

Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon, New York

Minutes for the monthly meeting, July 13, 2020

Attending: CAC members Jenna Barbary, Cynthia Creech, David Farren, Robert Gilson, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Paul Rix and guests Marc Anthonisen, Deborah Gordon, Cathy Wilkerson

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 P.M. We approved the minutes of the June 8 CAC meeting as amended; they had been posted by the Town Clerk, who will amend them.

David Farren gave an update on Trees for Tribs. David plans to plant the last seedlings, 21 rose bushes, in fields further along the stream on Carole Roseman's property on Friday, July 17, with assistance from Shawna Fitzsimmons. She will be the 20th volunteer, completing the first Trees for Tribs project in New Lebanon. Volunteers will be needed on occasion to help water the plantings until they are established. Peg Munves noted that the town newsletter included a link to the CAC video update focused on Trees for Tribs and that the town's website provides a live link.

Peg Munves discussed flood plain studies as highlighted in articles she shared from the NY Times and Washington Post. FEMA hasn't studied New Lebanon's flood plain since the mid-1980s and hasn't listed flash flooding as a local issue even though the town is at risk. David Farren will ask Cissy Hernandez if she has been told when FEMA proposes to do a study. Marc Anthonisen pointed out that FEMA studies navigable waterways, not intermittent and ephemeral streams that can often cause serious flooding. Columbia County's 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan lists hazards the town faces but Marc suggested that the town should have its own Hazard Mitigation Plan to keep in good graces with FEMA. David Farren reminded us that New York State recognizes the Wyomanock as a "designated inland waterway," making the town eligible for waterway improvement grants.

Peg Munves and Paul Rix discussed the well-testing project resulting from PFOA contamination detected in the abandoned town landfill. Paul said that there was not much to report. Nine or 10 wells have been tested. The tests were initially done incorrectly and had to be done a second time. As of the July 13 meeting, 3 property owners had reported their test results and all were negative. Peg asked if we should use an independent lab to ensure that the tests have been done correctly, and if so, who should we use. Paul asked if we should do seasonal testing. Although the wells tested were not contaminated, they could become contaminated in the future due to leaching from the site. Peg said she would reach out to Tistrya to see if there are additional funds that the town could free up for independent testing.

David Farren noted that by regulation, the landfill still needs to be capped. It has not been in use since 1983. The town has \$650,000 from the county in its bank account to deal with the problem; regretfully, as much as \$2 million may be needed. Peg and Paul have all of the records, from 2010 on. The question is whether the town can take on this project during the current budget crisis.

The water study can be renewed once the landfill issue is resolved. Steve Winkley of the New York Rural Water Association had offered a source water study but we have been waiting now for 18 months. Steve would like to attend our next meeting. Paul Rix suggested that we should test wells in all four quadrants of the town and do more than one test per quadrant per year. Cynthia Creech noted that we don't have enough money in the budget to do testing at this time and that more homework needs to be done to decide how best to proceed.

David Farren discussed the proposal to the Town Board that cool ravines be identified as the first Critical Environmental Areas in New Lebanon. He noted that the Planning Board agenda includes an item regarding a lot line change for the parcel that Uli Rose has sold to Philip Gellert. Cynthia

pointed out that Joseph Kroboth owns the parcel along Main Street at the base of the cool ravine in Lebanon Springs. Homes on Old Mountain Road back up to the ravine and we need to know whether their septic systems were safely installed and have not contaminated the stream.

It was decided to table for now the idea of bringing Michael Clough from the Southern Vermont Museum of Natural History to do a community program this year. Even though his presentation to the summer campers was well received last year, it's not clear we could get an audience given the pandemic. Cynthia Creech also suggested a pollinator workshop for future consideration; she had attended an excellent one sponsored by the Columbia Land Conservancy some years back.

David Farren attended the June Planning Board meeting via Zoom in Bob Gilson's absence. The Nokomis Project off Wadsworth Road has proposed a connecting alcove between their two barns, one to process the Asian medicinal plants currently being grown and another to bottle the extracts. Their building permit for the second barn stipulated space for storage, not a bottling facility. There are issues with safety on the road, especially if large trucks routinely enter and exit the property.

It has been months since we have heard anything about the proposed laundromat in the Dollar Store plaza. The DEC was doing an environmental impact study on the septic system. As of meeting time it was not clear if the project is moving forward.

Steve Powers reported on the July 3 Climate Smart Community Task Force meeting. He noted that much of the meeting was devoted to procedural rules for the newly formed committee and that his and Monte's suggestions would be voted on at the Town Board meeting on July 14. Marc Anthonisen reported that he had finished the greenhouse inventory for the town. The inventory included information on electrical usage, heating, and gas for town vehicles. Marc noted that the town could save about \$700 a year by switching to a solar electricity provider. Marc has been doing bike repair for the Free Store to the tune of one bike per day.

Jenna Barbary reported that it was unlikely Darrow School could be used as a composting facility because their compost does not allow meat waste and they would be concerned about outsiders entering secure school grounds. She has reached out to restaurants in town to talk about composting and has received mixed reviews. She is looking into the costs of using a private service with a drop-off spot. It was suggested that perhaps the community garden or the Farmer's Market might be interested in sponsoring a community composting site. These efforts, along with a hazard mitigation plan, conversion to solar energy, and social media efforts informing the town's efforts to become greener, can be used towards New York State Climate Smart Certification for the town.

The next meeting will be August 10 at 6:30 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Gilson