

Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon

December 14, 2015, Meeting Minutes

Samson Environmental Center, Darrow School

Attendees: Cynthia Creech, David Farren, Bruce Shenker (County EMC)

Guests: Eric Johnson (potential member), Marshall Dong & Abraham Pritzker (Darrow students)

The meeting commenced at 6:40 P.M. Two expected guests were not able to attend.

The guests who did attend introduced themselves. Marshall Dong, from Shanghai, is a ninth grader at Darrow taking Biology with Ms. Corral. Abraham Pritzker, a tenth grader from New Jersey and previously from a cattle farm in Rindge, NH, does not take science currently. He is recovering from a Traumatic Brain Injury incurred last winter on the slopes at Jiminy Peak. While the injury was severe, requiring reconstructive surgery and keeping him bedridden for more than a month, Abraham is both enthusiastic and realistic about his ongoing progress. Marshall and Abraham have volunteered through the Hands to Work program at Darrow School to assist the CAC with the Natural Resources Conservation Plan (NRCP).

Eric Johnson is considering becoming a member of the CAC. He and his family train border collies to rid ponds of geese and to herd farm animals. He worked formerly at Hancock Shaker Village as an animal specialist and currently delivers mail for the New Lebanon Post Office in addition to his Wild Goose Chase business.

Bruce Shenker is also considering becoming a member of the CAC in addition to his EMC role.

Cynthia Creech confirmed that the Town Board approved \$2,500 for the CAC as a line item in the 2016 Town Budget.

David Farren reviewed progress in negotiating a contract for the Hudson River Estuary Program stewardship grant of \$21,520 awarded on November 18 to the New Lebanon CAC. Everything must be completed online through the New York State Grants Gateway portal. Once the contract is approved by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Gretchen Stevens of Hudsonia Ltd. and the Vispos of the Farmscape Ecology Program can kick off the NRCP project by training Darrow students and town volunteers. David hopes funds can begin to be disbursed as early as the first week of January. The grant covers the period November 1, 2015, through October 31, 2017.

David Farren reviewed the goals of the NRCP. The focus initially will be on identifying and mapping intermittent woodland pools and ancient forest patches wherever they occur throughout town. Since neither resource has ever been mapped in New Lebanon, reliable data would assist the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals in their decision making. The 500-acre parcel owned by Christine Dreyfus on either side of Hand Hollow Road is the planned starting point for on-site verification for the NRCP.

Bruce Shenker asked about the Farmscape Ecology Program's role in the NRCP. In addition to teaming with Gretchen Stevens in training Darrow students and town volunteers to use aerial maps in

pinpointing potential sites for verification, the Vispos will help delineate habitats throughout town and flag possible rare species. They will also translate the data they have collected in New Lebanon over many years, including a complete inventory of the Shaker Swamp, before forwarding their lists and photographs to the CAC in accessible formats. Their data will become a major part of the NRCP.

Bruce Shenker related some of the projects undertaken by the Columbia County Environmental Management Council (EMC) that meets on the fourth Monday of every month (but not December) in the County Office Building in Hudson and is open to the public. Several towns have not appointed EMC representatives. The EMC has pushed for the creation of CACs with Hudson being the latest. Advocates in the towns of Canaan, Chatham and Ghent are currently seeking to create their own.

The next Hands to Work session for the NRCP will meet this Wednesday, December 16, from 8:45 to 11:30 A.M. in the Samson Environmental Center at Darrow School. The next meeting would not be until January 6, 2016, at the same times and place.

The next CAC Roundtable hosted by the Columbia Land Conservancy is scheduled for January 6, 2016, from 5:30 to 7:00 P.M. Christine Vanderlan will confirm the meeting place closer to the date.

The next meeting of the New Lebanon CAC will be Monday, January 11, 2016, starting at 6:30 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by David Farren