

## ***Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon***

### **2020 Annual Report**

Members: Jenna Barbary Glovsky, Cynthia Creech, David Farren, Robert Gilson, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Paul Rix

Monthly meetings, 6:30 – 8:00 P.M. (minutes available on town’s website): 1/13 (Town Hall), 2/10 (Town Hall), 3/09 (Town Hall), 4/13 (Zoom), 5/11 (Google Meet), 6/08 (Google Meet), 7/13 (Shatford Park), 8/10 (Google Meet), 9/14 (Shatford Park), 10/12 (Google Meet), 11/09 (Google Meet), 12/14 (Google Meet)

#### **Overview of Activities**

The COVID-19 pandemic limited what the Town of New Lebanon Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) was able to accomplish during 2020. Our goals for the year included proposing Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs) to the Town Board for ratification, having decided on cool ravines as the first, updating the Scenic Resources map and tables in the *Natural Resource Conservation Plan* (NRCP) and then creating an interactive online format on the town website, and sponsoring once again a naturalist presentation to campers at the Summer Recreation Program in Shatford Park. We also agreed on a list of action items from the 2005 *Comprehensive Plan*, still unmet, to carry forward in an updated plan that a committee began to address in 2019. Restrictions caused by the pandemic pushed several of these goals into 2021. We also agreed to cede part of our annual budget to help the town meet an anticipated revenue shortfall caused by the pandemic.

The Town Board authorized a Climate Smart Communities Task Force (CSC) for the town at its April meeting to be chaired by CAC member Steve Powers. CAC members Jenna Barbary and Bob Gilson were appointed as inaugural CSC members and were joined later in the year by Peg Munves. The CSC focused on achieving bronze status under the state’s rating system, the first town in Columbia County to be able to do so. Marc Anthonisen, an MPA student at Cornell with a concentration in climate change who happened to be living with family in New Lebanon while he studied remotely, advised the CSC in this process. Marc’s advice also proved invaluable on certain matters for the CAC.

Our major activity focused on the first-ever Trees for Tribs project in New Lebanon. We organized volunteers to plant over 200 seedlings in spring and fall plantings at the Roseman property on C.R. 9. That 68-acre property abuts the Hand Hollow Community Conservation Area and an unnamed stream in the Hollow Brook watershed flows through it and extensive wetlands. In the end, 28 volunteers devoted 225 hours to planting and maintaining the seedlings, provided gratis by the Trees for Tribs program based at the Hudson River Estuary Program (HREP) of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) in New Paltz. Nearly all of the seedlings were sourced as bare roots from the state nursery in Saratoga

Springs and potted in New Paltz. Trees for Tribs produced a training video and supplied a label, protective tube, stake, weed mat and ground staples for every seedling. Carole Roseman's husband, Steven Dono, assisted with watering and carting topsoil and mulch. Carole purchased topsoil and starter fertilizer that we used to amend soil in every dug hole.

### **Town Board Resolution**

The Town Board passed a resolution at their April meeting to expand membership in the CAC to seven members and appointed Jenna Barbary Glovsky to both the CAC and CSC.

### **Scenic Resources**

David Farren worked with Sharon Powers on March 11 to incorporate additional scenic view sheds in the western areas of town and scenic roads throughout town into the NRCP's Scenic Resources map and tables. In October 2019, David and Steve Powers revisited view sheds that the CAC had first identified in October 2017, too close to press time to be included in the NRCP, and Steve took many photographs. These view sheds and scenic roads will be captured in the online version of the NRCP posted on the town website and also in future NRCP reprints. Sharon expressed her willingness to work on converting the Scenic Resources map and tables into an interactive online inventory on the town website.

