

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANGAEMENT COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
22 MARCH 2010**

PRESENT:

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
Kathy Schneider, Stuyvesant
Karen Mort, Ghent
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
John Adams, Canaan
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
Louise Bliss-Kenneally, Greenport
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Theresa Mayhew, CCE

GUEST:

Anthony LaSalvia

REGRETS:

Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Dean Vander Schaaf, Livingston
Jamie Purinton, Ancram
Harvey Weber, Copake
John Dax, New Lebanon

ABSENT:

Phil Leonard, Clermont
Ed VanNostrand, CC DOH

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

VACANCY:

City of Hudson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and noted that a quorum (11 out of 19) was present to conduct official business. Chairman Simonsen passed out two items: Article 12-F (Conservation Advisory Councils) and EMC speaker series ideas presented previously by Deirdre Henderson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft February 2010 EMC minutes were reviewed. *Bob Kessler made a motion to approve the draft 2/22/10 EMC minutes as presented and seconded by Karl Gabosh. Vote: All in favor.*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Simonsen reported that he had emailed information on the Mid Hudson Energy Smart Committee to members and that the paperwork for the EMC to join the NYS Association of EMCs was in process but was awaiting a tax exempt number. Also, no correspondence was received.

OLD BUSINESS

- 1) *Speaker Series:* Referring to the handout distributed earlier, Deirdre Henderson reiterated that she was waiting to proceed on contacting and confirming speakers pending full EMC consensus and any Board of Supervisors (BOS) approval necessary. She further reminded the EMC that the purpose of the speakers series is to provide the public with environmental information and also increase the visibility of the EMC. She has identified Ward Stone, NYSDEC wildlife biologist as a prime candidate who would be asked to address the impacts of development on wildlife populations. She also stated that she had a commitment from the DEC Climate Smart Communities office to provide a speaker to address climate change issues. A third topic is biodiversity and she suggested Gretchen Stevens from Hudsonia. Bob Kessler added that Ms. Stevens is a friend and neighbor of his in Hillsdale and he would be happy to talk to her. Richard Reynolds with USGS in Albany had been identified but he is currently not available for any speaking in the county. There was a discussion of the location for the first public meeting and that Harvey Weber had offered Taconic Hills School space. The consensus of the members was to have Deirdre Henderson make contact with Ward Stone to see about his availability and Harvey Weber to find out about the facilities and arrangements with Taconic Hills School District and report back at the April EMC meeting. The goal would be to have Mr. Stone speak at a spring 2010 meeting. And then a second public meeting would probably occur in the fall and could focus on the climate change topic. One suggestion offered was to consider panel discussions as well as single speakers. Some thought that a session on biodiversity with Conrad Vispo with Hawthorne Valley and Gretchen Stevens with Hudsonia might work out well. There was a discussion about publicity for the speakers series and Roland Vosburgh explained that there were very few EMC press releases over time and most were related to the Good Earthkeeping Award. The last EMC press release announced the EMC website in late 2008. He suggested that it would be good for Chairman Simonsen to present the overall concept of the speakers series and topics and speakers to the Planning, Economic Development, Tourism, Transportation, and Agriculture Committee of the BOS and guidance on publicity could be determined at such a meeting. Mr. Vosburgh reminded the EMC that public education was one of the powers of the EMC under state law. Chairman Simonsen agreed that he would contact Commissioner Ken Flood to discuss how to handle the publicity and press releases.
- 2) *Town Comprehensive Plan Reviews:* Chairman Simonsen explained that the purpose of this project is to determine the degree to which local comprehensive plans address environmental

issues. Members are in the process of reviewing either their own town's or another town's comprehensive plan and use the checklist format prepared by Dan Marcus to prepare a brief synopsis of each plan. He reported that he had received by email summaries for the comprehensive plans for the towns of Ancram, Austerlitz, Canaan, Claverack, New Lebanon, Stockport, and Taghkanic. Some of the comments made during the discussion were:

- Recommended Patty Salkin's article on examples of environmental land use planning in NYS.
- Question was raised on what the final product of this review would be with a response that it would tell the EMC whether the towns are addressing environmental issues adequately in their comp plans.
- Comprehensive plans in Columbia County go back to the early 1970s and we will probably find uneven materials. The towns are more sophisticated in land use planning now. Issues not addressed in an official plan still may be quite important to citizens. It is hard to bring town residents together on issues.
- County needs a county wide comprehensive plan that deals with environmental issues; suggested looking at Orange County plan for example. The EMC should be making this recommendation to the BOS.
- Recall that this project grew out of the EMC discussion on the most pressing environmental issues and it all revolves around unregulated development and there is a need for a county plan.
- Comment that there is a big difference between having a comprehensive plan and implementing it.
- Potential for rising sea level impacts on Hudson River shoreline communities should be addressed in comprehensive planning.

- 3) *Conservation Advisory Councils:* There was a short discussion about CACs. According to Chairman Simonsen he has been informed that the following towns have CACs: Ancram, Copake, Gallatin, Hillsdale, and New Lebanon. Whether there are others in existence and the possibility that some have been set up merely as Town Board appointed advisory boards while others are actual CACs created under state law was also discussed.
- 4) *Bag Tax:* Deirdre Henderson said that she had done a write up on the issue including the externalities but that with the current recession, it probably was not timely to bring this matter up to the BOS. The EMC consensus was to table this issue until next year.
- 5) *Groundwater Resources and Local Planning conference:* Chairman Simonsen explained that Ellen Jouret-Epstein called him following the February EMC meeting about the EMC supporting the conference which is scheduled for 4/28/10 at the CGCC. He sent out an email request to members seeking reaction and he received 11 responses positive and no negative comments. Therefore, he notified Ms. Jouret-Epstein that it would be fine to list the EMC on the conference flyer.

- 6) *EMC Website Review*: A small committee consisting of Dan Marcus, Kate Cashen, Scott Stackpole, and Jamie Purinton is working on some ideas. According to Dan Marcus, there are not many EMCs with websites. He thought our current website needed major changes and he suggested Oneida Co. EMC as a model. The actual protocol for making major changes to the EMC website needs to be clarified as to who is involved and who makes final decisions on design and content. Roland Vosburgh reported that he had agreed to make a request to make minor revisions on content (revised welcome page, and updated membership and minutes pages).
- 7) Members representing Chatham, Stuyvesant, Austerlitz, Stockport, Taghkanic, and Kinderhook reported on how the EMC OWB recommendations are being received at the town level. Response varies. Some town boards are not convinced it is an issue in their communities while others have taken steps to enact moratoria and/or develop regulations for OWBs.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

With no further business, the EMC adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner