

Trina Porte	Chair
Craig Westcott	Secretary
David Cullen	Member
Kevin Fuerst	Member
Anna Hogle	Youth Member Elect
Damon Steed	Member Elect

Overall, we had an excellent year. Though new to the NLCAC, each member comes from a background of community concern and involvement, and we are all enthusiastic about our charge of helping New Lebanon move forward in its environmental stewardship.

With the understanding that completing both a **Natural Resources Inventory** [NRI] and an **Open Space Inventory** [OSI] for the Town will take some time, we have begun to approach these tasks by gathering what information and resources are currently available. Step one was to have **Karen Strong, Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** [DEC], present to us the **Habitat Summary** she had just completed for the Town of New Lebanon at our September 22nd meeting. This summary will be a vital tool for us in our work, because it has a thorough reference list of all the resources currently available in our State and County on habitat, species, geology, mapping, wetlands and streams, and land use, as well as being a summary specific to New Lebanon of what these sources currently have documented about our Town. She rightly pointed out that land use decisions are primarily made at the local level, so well-informed and environmentally-concerned Town Zoning, Planning and Board members are vital to the protection of local land and water resources.

Another highlight for this year was the presentation by **Meredith Nierenberg, Outreach Representative to New Lebanon for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority** [NYSERDA], at our November 10th meeting. The information she shared on free home energy audits is so exciting because it offers people so much in potential savings for such a small investment of their time. This led to our arranging a meeting between Ms. Nierenberg and our Town Supervisor, Town Code Enforcement Officer [CEO], and other interested Town officials on what **energy-efficiency grants and programs** may be available for the Town Hall Renovation Project and residents in general. Providing savings of both energy used and dollars spent helps us individually and helps our environment—great news personally and in the reduction of tax dollars spent on energy consumption.

The first meeting in this first year of our existence was held on August 25th, 2010. **Craig Westcott** shared with us a model that he uses in his **Environmental Education Curriculum at Darrow School**:

ISSUES > DECISIONS > ACTIONS TAKEN > NEXT STEPS

This is a model I find very useful for our own organizational behavior in the NLCAC.

By our last meeting of the year, held on December 1st, we had decided that in order to assist our Town in fulfilling its **Comprehensive Plan**, we first needed to complete the **NRI** and **OSI**, which will provide much of the information required to undertake the Comprehensive Plan's next steps—**mapping of overlay districts** and possibly creating **land use planning guides**, etc. Such a consolidated organization of the most current information available will also assist our Town Zoning and Planning officials in their decision-making with issues such as the use of cluster development to protect maximum open space, farmland, viewsheds, and sensitive habitat areas into the future.

Interestingly, the number-one-rated issue of concern by people living in New Lebanon during the research done to develop our Comprehensive Plan was found to be **water quality**. Helping local residents make the connection between personal behavior, land use, and their water quality is exactly the type of issue for which the NLCAC was created, and a challenge we look forward to meeting in our future work and outreach. Considering that we have learned that **groundwater seepage is measured in feet per year**, and therefore it may take decades to detect something in our drinking water that was left on our land (and would be near-impossible to clean up something that well-dispersed), this is a sobering task indeed. On the bright side, **one acre of wetland can hold one million gallons of stormwater runoff**, which is why wetlands are an important natural tool in **preventing flooding**. Such a fact is sure to be of interest to anyone who has ever had to deal with flooding, or wonders of what use is the protection of wetlands.

Other issues of concern that we discussed for future research include gravel mining, protection of the Shaker Swamp area, stormwater runoff, State Environmental Quality Review Act [SEQR] reviews, site planning, student and community involvement and education, and current movements which are trying to develop self-sustaining towns in the face of disappearing fossil fuel supplies (and the loss of farmland to development).

In my notes from September, 2010 on what I wanted to include in our first Annual Report, I have written down:

"We aren't experts, just people trying to pay attention. We've noticed changes for the worse, so we've joined together to ask how to change things for the better.

At dusk, where are the bats that used to fly around eating mosquitos? In the Spring, why has the number of baby frogs decreased so sharply? Why hasn't the State DEC or the Federal EPA ordered the removal of the tractor-trailers full of hazardous waste on Route 20 that have been there for years?

We read the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Law, Habitat Survey, Mining Permits, and other documents to try to understand both what the Town wishes for its environmental health and what it must allow that may conflict with that health."

I think that about sums it all up pretty well. We look forward to continued learning, and to sharing what we learn with New Lebanon in 2011.

Sincere thanks go to **all my co-members** of the NLCAC; **Cissy Hernandez**, New Lebanon Planning and Zoning Administrator; **Colleen Teal**, New Lebanon Town Clerk; **Gretchen Stevens**, Director of the Biodiversity Resources Center at Hudsonia, Ltd. and member of the Hillsdale, New York CAC; **Karen Strong**, **Meredith Nierenberg**, and anyone else who I have forgotten to mention, for their dedication to making our environment healthier and our towns more livable, and for putting up with my innumerable questions throughout the year.

Trina Porte, NLCAC Chair