

**Columbia County
Environmental Management Council
Meeting Minutes
28 February 2011**

Present

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Jamie Purinton, Ancram
John Adams, Canaan
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Karen Mort, Ghent
Michael O’Hara, City of Hudson
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
John Dax, New Lebanon
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Kathy Schneider, Stuyvesant
Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Ed Van Nostrand, CCDOH
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

Regrets

Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Bob Kessler, Hillsdale (resigned)

Absent

Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Harvey Weber, Copake
Louise Bliss-Keneally, Greenport
Frances Szasz, Germantown

Vacancies

Town of Austerlitz
Town of Clermont

Guests

Art Bassin, Supervisor, Town of Ancram
Ellen Jouret-Epstein, Columbia Land Conservancy

Call to Order

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and noted that a quorum to conduct official business was present. Dan Marcus moved to approve the January 24, 2011 minutes, and they were seconded by Mike O’Hara.

Chairman’s Report

Distribution of year-end report to the Board of Supervisors is still pending, due to a lack of staff support by the County. Members were asked to send their supervisors’ e-mail addresses to Katy Cashen , who will compile a address list and send to the Chairman for direct distribution to the Supervisors.

Old Business

Ed Simonson thanked the members for attending the Climate Smart session in February. He thought it was a very informative session, but the attendance was lower than the previous session. There was some discussion that there were possibly other meetings that conflicted with the meeting and the interest by Planning and ZBA members to obtain credit for attending.

There was some discussion about future topics for the series and the need to identify other purposes for these topics. One item that was suggested was alternative energy sources and speakers that could talk about the various sources. Mike O'Hara suggested that the EMC could compile the various experiences of towns on the issues of renewable technologies.

John Dax suggested that the EMC look back at the list of items that Nan Solzenburg identified on a county level and then identify what towns have already done work in that area that could be a resource for other towns. This could be then widely shared as a "best practices" resource so that towns do not have to re-invent the wheel. Examples of this were land use policies/zoning on alternative energy sources (wind power/solar), viewsheds and ridgelines, water resources. There was also discussion that we would have to look at the zoning laws that are in place to support the comprehensive plans. It was mentioned that standardizing the information collected would be most helpful to the towns.

John Dax offered to develop an initial series questions in a prescribed format for all towns to look at and then begin the information collection process.

Jamie volunteered to look into the identification and protection of vernal pools and possible language and education and stream buffers/set-backs.

It was mentioned that the NY National Heritage Agency has information on endangered species areas/sensitive areas that could be helpful to towns across the county. The EMC could help develop a list of resources for planning and zoning boards. In addition, Karen Strong, from Hudson River Estuary Program offers a service to towns to help them identify endangered and sensitive areas.

Ellen Jouret-Epstein from the Columbia Land Conservancy said her organization may be sponsoring a workshop in the future on the new SEQRA law and help educate the zoning and planning boards.

Short-Term and Long-Term Goals Discussion:

- GIS—is a tool that can be used for many of these issues. It is a long-term goal to get the county to purchase it for use. Reading maps is easy, making maps is more difficult. But there are a number of data sets already out in the towns that can be shared. Larry Brody from the County Planning Board has more information on this. Ellen agreed to look into this.
- Coordination of Regional water resource protection—long term goal.
- CACs—promotion of them in the various towns. Letter from EMC Chair to the town boards encouraging them to consider forming a CAC was recommended.
- Mike O'Hara spoke about the NYSAEMC Conference that he attended recently. He thought it was very worthwhile. They were an enthusiastic group of individuals. The link to the conference website with all of the presentations is at: <http://www.nysaccny.org/resources>.
- Installation of new power lines across 5 towns by NYSEG may be of interest to the various towns. Representatives will be attending the Kinderhook Planning Board on March 10.

- Secretary's position—need to find someone to take minutes for the meeting (\$200) for the year. Not sure where we are on this.

New Business

John Dax made a motion to recommend Ed Simonson to continue as chair of the EMC. The motion was seconded by Mike O'Hara and passed unanimously.

There was a brief discussion about a request that came from Steve Winkley, asking for the EMC support for the New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA), within the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Winkley requested the EMC's support to send a letter to Congressman Chris Gibson for continued funding for NYRWA. The Committee agreed to send a letter/memo to the Chairman of the County Economic Development, Planning & Tourism Committee (the EMC host committee), urging the Board of Supervisors' support for these programs and encouraging them to voice this support to Congressman Gibson. Chairman Simonson agreed to send a communication to Chairman Keaveny.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Minutes prepared by:
Katy Cashen, Claverack