

**Columbia County
Environmental Management Council
Meeting Minutes
24 January 2011**

Present

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Jamie Purinton, Ancram
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Karen Mort, Ghent
Michael O’Hara, City of Hudson
John Dax, New Lebanon
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Kathy Schneider, Stuyvesant
Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Ed Van Nostrand, CCDOH
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

Regrets

John Adams, Canaan
Bob Kessler, Hillsdale
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston

Absent

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

Vacancies

Town of Austerlitz
Town of Clermont

Guests

Ellen Jouret-Epstein, Columbia Land Conservancy
Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning & Environmental Associates
Don Meltz, Community Planning & Environmental Associates
Art Bassin, Supervisor, Town of Ancram
Ken Flood, Commissioner, Col. Cty. Department of Planning & Economic Development
Chris Simonsen, Kinderhook Planning Board

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.

CAC Meeting

Ellen Jouret-Epstein from the Columbia Land Conservancy provided a brief overview of the upcoming workshop on Conservation Advisory Councils on January 31, 2011. The meeting is co-sponsored by the EMC. She handed out registration materials and encouraged all EMC members to attend.

Special Speakers—County Environmental Issues

Nan Stolzenburg and Don Meltz of Community Planning & Environmental Associates provided a briefing on the environmental issues across towns in the county. They have worked in approximately 7 towns in the county on their comprehensive plans and noted that there are a great deal of commonalities among the towns on environmental issues.

Environmental needs and issues that cross town borders:

- There is a great need for GIS data at County level that is accessible by the towns.
- Viewsheds and Ridgelines—keeping the rural character is a desire by many towns and there are little to no studies that define viewsheds and ridgelines. No commonality between towns. Ancram’s plan does a good job of defining rural character. Need to standardize and define ridgelines and viewsheds for the county so there is some consistency across towns.
- Educating local planning boards and citizens about vernal pools and the importance of them to the local environment. This includes wet and woodland areas that are connected. These areas are not well-mapped in the towns (e.g., Spotted Salamanders, Jefferson Salamanders). The EMC could help educate the town Planning Boards about the importance of protecting vernal pools.
- Stream management and stream buffers. Know where vegetation exists.
- County water study and data—identify re-charge areas, aquifers. What kind of density can be supported by the environment? One step beyond what Steve Winkley from Rural Water Resources does—Given the soils for septic systems, what kind of density can be supported by those studies?
- Get a list of what studies have been done in the various towns (water, biodiversity, etc).
- Looking at impervious surfaces. Very little information is available at the town or county level. This information would be helpful to town Planning Boards in responding to development proposals.
- Setting up Conservation Advisory Councils (CACs) in the various towns.
- Need for a county-wide map of the environmental resources/concerns so you could better protect the environment. Flood plains, soil maps, ridgelines, etc. County wide discussion on what those environmental features are would be a good topic to look at. Tug Hill area is a model to look at. Other models include the Catskill Watershed and the North Country area.
- Tie these environmental issues to economic development.

- Watersheds from a planning perspective are important. Green infrastructure--Wetlands, vernal pools, stream buffers, etc. Helps link all of these areas to show how important it is to the economy of the area.
- Wind generation—wind farms. Models, resources would be helpful for the towns.
- Public education—Hudsonia Biodiversity studies. Education for the Planning Boards and ZBAs.
- <http://bit.ly/egQ2nW> Good resource for GIS data layers and sources.

Approval of Minutes

Michael O’Hara made a motion to approve the draft November EMC meeting minutes as written and seconded by Don Marcus. Vote: All in favor.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Simonsen recently met with Ken Flood and Patrice Perry from the County Planning Office and they discussed meeting space and administrative support for the EMC, given the retirement of Roland Vosburgh. Additional information on this will be provided and the staff will continue to send us information as has happened in the past.

The County Farmland Protection Board is sponsoring a series of forums to gather information that will be used to develop a County-wide Farmland Protection Plan. EMC members were encouraged to attend the forums. The dates of the forums are: 1/22, 2/3, 2/19, 3/3, and 3/19)

Correspondence

Chairman Simonsen reported that the EMC 2010 year-end report and cover letter will be shared with the Board of Supervisors.

Old Business

The potential future topics/speakers list was briefly discussed. Several members submitted ideas and these were compiled, as submitted, by John Adams. A list of issues that members came up with was shared. Jamie said that Ancram was already planning on having talks on vernal pools and stream buffers. She will look into making these sessions more broad.

Deirdre Henderson confirmed that Mark Lowery, with NYSDEC’s Climate Smart Community program would be the next public speaker for the EMC’s speakers series on 2/17/11 at the Stuyvesant Town Hall. Melissa Sorman and Scott Stackpole agreed to help in the media outreach on this session.

The need to define short term direction and goals for the coming year was discussed briefly. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

Mike O'Hara reported that he attended a recent meeting of other EMCs across the state that was held at West Point. He said that he found very useful and he would share the presentations.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Minutes prepared by:
Katy Cashen, Claverack