

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
27 SEPTEMBER 2010**

PRESENT:

Ed Simonsen, Chairman, Kinderhook
John Adams, Canaan
John Dax, New Lebanon
Katy Cashen, Claverack
Harvey Weber, Copake
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Kathy Schneider, Stuyvesant
Scott Stackpole, Taghkanic
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
Jamie Purinton, Ancram
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Michael O'Hara, City of Hudson
Louise Bliss-Keneally, Greenport
Deirdre Henderson, Chatham

REGRETS:

Karen Mort, Ghent
Robert Kessler, Hillsdale
Theresa Mayhew, CCE
Frances Szasz, Germantown (appt. pending)

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

ABSENT:

Ed Van Nostrand, CCDOH

VACANCIES:

Town of Austerlitz
Town of Clermont

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Simonsen called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm and noted that a quorum to conduct official business was present (14/19 voting members).

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Simonsen summarized three short topics:

- 1) He reported speaking with and receiving the ok from Commissioner Ken Flood for the EMC to co-sponsor the Columbia Land Conservancy's (CLC) planned workshop on conservation advisory councils in early 2011. Chairman Simonsen will contact Ellen Jouret-Epstein at CLC.
- 2) He reported that, in an email exchange, Roland Vosburgh had clarified for Kate Cashen the history of why EMC meetings without a quorum are labeled "unofficial meetings." Ms. Cashen thought that the term "unofficial" implied it was a covert meeting. There was no sentiment expressed for seeking a different wording.
- 3) He reported that the question of attendees at the 9/30/10 EMC public meeting on biodiversity being eligible to receive training credits had arisen. Under the mandatory training requirements for members of local planning board and zoning boards of appeal, each local

government determines eligibility. Roland Vosburgh explained that each local government makes the decision on whether or not to accept credit for this workshop, not the EMC. will provide 50 copies of a self certifying attendance form at the 9/30/10 meeting for anyone who would like one to turn into their local government.

Chairman Simonsen again reminded members of upcoming meetings and conferences.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/UNOFFICIAL MEETING NOTES

Harvey Weber made a motion to approve the draft July EMC meeting minutes and the August draft unofficial meeting notes as written and seconded by Katy Cashen. Vote: All in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

1) Speaker Series Update

Chairman Simonsen reminded all that the first EMC sponsored public meeting (biodiversity and local planning) would be held on Thursday, 30 September 2010 at 7:00 pm at the Copake Town Hall. He thanked all the members involved in organizing and publicizing the event. Roland Vosburgh suggested that the EMC discuss adopting a standard protocol for organizing and planning these public meetings, e.g. designate one member as the coordinator or facilitator to oversee a small committee to carry out the details of the event (who, when, where, publicity, refreshments, etc.). It could rotate amongst the membership, or the EMC could set up a permanent small committee to do this work. He also thanked those directly involved (Harvey Weber, Scott Stackpole, and Melissa Sorman) with making all the arrangements for the 9/30/10 event.

Discussion turned to future public meetings. The following points were made:

- Kathy Schneider volunteered the Stuyvesant Town Hall for the next meeting (DEC Climate Smart Communities?) in February or March 2011.
- Firming up a potential date is important. The fourth Thursday looks good because it conflicts least with local town and village meetings.
- Deirdre Henderson agreed to contact the DEC about a speaker on the Climate Smart Communities program.
- Columbia County Film Festival is a large draw and perhaps the EMC could sponsor a film/discussion. Harvey Weber invited everyone to view the film “Fresh” (about agricultural practices) at the Copake Town Hall on 10/9/10 (contact Mr. Weber for details).

2) EMC Website

Chairman Simonsen recalled that a few members had expressed interest in looking at revisions to the website. Scott Stackpole said he was interested and saw a need for photos of events or places

around the county on the EMC website. He volunteered to take some photos at the 9/30/10 public event. Questions arose about the capabilities of the county-supported website and whether the EMC had to go through the county for the website. Roland Vosburgh explained that under Chairman Gontier, the EMC worked with the County Data Processing Department to set it up and it is maintained by one of their staff. Mr. Vosburgh encouraged the EMC to establish a small committee which could work directly with the County Data Processing staff on website matters. He agreed to provide a contact name for the EMC to follow up with.

3) EMC List of Environmental Concerns

Chairman Simonsen wanted to revisit this issue which came up about a year ago and bring it to some form of completion. Katy Cashen had recently forwarded to all members (via email) a compilation of the issues discussed by the members at that time. The following points were made during the discussion:

- EMC should make a distinction between issues with a county wide impact and avoid focusing on narrow, local issues.
- EMC should identify impacts that degrade environmental quality and make recommendations to the BOS.
- County wide issues include: water, transportation, energy
- Harvey Weber recommended having DEC sample fish in local lakes for contaminants as was done at Robinson Pond recently.
- Salt sheds (what are other local governments doing) and preserving public access to the Hudson River shoreline were suggested as county wide issues.
- Greater information on biodiversity in each town is needed, no central repository exists now.
- We haven't made any progress on this topic for a year.
- Small committees successfully researched and made recommendations on energy and outdoor wood boilers, so maybe this would be more productive than discussions of the full EMC.
- A regional plan approach is really needed that would identify where we want to promote development and where a more measured approach is needed.
- A basic natural resources inventory would be helpful, but it was noted that such inventories depend on mapping and the county currently lacks a geographic information system (GIS).
- Invite one or more consultants who have worked with multiple towns in the county to discuss issues they have identified. Katy Cashen agreed to contact Nan Stolzenburg who has worked with numerous county towns on comprehensive plans.
- EMC members lack expertise to make judgments on what the issues are, so we should bring in experts to discuss issues.
- When asked what are the capabilities of the county planning department for regional planning, Roland Vosburgh suggested that this question should be presented to

Commissioner Ken Flood. It was agreed to develop a set of questions to submit to Commissioner Flood first, rather than invite him to a meeting. John Dax volunteered to draft some questions and circulate them for comment. Chairman Simonsen will discuss with Commissioner Flood.

- The EMC must avoid “mission creep” that overlaps with the responsibilities of land use planners and focus on environmental issues.
- Public meetings and public education are probably more within the EMC’s area of competence than planning studies and inventories. Education should be the EMC’s highest priority. Lack of structure and budget are limitations. CACs at the local level may hold greater promise.
- EMC should not be reluctant to advise BOS on what the county lacks (e.g. a county plan or inventory of county natural resources) and suggest funding sources.
- A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was suggested. Perhaps the EMC could take two hours (perhaps daylong session) with a facilitator to do a SWOT analysis. John Adams and Michael O’Hara will contact people they know who might serve as a facilitator.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner