
Town of Stuyvesant
City of Hudson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and noted that a quorum (13 out of 19 members) was present to conduct official business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft October EMC minutes were reviewed. *Dan Marcus made a motion to approve the draft 10/26/09 EMC minutes as presented and seconded by Harvey Weber. Vote: All in favor.* Roland R. Vosburgh recommended that the vote on the approval of the September 2009 EMC minutes be taken again as the motion to approve them was seconded by Theresa Mayhew, whose membership term had lapsed. *Dean Vander Schaaff made a motion to approve the draft 9/28/09 EMC minutes and seconded by Harvey Weber. Vote: All in favor.*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Simonsen explained that he emailed Commissioner Ken Flood regarding staff assistance for EMC data collection but had not heard from him yet. He reported that Ellen Epstein, with Columbia Land Conservancy, had accepted his invitation to speak to the EMC at the January 2010 meeting, as an outgrowth on last month's discussion of top environmental issues in the county. Finally, he reminded the members of the requirement to prepare an annual report for distribution to the County Board of Supervisors (BOS).

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Simonsen reported receiving a copy of a watershed survey for the greater Stockport Creek (including Kinderhook and Claverack Creeks), copies of which were distributed to those in attendance. It was agreed that each member in these watersheds would fill out the surveys to the best of their knowledge. It was agreed that members outside of these watersheds could also complete it for their watershed (mainly the Roeliff Jansen Kill).

OLD BUSINESS

1) Outdoor Wood Boilers Recommendations

Chairman Simonsen reported that he, Dan Marcus, John Dax attended the BOS Planning, Economic Development, and Tourism (PET) Committee on 11/24/09 and that the committee voted unanimously to accept the EMC recommendations and forward to the County BOS for their acceptance. Chairman Simonsen, Dan Marcus, and John Dax were all pleased with how well received the report was and the enthusiasm of the members who commented.

2) EMC Speaker Project

Deirdre Henderson reminded the EMC that she was holding off contacting any potential speakers until the EMC had prioritized issues. She listed the potential speakers to date: Ward Stone (NYSDEC), Conrad Vispo (Farmscape Ecology Program), Gretchen Stevens (Hudsonia), someone from NYSDEC Climate Smart Program, Paul Beyer (NYSDEC Smart Growth), and Richard Reynolds (USGS). Chairman Simonsen agreed that once the priority list of issues is finalized, that will help guide the selection of speakers. The concept is for the EMC to sponsor speakers for the benefit of the public and includes moving the meeting location around the county. Harvey Weber added Steven Winkley (NY Rural Water Association). Chairman Simonsen added that more names can be added to the list. Scott Stackpole wondered whether a speaker on OWBs would still be useful. Bob Kessler reported that the Hillsdale Green Solutions group hosted Ned Depew speaking on energy conservation related to residential dwellings. He

urged all towns to create local town conservation advisory councils or environmental committees.

3) Critical Environmental Issues in the County

Chairman Simonsen noted that additional ideas came up after the last EMC meeting and the challenge is paring down and categorizing the ideas to help guide the EMC. He distributed a one page list of the ideas submitted so far. The discussion included these points:

- First speakers should be ones that we could insure would bring a large turnout.
- Reach out to talk with CC Planning Board (PB) with goal to interest local government planners in environmental topics.
- Not necessary to focus on speakers related to cement plants as there are already established groups involved in the issues surrounding cement industry.
- The real problem seems to be the issue of growth and development and its patterns throughout the county.
- EMC focus should be on environmental information for decision makers. Perhaps BOS might support EMC focus on environmental aspects of the broader planning and development issues.
- We need to combine the issues of residential with commercial growth because there are negative impacts from both types of development.
- The Pace Land Use Center training programs were mentioned as a good resource.
- County needs a master plan to address new development.
- EMC could set up a subcommittee to review all local government comprehensive plans to understand what the goals and objectives and guidelines are already in place and from this, the EMC could outline what might be included in a county comprehensive plan.
- EMC must not overstep its authority; we need to coordinate with other groups (e.g. CC PB and CC Planning and Economic Development (PED) Department).
- Growth and development has many facets (e.g. economic, social, as well as environmental). EMC should stay focused on environmental aspects.
- EMC should not “step on the toes” of CC PB and CC PED Department, but clearly, there are environmental issues everywhere.
- We do need to be serious about regional planning and certainly, county wide planning.
- SEQRA compliance is very important at local government level and training is imperative (it was noted that the CCPB has sponsored SEQRA training as part of its efforts to provide training for local government officials).

