

Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon
Minutes for monthly meeting on March 8, 2021, via Google Meet

Present: CAC members David Farren, Robert Gilson, Donald Lamonaca, Adelia Moore, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Paul Rix; Guest Marc Anthonisen

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. We approved the minutes for the monthly meeting on February 8, 2021, and they will be sent to the Town Clerk for posting. Due to an unreliable internet connection on Google Meet, we adjourned the meeting briefly and resumed via the Zoom account of Peg Munves.

David Farren listened to the Hudson River Estuary Program webinar on Open Space Inventories after the fact. The presenters stressed that OSIs normally follow Natural Resource Inventories and can end up as an Open Space Index approved by the town. The order in New Lebanon is reversed. The CAC needs to consider whether we should update our OSI from 2014 and apply for an HREP grant. The application deadline is June 2, 2021, and the minimum award would be \$10K over two years.

David reminded everyone that the RPA monthly lecture will feature Rachel Reiman talking about the benefits of unfragmented forests on the Rensselaer Plateau. Rachel is an RPA director and long-time employee of the U.S. Forest Service.

David attended the Quad Board meeting on February 24. The next meeting is scheduled for March 18 but going forward will be on the fourth Wednesday of every month. Tistrya would like to resolve issues regarding the roles of the Code Enforcement and Zoning Enforcement Officers and clarify Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals procedures. In that regard, the PB and ZBA chairs are fine tuning procedure manuals. Site Plan Review will also be a focus.

David suggested that we pass a motion to ratify CAC goals for 2021. They are the Trees for Tribes project in Shatford Park, launching a floodplain mitigation study, completing the Water Study with NYSDOH this spring and spurring to completion the Source Water Protection Plan conducted by Steve Winkley, creating an interactive online scenic resources inventory (which may require additional viewshed photos), rationalizing Critical Environmental Areas in town starting with the special habitat of cool ravines, and sponsoring a naturalist presentation to campers at the Summer Recreation Program. Steve Powers made the motion, Peg Munves seconded it, and CAC members passed it unanimously.

Trees for Tribes: The Shatford Park project has been tentatively approved by Trees for Tribes. We have requested 500 tree and shrub potted seedlings for spring planting with delivery likely in late May. Trees for Tribes has promised two auger operators to dig the holes. David will propose a budget to the Town Board for purchasing topsoil and starter fertilizer to amend soil in the holes.

Comprehensive Plan: David suggested that the CAC proactively outline natural resource and environmental goals and indicators for the update. Due to COVID and its unpredictable influence on New Lebanon's future, the update will focus on the next 3 years, after which

another update committee would need to address the town's future. We will need to prioritize what we can accomplish in 3 years. In 2019, after much discussion, we approved a list of action items remaining from the 2005 plan but need now to focus on goals and achievable indicators for the update. Until now, goals and indicators regarding climate change have not been addressed.

Marc Anthonisen shared the Climate Smart Communities scorecard and the 300 points required to achieve Silver Status. There must be actions in the Comprehensive Plan that support the CSC Task Force's efforts as well as goals for the environment. The bike restoration project, for example, should support requirements for an alternative transportation effort. The CSC may need to decide which goals are achievable over 3 years. Steve asked David his view of the process. Until the update becomes final following a series of public hearings, we would have the opportunity to help shape it. Marc pointed out that CSC goals are intended to be guiding principles that underlie the Comprehensive Plan and should not be tacked on after the fact. Paul Rix suggested that it would be useful to look at curriculum development as an organizing principle. Are CSC goals things we are already doing or new things we hope to achieve? Marc asked how we define smart growth for New Lebanon. NYSDEC's scorecard lists it but we need to interpret it.

The CSC's success in achieving Bronze Status in record time speaks to the town's focus on the environment. Do we feel that the 2005 plan addressed CSC objectives adequately? Marc noted that what we have already done is not as important as our vision for the future. We should not write goals into the Comprehensive Plan just to score points. Rather, CSC goals are meant to help retool the planning vision. Steve will reach out to Jill Fauchi to sound her out on her work on her town's Comprehensive Plan revision to give us direction. Meanwhile, Deb Gordon has been critical of the Comprehensive Plan because unrealistic goals light the way. Many goals may not be achievable. Rather, they should be step by step so that we can achieve them.

Marc reiterated that goals should not be tacked on at the end. David suggested that CSC members reach consensus on goals at their April meeting that could then be addressed by the Comp Plan Update Committee at their meeting later in April. Steve will consider the CSC role in helping fashion the new section on the environment in the Comp Plan update. Marc said that most of the Silver Status goals do not relate directly to the environment. However, the NRCP goals do so and we could heighten our involvement by aligning our plans with the Comp Plan update.

David pointed out that the next Planning Board meeting is on March 17. Neighbors have many concerns about the proposed Nokomis ecology center and have organized in opposition.

Peg explained that the NYSDOH water study is on hold, waiting for winter to break.

The next CAC Meeting will be on April 12, 2021, starting at 6:30 P.M. via Google Meet. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Gilson