### **Abandoned Town Landfill water testing**

NYSDEC tested monitoring wells at the abandoned Town Landfill off Old Post Road and recorded PFOAs above the maximum recommended levels. When these results reached Supervisor Houghtling, she worked with Peg Munves and Paul Rix to implement additional testing by NYSDEC on wells within a half mile and down gradient from the landfill. Results from the 10 residential wells tested all proved negative for PFOAs. Meanwhile, the mandated capping of the landfill remains undone. Columbia County had agreed to share half the anticipated cost and their contribution of \$650,000 continues to sit in an escrow account. Other towns that had been required to cap their abandoned landfills were compensated in full by the county. In New Lebanon, however, the landfill sits on private property. The cost of capping is now anticipated to be much greater than twice the county contribution.

### **Trees for Tribs**

Our major focus in 2020 was the first-ever Trees for Tribs project in New Lebanon on a 68-acre parcel at 3936 C.R. 9 owned by Carole Roseman. Peg Munves helped produce a video report on the project that we submitted to the Town Newsletter and also to a Columbia County CAC Roundtable convened remotely. Note that final reports for the Trees for Tribs spring and fall plantings are included as addenda to this report.

### **Water Study**

Steven Winkley of the New York Rural Water Association continued his preparation of a Source Water Protection Plan for the town. He participated in the September CAC meeting to update us and provide new maps. He also arranged for New Lebanon to participate in a pilot well testing program to be conducted by the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) in 2021, as one of

three towns in the state, and helped identify wells down gradient from two suspected areas of contamination. Those sites along Route 20 are the abandoned CeramTec facility and the brownfield that had been a General Electric dumping ground for PCBs. Peg Munves identified other homeowners for the sampling and with Supervisor Houghtling's help set out to recruit 21 participants to represent all geological areas in town.

### **Climate Smart Communities Task Force**

The Town Board created the Task Force by resolution in April with the intention that the CAC play a major role. By the end of 2020, following a flurry of activity thanks to Steve Powers' leadership, the CSC was positioned to earn bronze status, the first town in Columbia County to do so.

### **Comprehensive Plan Update Committee**

Cynthia Creech and David Farren, by virtue of their membership on the Zoning Rewrite Committee as CAC representatives, served also as members of this committee which met monthly following its first meeting in September 2019. For help in funding a consultant, David submitted grant applications to the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. Although the Greenway announced a \$10,000 grant for New Lebanon, they were forced to postpone due to the state's budget cuts resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation decided to devote all of its funds for Columbia County to COVID relief. David and Cynthia helped conduct focus groups convened by the committee to inform the updated plan. The NRCP with its 22 new maps of the town will be an integral component of the updated plan.

### **Zoning Rewrite Committee**

Cynthia Creech helped prepare new definitions for agriculture that she gleaned from NYS Ag & Markets. The committee approved them and requested that the Town Board adopt them through resolution.

### **Planning Board**

Bob Gilson represented the CAC at most monthly meetings of the Planning Board. David Farren attended a June meeting remotely that focused on a Nokomis proposal to build an alcove walkway between a barn and storage building at their site off Wadsworth Road where they grow exotic Asian medicinal plants. The storage building turned out to be a bottling plant for the oils extracted from the plants. The CAC submitted a response objecting to the proposal. A proposed laundromat in the Dollar Store plaza was another concern. We planned to oppose it due to questions about an adequate septic system but our response became moot when the proposal failed to advance.

### **A Look Ahead**

The CAC's 2021 goals will include several 2020 goals that we were forced to carry forward due to the COVID-19 crisis. These include Critical Environmental Areas, an interactive online Scenic Resources inventory on the town website, and sponsoring a naturalist for summer campers. We will also assist Steven Winkley in completing his Source Water Protection Plan. Also

possible is a revision of the 2014 Open Space Inventory to conform to the updated Comprehensive Plan expected to be available in late 2021, using the new maps produced for the 2017 NRCP, and the creation of a first-ever Open Space Index to be certified by the Town Board.

