

Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon, New York

Minutes for the monthly meeting on August 10, 2020

Attendees via Google Meet: CAC members Jenna Barbary, Cynthia Creech, David Farren, Robert Gilson, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Paul Rix and guests Marc Anthonisen, Christine Dreyfus, Bruce Shenker, Monte Wasch, Cathy Wilkerson

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. We approved the minutes for the July 13 meeting, which will be sent to the Town Clerk for posting.

Source Water Study: Steve Winkley was unable to attend.

Trees for Tribs: David Farren reported that the spring planting project on Carole Roseman's property on C.R. 9 was completed on July 17 with Shawna Fitzsimmons as the 20th volunteer participating. Altogether, 106 seedling shrubs and trees were planted along the unnamed riparian corridor that flows into Hand Hollow Conservation Area. He will work with the Town Supervisor to apply for a spring planting project in 2021 in Shatford Park along the Wyomanock Creek. Tistrya suggested that campers at the Summer Recreation Program would be able to maintain the plantings through the hot summer.

CAC Budget: The proposed CAC budget for FY2021 is \$980. Internet access for the field tablet comes to \$480 and the remainder will be held in reserve for a public program.

PFOA: Whether DEC tested the well (or wells?) at the trailer village bordering the Wyomanock Creek on Old Post Road needs to be resolved. Ten wells were tested but only four property owners have reported their results to the Town Supervisor. All were negative for contamination. Regarding the capping requirement at the town landfill, abandoned since 1983, it would be good for Peg Munves and Paul Rix to walk in and determine whether it is still an open area and not reforested. We also briefly discussed the Source Water Study and whether money exists to test selected wells across four town quadrants. A first step could be to contract Gould to test for iron and manganese. Paul suggested that homeowners already conduct their own tests routinely and town involvement, with its expense, may not be the wisest course.

2020 Goals: Peg suggested that in view of the current town budget cutbacks, we will need to keep new initiatives involving expense at bay for the present. The Critical Environmental Areas proposal, to first have the Town Board designate Cool Ravines, will not involve expense but may better wait until the public can once again attend indoor meetings safely. The online interactive Scenic Resources inventory may involve expense and still awaits a time when David can meet safely with Sharon Powers at her work station. Sharon has offered to donate her skills and time. Meanwhile, Sharon helped update the Scenic Resources map and tables in the *Natural Resource Conservation Plan*. The online link to the map and tables will show view sheds throughout the town as well as scenic roads that Steve Powers and David identified. Future printings will capture the updates.

Planning Board update: Cynthia Creech spoke about the Nokomis project that went before the Planning Board. Nokomis wants to connect their two existing buildings with a walking alcove. Their engineer has convinced the Planning Board that they qualify for an agricultural waiver. Cynthia had contacted Bob Sommers, at NYS Ag & Markets, and he wrote a letter to the Planning Board explaining why Nokomis does not qualify for an agricultural waiver. Nokomis' attorney said that Sommers doesn't know what he is talking about. The first building was an existing state-of-the-art stable, the second a new building permitted as a storage facility but that is intended as a bottling plant. Nokomis plans to bottle essential oils extracted from the exotic Asian medicinal plants they

are growing on the property. Nokomis had misrepresented the second building's use in gaining the building permit. Paul Rix asked if Ag & Markets has the clout to overturn the Planning Board's decisions. Cynthia said when Ag & Markets says no, it means no. The July PB meeting, following the sketch plan conference at the June PB meeting, when members asked many questions, should have been a preliminary hearing in advance of a public hearing before final approval. David Farren noted that if no site plan review exists for a property, any proposal to continue the same use must nonetheless create an inventory for the Land Use Office's files. David noted what he had pointed out at the June PB meeting, that Wadsworth Road is as dangerous a road as exists in New Lebanon, with a series of elbow turns and limited vision of oncoming traffic. Daily UPS deliveries and pick-ups could well be hazardous. As well, might Asian medicinal plants be invasive?

Further to Planning Board pending proposals, Cynthia noted that the NAPA store is moving to the old Stewart's, as approved some months ago. NAPA will be collecting used oil in barrels, as they have in the past. They will not be collecting antifreeze or used batteries. The Laundromat is on hold for the moment. The DEC study requires that a laundromat install two new leach fields to accommodate wastewater, an expensive proposition.

Climate Smart Community Task Force update: Steve Powers announced that New Lebanon may well be the first Climate Smart Community in Columbia County to earn bronze status. The town has made good progress at being certified through the Clean Energy initiative. Marc Anthonisen has begun groundwork for a collaborative relationship between the town and Cornell University. If his mentor Rebecca Brenner approves, teams of students from Cornell's MPA program would be available to work on various projects for the town. Possible projects include a Climate Vulnerability Assessment, a Greenhouse Gas Survey, and a survey on conservation of resources. Task Force member Jenna Barbary spoke about composting. The CSC approved the composting plan with two options: residents can compost on their own or they can drop off materials at locations including the Community Garden. Jenna has designed a flyer to distribute to residents with a map of drop-off sites, endorsed by the Town Board, and has also created a Composting 101 video. Jenna noted that someone has offered to donate composting bins.

Bruce Shenker will request that the Town Board send a letter to the Columbia County Board of Supervisors advocating that the County become a Climate Smart County. Bruce also mentioned that he spoke with Cara Humphries about doing a presentation on Community Solar at the September Town Board Meeting. Bruce noted that switching to solar energy would save both the town and residents who switch about 10% on their electricity bills, in addition to helping reduce greenhouse emissions.

Business Development Committee update: Cynthia Creech said that the BDC has been very active. Her Food subcommittee was involved in July with the distribution of 17,000 pounds of free food. The committee is addressing the town's infrastructure and ways to improve it. Cynthia noted that Hillsdale has installed a municipal sewer system in the business district and this has made a tremendous difference for the town. David pointed out that they have also installed sidewalks, possibly with the state funds that had been earmarked for New Lebanon. Monty Wasch spoke about the community Appearance and Design subcommittee, which is considering a competition for architecture and design, inviting students to improve the appearance of the "Miracle Mile."

Zoning Rewrite Committee update: Cynthia Creech said that the Zoning Rewrite Committee has sent to the County for approval the rewritten agricultural definitions in the zoning ordinances that conform to NYS Ag & Markets. The ZRC is also looking into regulations for short-term rentals and is questioning whether the push to develop AirB&B-type properties jeopardizes long-term rentals in town, and the impact they will have on the community. Various approaches to short-term rental

ordinances that could be enacted have been discussed. Cynthia noted that Hillsdale requires a permit for occupancy and that many towns charge a tax on short-term rentals. The committee has discussed regulations regarding owner involvement as well as a requirement that a designated person able to maintain the property live within a 20-minute drive.

The next meeting will be September 14 at 6:30 P.M. We agreed to meet at the Shatford Park Pavilion with social distancing and expect Steve Winkley to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Gilson