

<b>Trina Porte</b>	Chair
<b>Craig Westcott</b>	Secretary [former]
<b>David Cullen</b>	Member [former]
<b>Kevin Fuerst</b>	Member [former]
<b>Damon Steed</b>	Member [former]

Our second year began with big hopes but was rocked by big disappointments. We met from February through July, during which time several members resigned, and that left us without a quorum (thereby putting us on hiatus until new members join the CAC).

Steve Winkley, of the New York Rural Water Association, was queried by Ms. Porte about doing a groundwater study for New Lebanon, but the association's funding ran out before he was able to add us to his list of town studies to complete.

Member David Cullen began setting up, but was never able to finalize, a proposed liaison team to facilitate ways for townspeople to become familiar with and then take advantage of NYSERDA programs for energy efficiency in their homes and businesses. Mr. Cullen also had conversations with USDA Rural Housing Services representative Joan Young, of Middletown, NY, regarding low-cost loans and possible grant funds from the USDA for New Lebanon residents, but no concrete information was passed on to the CAC from these conversations.

Ms. Porte contacted Meredith Nierenberg, NYSERDA's representative to New Lebanon, to meet with our town business association (the LVBA) to set up a meeting on the newly-enacted Green Jobs Green New York (GJGNY) initiative, but again, these plans never came to fruition as far as the CAC was ever informed.

On the plus side, we met monthly (rather than bi-monthly, as we had in 2010) from April through July this year, which gave us a number of meetings to discuss OSI issues such as planning stages, possible use of interns, draft outlines, and possible grant funds available for undertaking the New Lebanon OSI beginning in fiscal year 2012-2013.

Other topics of discussion were the CAC's possible participation in; a newly-forming Shaker Swamp Preservation initiative, providing information and/or workshops to environmental studies programs within our local schools, attending regular town, zoning, and planning meetings [we settled on having Ms. Porte ask our town clerks to add all CAC members to those receiving minutes from all meetings via email], and doing a "bio blitz" in the Taconic Ridge area of New Lebanon to involve people town-wide with this key area of environmental richness and to create some initial raw data to start off our undertaking of a NRI for the town.

Lastly, we had a very spirited and philosophical discussion on what role, if any, the CAC has in areas of human-environmental interface—such as the completion of SEQRA forms, sewage disposal, stormwater runoff plans, and the use of pesticides. Namely, is

our charge only to protect non-human species and habitats, or does the human animal qualify as one also needing protection, even if sometimes from itself?

Ms. Porte also arranged for John Dax, New Lebanon's representative to the Columbia County Environmental Management Council (EMC), to meet with us for the purpose of giving us an update on the EMC's functioning and current projects. Mr. Dax also shared with us the intention of the New Lebanon Zoning Rewrite Committee's plans to create overlay districts for stronger habitat, viewshed, and steep slope protection, and the committee's desire to share resources with and gain input from the CAC on this project, which would be the fulfillment of an important next step in New Lebanon's Comprehensive Plan, and an excellent opportunity for the CAC to help fulfill its mission to support conservation-friendly zoning and planning initiatives.

We also discussed the possibility of proposing a moratorium, to be enacted by the Town Board, on all development in the Taconic Ridge area specified in Karen Strong's Habitat Survey of New Lebanon. We felt this was perhaps a desired step to take for New Lebanon, because Ms. Strong cited this area as a very large, unspoiled, valuable, but privately owned (and therefore unprotected) habitat area in the town. We invited Gretchen Stevens, director of the Biodiversity Resources Center for Hudsonia and a member of the Hillsdale CAC, to discuss the issue of moratoriums with us, as this is considered by many to be a potentially divisive or controversial step to take. After discussing ways to approach working with town boards with Ms. Stevens, we concluded that a moratorium was indeed too strong of a direction to take for now, and tabled sending a letter to the Town Board that Ms. Porte had written on behalf of the CAC requesting such a moratorium. [Ms. Porte was therefore very pleased and excited to have the opportunity a short time later to instead write a letter of support for a grant that would preserve this important and irreplaceable area of habitat for all of our townspeople and area residents to enjoy and protect into the future—see below.]

Chair Trina Porte also gave our first public report to the town at the regular meeting of the New Lebanon Town Board, September 12, 2011, and her report was liberally quoted in the official minutes for that meeting by Town Clerk Colleen Teal. Thank you, Ms. Teal!

And at that September 12 meeting, Tony Colyer-Pendas, a representative of the Columbia Land Conservancy, was also present, and gave a compelling report on a grant application to preserve an area of the Taconic Ridge that falls within the towns of Canaan and New Lebanon. Mr. Colyer-Pendas asked the town to help strengthen this grant application with letters of support. Ms. Porte volunteered to do so on behalf of the CAC [**copy attached**], as did our Town Supervisor, Margaret Robertson.

My sincere thanks to all those whose efforts continue to improve our Town and environment for another year.

**Trina Porte NLCAC Chair**

Robert K. Davies, Director, Division of Lands and Forests  
S. McCrea Burnham, Forest Legacy Coordinator  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway  
Albany NY 12233-4250

November 7, 2011

Dear Mr. Davies and Mr. Burnham,

On behalf of the New Lebanon Conservation Advisory Council, I would like to register support for the State of New York's nomination of the Mount Lebanon Project Area as a fiscal year 2013 Forest Legacy Project.

The Mount Lebanon Project Area represents 1,300 acres under four ownerships that could be protected along the Taconic Ridge. The properties all lie within the designated Taconic Ridge Forest Legacy Area, which is itself part of the same ecological unit as the nearby Rensselaer Plateau Forest Legacy Area, and abuts the Taconic Range Forest Legacy Area in Massachusetts.

According to the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, the entire 70-mile Taconic Ridge, including the Mount Lebanon section, is a high priority for protection. Further, the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program has designated this as an area of high biodiversity.

Locally, both the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of New Lebanon and the New Lebanon Habitat Survey completed by Karen Strong, NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator, outline this specific area as one of critical habitat importance and irreplaceable value. Given that all of this land is privately owned, its protection is of great significance and immediate need, and to do so would also greatly support the goals of the New Lebanon Conservation Advisory Council, which does not have the resources necessary to undertake a project of this magnitude.

Protection under the Forest Legacy Program will ensure that these important forest lands are permanently protected. It will also create new recreational opportunities in an area that currently has very limited public access.

I applaud nomination of the Mount Lebanon Project for Forest Legacy Funding and hope that the request for funding is approved for 2013.

Sincerely,

Trina Porte, Chair, New Lebanon Conservation Advisory Council

CC: Commissioner Joe Martens  
Senator Charles Schumer  
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand  
Congressman Chris Gibson