### **Activities and Training**

#### **David Farren**

- Town Board: 1/14, 2/11, 4/14, 6/09, 7/14, 11/10, 12/08
- Town Newsletter submissions/mandated town training/misc.: 3/11 working session with Sharon Powers to update the NRCP's Scenic Resources map and tables; 6/22 deadline for Trees for Tribes video for Town Newsletter; 6/23 conference call on CSC alignment in updated Comprehensive Plan with Marc Anthonisen, Steve Powers and Ted Salem; 11/17 mandated town training
- Comprehensive Plan Update Committee: 1/21, 2/18, 3/17, 4/21, 5/19, 6/16, 7/21 (Shatford Park), 9/15, 9/23 (Seniors Focus Group at Town Hall), 11/17, 12/15
- Zoning Rewrite Committee: 1/28, 2/25, 3/24, 4/28, 5/26, 6/23, 7/28, 9/22
- Hudson River Valley Greenway grant for Comprehensive Plan update: 1/29, 2/05 (writing session with Winfried Fuchshofen); 2/06 (Supervisor Houghtling sign-off)
- Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation grant for Comprehensive Plan update: 2/27 (Supervisor Houghtling sign-off)
- Water Study: 11/12, 12/03 (conference calls with NYSDOH)
- Trees for Tribes: 3/05 assess Roseman property, 9/28 delivery and assess Shatford Park, 10/21 Shatford Park walkthrough with Supervisor Houghtling [**NOTE:** Trees for Tribes reports are included with this report as addenda.]
- Columbia County CAC Roundtable: 3/11 Claverack Town Library
- Hawthorne Valley Farm's Farmscape Ecology Program First Thursdays: 2/06, 3/05, 5/07 (Butterflies via Zoom)
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation: 12/15 Environmental Update via WebEx (9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.)
- Hudson River Estuary Program webinars: 2/26 Stormwater Management, 3/18 Wetland Conservation, 4/15 Natural Heritage Important Areas, 5/20 Hudson Valley Forest Conditions, 7/23 Streams
- Rensselaer Plateau Alliance lectures: 7/09 Berkshire Bird Paradise, 9/17 History Beneath our Feet, 10/15 Forest Regeneration, 11/19 Ingrid Haeckel on Conserving Habitats and Wildlife, 12/17 Trails

In addition to his volunteer work with committees in New Lebanon, David serves as a Director of the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, chairs its Development Committee and is an advisor to Rensselaer Youth Outdoors. He is treasurer of the Corkscrew Rail Trail Association. He has also been an active volunteer over decades for his high school and college.

### **Jenna Barbary Glovsky**

Jenna joined the CAC and CSC in April. In June, Darrow School promoted her from positions teaching Environmental Studies and serving as campus Wellness Coordinator to Dean of Students. She and her husband Michael have taught at Darrow for a number of years and live on campus with their two-year-old daughter Anna. Jenna volunteered in the Trees for Tribes project and spearheaded the community compost project for the CSC.

### **Cynthia Creech**

Cynthia owned and operated Artemis Farms on Cemetery Road, raising Randall cattle, a breed she rescued in the 1980s in Vermont when fewer than 10 remained. She sold the farm in December 2020 with plans to move her remaining herd to southern Virginia in early 2021. Consequently, Cynthia resigned from the CAC and other town committees in December to provide adequate time for recruiting her successors. She also served on the board of Grow the Valley and rejoined the Court Clerk's office as Assistant Clerk. Cynthia was a presence at all monthly Town Board meetings, represented the CAC at budget hearings, joined the Business and Economic Development Committee, chaired its Food subcommittee, met her other committee assignments with distinction, and volunteered in the Trees for Tribes project. She will be missed as a CAC member.

### **Bob Gilson**

Bob and his wife Rae had long been second-home owners in New Lebanon. When Bob retired, he decided to live here year round. Rae is a board member of Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon and Bob has been a trustee of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Bob takes delight in fly fishing and photography and posts stunning views of his surroundings on Instagram. Bob attended most Town Board meetings and most of this year's Planning Board meetings as the CAC liaison. He is also a CSC member. Since June, Bob has been taking the CAC minutes.

### **Peg Munves**

Peg owns and operates a dog training business. Peg attended nearly all Town Board meetings and joined the CSC and Business and Economic Development Committee later in the year. She and her husband Moy Wong also volunteered in the Trees for Tribes project. Peg filmed and produced the video that we submitted to the Town Newsletter and CAC Roundtable. She and Paul Rix also reviewed voluminous town records on the abandoned Town Landfill off Old Post Road and Peg took the lead with Steven Winkley in addressing NYSDEC's tests of the monitoring wells and subsequent testing of private wells. She also took the lead in the NYS Department of Health's pilot program to test more than 20 residential wells in New Lebanon. Peg and Moy have lived full-time in New Lebanon for more than a decade and have owned their home overlooking the Shaker Swamp since the late 1980s.

**Steve Powers**

Steve, his wife Sharon and family relocated to New Lebanon in 2018 from Long Beach, Long Island, and quickly integrated into the community. Steve runs a travel company of long standing, Hidden Treasure Tours, and lived for many years during his early career in Nepal. Steve attended every monthly Town Board meeting, chaired the CSC and its monthly meetings, and enjoys bird watching and photography. His photographs will be featured in the interactive online Scenic Resources inventory on the town website.

**Paul Rix**

Paul and his wife Anna Duhon homestead in New Lebanon, growing and harvesting their own food crops and raising goats and chickens. Anna is the long-serving staff anthropologist for the Farmscape Ecology Program at Hawthorne Valley Farm. Paul and Anna are proud parents of three-year-old Adriana. In addition to reviewing voluminous town records on the abandoned Town Landfill, Paul researched issues surrounding excessive levels of PFOAs.

**Trees for Tribes Fall 2020 planting, Roseman property at 3936 C.R. 9, New Lebanon**

Date	Volunteers	Hours	Species Planted	Notes (Generally, AM 9:30-11:30, PM 1:00-4:30)
Mon. 9/28	1	4	94 potted seedlings delivered*	Anna Palmer helped unload w/DLF, Carole Roseman & Steven Dono
Mon. 10/19	2	3.5		DLF helped Steven Dono chip brush pile for mulch
Wed., 10/28	2	5		Craig Westcott helped DLF dig 24 holes in front field along stream
Fri., 10/30	1	1		DLF reviewed planting scheme with CR
Mon., 11/02	1	3		DLF dug holes along rear line of front field
Tues., 11/03	1	2.5		DLF dug holes along road for Tulip Trees
Wed., 11/04	2	6		Bruce Shenker helped DLF dig 21 holes along front field boundaries
Sat., 11/07	2	4		Bruce Shenker helped Steven Dono chip brush pile for mulch
Sun., 11/08	1	2.75	4 Basswood	DLF began planting line at rear of front field
Mon., 11/09	1	4.5	2 Basswood, 2 Tulip Tree	DLF continued planting along rear line in front field w/Tulip Trees along road
Tues., 11/10	2	4.75	7 Basswood	DLF joined by Craig Westcott to complete line at rear of front field
Wed., 11/11	1	1.5		DLF dug holes for River Birch in front field keyhole area and far side of stream
Thurs., 11/12	2	3.75	1 Bur Oak	DLF spread mulch on all plantings in front field, laid tarp on garden soil w/SD
Fri., 11/13	1	5.75	6 Bur Oak	DLF redug many Bur Oak holes to hold line to left in front field
Sat., 11/14	2	6.25	1 Bur Oak, 3 Tulip Tree	DLF joined by Bob Gilson AM; Jenna Barbary couldn't show
Mon., 11/16	1	2	3 River Birch	DLF planted in triangle in keyhole, to left at back of front field
Tues., 11/17	3	11	11 Swamp White Oak, 2 White Spruce	DLF joined by Donald Lamonaca AM, Steve Beauchamp PM
Wed., 11/18	2	4		DLF dug holes, AM and PM, while Bob Gilson mulched new plantings in AM
Thurs., 11/19	2	7	7 Red Bark Osier, 3 Redbud, 1 White Spruce, 2 River Birch (front field complete)	DLF joined by Donald Lamonaca AM
Fri., 11/20	3	6.75	3 Red Bark Osier, 12 Redbud, 1 Swamp White Oak	DLF joined by Bruce Shenker PM, dug 2 holes for White Spruce
Sat., 11/21	3	11	4 White Spruce, 15 Flowering Dogwood	DLF joined by Rae Gilson PM; planted line of dogwood near top of back field
Sun., 11/22	1	2.25	4 White Spruce (back of house complete)	DLF planted along path from back field to stream

**(23 days total)**

**Totals:** 8 volunteers 102.25 94 potted seedlings planted  
visits: 37

\* plus wooden stakes, nested tubes, ground staples

Note: 2 White Spruce were replacements for spring seedlings that did not thrive.

**Trees for Tribs project, Roseman property, New Lebanon**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Species Planted</b>	<b>Notes (Generally, AM 9:30-11:30, PM 2:30-4:30)</b>
Sun, 5/17/20	1	4	(109 potted seedlings delivered)*	Anna Palmer helped unload w/DLF, Carole Roseman & Steven Dono
Mon, 5/18/20	3	6	2 Tulip trees	AM DLF helped get ready, Heather Navatni and daughter Sasha PM
Tue, 5/19/20	6	14	10 Flowering dogwood	Cynthia Creech, Peg Munves & Moy Wong AM, Liz & John Poreba PM
Wed, 5/20/20	2	5	3 Redbud	Rae Gilson PM, lots of snakes
Thu, 5/21/20	1	2	2 Redbud	DLF alone
Tue, 5/26/20	6	15	2 Redbud, 2 Ironwood, 14 Red-bark osier dogwood	Peg Munves, Moy Wong, Bruce Shenker AM, Liz & John Poreba PM (all osiers)
Wed, 5/27/20	1	2		DLF alone, watering
Thu, 5/28/20	4	6	3 Tulip tree	Craig Westcott and sons Haven and Keller PM, planted opposite house along road
Fri, 5/29/20	2	5	4 White swamp oak	Donald Lamonaca, one in lawn, three along road near guidewires
Tue, 6/2/20	2	5	4 White spruce	Donald Lamonaca, to right of house/garage/barn
Wed, 6/3/20	1	4		DLF alone AM, PM; stakes, tethering, weed mats
Thu, 6/4/20	3	7	3 White spruce, 3 Beach plum	Cynthia Creech, Peg Munves AM
Fri, 6/5/20	2	9	6 White spruce, 2 River birch	Jenna Barbary-Glovsky AM, PM
Mon, 6/8/20	1	2		DLF alone AM, scoped further plantings
Tue, 6/9/20	4	5	4 Ironwood	DLF PM walkthrough w/Marc & Marianna Anthonisen, Joel Priest
Wed, 6/10/20	1	3		DLF alone PM (John Trainor rescheduled)
Mon, 6/15/20	5	12	16 Dwarf sand cherry, 3 River birch	Marc & Marianna Anthonisen, Joel Priest AM, John Trainor PM
Tue, 6/16/20	1	4		DLF alone, weed mats AM, watering PM
Wed, 6/17/20	1	2		DLF alone PM, watering and stakes
Thu, 6/18/20	1	2		DLF alone PM, tethers and stakes
Tue, 6/23/20	1	2	1 Hawthorn	DLF alone PM
<b>(21 days total)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>86 potted seedlings planted</b>	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>49</b>			
<b>visits:</b>				

\* plus weed mats, ground staples, stakes, tubes