The remaining discussion focused on getting familiar with town comprehensive plans in place. Chairman Simonsen noted that Ellen Epstein would be addressing this broad issue of growth and development when she speaks at the January meeting. It was also suggested that contacting

consultants who have worked on comprehensive plans in the county (one suggested was Nan Stolzenburg who has assisted several towns) might be helpful. In the end, it was agreed that members would chose a comprehensive plan to review (their own town or from a different town) and focus on the aspects that directly address environmental issues.

4) *Quorum/ Ex officio Issue*

Chairman Simonsen reported that Roland Vosburgh had initiated research into the matter based upon the belief that ex officio members could not vote and therefore could also not make or second motions. What was learned was that while ex officio members are permitted to vote, the members of agencies which the EMC has included for years (e.g. Cornell Cooperative Extension and CC Dept. of Health) actually do not meet the definition of ex officio member. Roland Vosburgh sent all EMC members an email summarizing the issue and the recommendation that will be presented to the BOS in January 2010 to create an EMC membership category termed: non voting agency representative. Chairman Simonsen and Terri Mayhew both said that supported the correction. Roland Vosburgh also added that this solution does not change the status of these valuable resource members from past practice and it does not impact the definition of quorum. Chairman Simonsen added that the EMC is greatly benefited by having people like Terri Mayhew and Ed Van Nostrand contributing to the work of the EMC.

5) *Data Collection*

Chairman Simonsen deferred the discussion until he has heard from Commissioner Ken Flood.

6) *Composting*

Chairman Simonsen noted that Karl Gabosh and Melissa Sorman have been working on this topic. Karl Gabosh distributed a two page draft recommendation to those in attendance. He has had conversations with Vicki McDarby at the CC Solid Waste Department and recounted that no one is really doing any composting. He summarized the reasons for undertaking some form of composting (county, municipal, individual) as reducing disposal costs, production of a viable end product that could be sold, and the value of using the compost to replenish soil fertility in the county. Karl Gabosh noted several web sites with links as resources and particularly a Bard College master's thesis which describes a way to implement composting. Karl Gabosh agreed to send the link for this Bard College thesis to the members. The following comments came up in the discussion:

- At what level would composting be successful; home, town, or county?
- Include a list of five examples of successful composting programs in the EMC recommendations so towns could review them.

- Composting will only be successful with someone supervising the process to avoid contamination.
- Invite Jolene Race from the County Solid Waste Department to speak to the EMC.

7) Watershed Questionnaire

See report under Correspondence.

NEW BUSINESS

Karl Gabosh announced that the next meeting of the Lafarge Cement Company's Community Liaison would be held next week. He asked if anyone had any issues or questions for Lafarge, to let him know. Frances Szasz recommended that he request that any information provided to the Community Liaison members be also provided to the EMC office so that there is a record on file. She also recommended that he ask Lafarge officials for an analysis of the mercury found in their limestone feedstock, as she understands that mercury levels in the rock varies spatially. Chairman Simonsen recommended that he ask Lafarge officials to conduct an elemental analysis of all materials used in the production of cement.

In view of the timing of the December meeting falling between the Christmas and New Year's holidays, it was recommended that the December meeting be cancelled. ***Bob Kessler made a motion to cancel the December 2009 meeting and seconded by Harvey Weber. Vote: All in favor.***

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner