

CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 21, 2015
Delancey Hall

Members Present: Pam Pooley, Co-Chair
Janine Selendy
Nancy Welo
Alan Towers

Member Absent: Lori Tripoli, Co-Chair

Also Present: Janice Will, Secretary

Pam Pooley opened the meeting.

The minutes of the July 27 meeting were unanimously approved.

Town Code of Ethics Form

Ms. Pooley said she will check to see if all members of Town boards, councils, etc. are required to sign this form or just chairpersons.

Liability Issues

Ms. Pooley stated that Ms. Tripoli brought up the subject of possible liability in the instance of CAC members inspecting conservation easements in an e-mail to Cynthia Curtis, Planning Board Chairperson but they (Ms. Pooley and Ms. Tripoli) have not had a discussion about it yet.

This topic to be taken up again in October.

Inspection of Conservation Easements

It was noted that the Town Board has put this item on their agenda for September 29.

Best Management Practices

Ms. Pooley said that she intends to work on this during the winter.

Southeast Pipeline Expansion

Alan Towers stated that Amy Rosmarin (Town Board member) forwarded him a copy of a letter from the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (a public interest group) to the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, requesting that the NRC withdraw its finding that the proposal would have no significant impact. The letter cites specific shortcomings in the regulatory process, and points to past NRC research results that are contrary to what is being put forth at present. The NIRS letter stated that no work should be permitted to begin until more/better research into the possible effects of the proposed expansion is conducted.

Mr. Towers said he also received an e-mail asking that concerned parties write to County government officials to protest the pipeline expansion and provided contact information. Mr. Towers contacted members of the County Legislature and the office of Rob Astorino, County Executive. Mr. Towers said he heard from some Legislators (not very specific) and also Mr. Astorino's office, although that response was confusing and evasive. Mr. Towers e-mailed the County Executive's office again, asking if Mr. Astorino has the responsibility of approving the project or not office and was informed that the County Executive was not responsible for approving the project. Mr. Towers read in a local news publication the next day that Mr. Astorino had approved the project.

Janine Selendy thought it important to verify the current status of the project (has it been approved and by whom).

Mr. Towers said that it has been approved, and he was concerned about the way protests/objections have been ignored, especially those raised by people in towns near the Indian Point nuclear power plant.

Ms. Pooley was not sure there was anything for the CAC to do.

Mr. Towers said Ms. Rosmarin has had no success in trying to get an appointment to meet with the pipeline people, so he was not sure she would be able to do anything either.

Ms. Pooley brought Nancy Welo (just arriving at the meeting) up to date on the pipeline discussion.

Ms. Welo thought the CAC could send a comment letter asking that further review be conducted.

Mr. Towers said he will e-mail Ms. Rosmarin and ask her what the current status of the project is because the CAC is considering writing a letter.

Ms. Welo noted that the letter from the NIRC states that the NRC previously found that smaller pipelines situated farther from nuclear plants posed a risk (source given in a footnote).

Mr. Towers remarked that all the NIRC letter asks for is further review, which he thought was reasonable; a letter from the CAC could support that position.

Ms. Welo thought the footnoted statement by the NRC would be a good point to work from in a letter to them.

Topic to remain open for discussion with Ms. Tripoli in October. Mr. Towers will let the others know what he learns from Ms. Rosmarin in the way of an update.

Hudson to Housatonic Initiative

Ms. Pooley stated that Nancy Welo attended a recent gathering at Mt. Lakes. She explained that H2H seeks to get adjoining areas to be aware of the biotic corridor/ environmental challenges and also to see what local concerns are. Ms. Pooley said that

although attendance was light, the Camp Hemlock venue was very nice and it was good to hear what people had to say. She added that the topic most often brought up was invasive species.

Ms. Welo said the state of Connecticut has produced a booklet to help people identify invasives/compare them to similar-looking non-invasives.

Ms. Pooley noted that Carrie Sears of the Pound Ridge Invasive Project was at the gathering, and she showed some invasive plants to help people recognize them.

Ms. Pooley said H2H is a project of the US Forestry Service, and the Westchester Land Trust is responsible for administering the grant. The goal was to get 200+ conservation easements in the region and also landowner commitment to stewardship practices. Ms. Pooley stated that the grant will be available until June 2016, so there will probably be other events scheduled. She will not be available to attend one to be held soon in Greenwich, CT, but Gloria Stein of the North Salem Open Land Foundation will go.

Ms. Selendy said she recently co-hosted a coffee-gathering with her neighbor, Lorraine Karafel, which was held before the last NSOLF walk of the season, and which was attended by the executive director of the WLT and her husband as well as Gloria Stein. Ms. Selendy noted that much of the discussion during the walk was about invasives and also the bio-corridors and people working together. She remarked that the walk was challenging as there is no trail.

Ms. Pooley said Ms. Karafel asked her to look at her property, which she did as a CAC member/not a paid landscape consultant. Ms. Karafel sought advice on what to choose to ask her landscaping people to do to try and make the job finite and not be alarmingly expensive, and Ms. Pooley suggested having them open up her creek (not flowing due to downed trees and undergrowth). Ms. Pooley said the property also includes a slope with invasives growing all over it (as well as some crab apple trees), which would present a problem if one were to take out all the plants at once because that could endanger the slope. She commented that seeding with grass would help in circumstances like those. Ms. Pooley said the meeting with Ms. Karafel was another instance of people's uncertainty about what are and are not invasive plants as well as what to do about them. She expressed hope that in the future/with more knowledge and experience, the CAC will be of assistance to people.

Ms. Selendy remarked that winter berries are good, attractive plants to help stabilize slopes, and Ms. Pooley agreed.

Ms. Pooley invited the others to visit a garden she planted at the Leon Levy Preserve in Lewisboro, consisting of 5000 sq. ft. of native, deer-resistant plants. The Preserve has over 300 acres available for hiking.

Meetings Attended

Ms. Pooley stated that she and Alan Towers had attended a Planning Board meeting in July when Hawley Woods was discussed.

Mr. Towers added that he also attended a presentation by Energize NY.

Ms. Pooley attended another Planning Board meeting on August 12, when a boring test on the Hawley Woods land was discussed. The Planning Board requested further testing/samples and the public hearing remains open. Ms. Pooley remarked that although some neighbors are still contesting the project, it seems as though it will go forward, especially given the reduced number of lots/houses (3) versus what was originally proposed. She commented that very small homeowners associations sometimes struggle to stay solvent, maintain their roads, etc. She said she will attend the next Planning Board meeting when Hawley Woods is again on the agenda.

Mr. Towers remarked that the construction of Hawley Woods may go on for 6 years.

Ms. Welo said the head of the County Planning Department once said that people will eventually build wherever construction is permitted, so a 3-house project on over 48 acres is not so bad. She added that it is easier/faster to use modular houses.

Ms. Pooley said there were some concerns about the water (both quality and adequacy), but water-testing is not required for sub-division approval.

Specific Sites – Ryland West Realty/621 Route 22

Ms. Pooley said she and Lori Tripoli went on the Planning Board site visit to this property, the former Lakeland Lumber site. She explained that the new owner plans to have his pool business there, with a showroom, office and material storage/truck fleet. Ms. Pooley remarked that the large rear yard is in poor condition, but she believes the new owner will do a lot to improve it. She added that other offices, including an acupuncturist, are planned for the site. Ms. Pooley said there are residential lots behind the lumber yard, so she and Ms. Tripoli asked about plans to remove trees and requested that some be planted to replace them. The CAC has not received plans yet, perhaps because they are still being finalized.

Ms. Welo said she looks forward to updates on this project.

Ms. Pooley said she and Ms. Tripoli are ready to comment when they receive updated information/drawings.

Papovitch/7 Bloomer Road (former Piedmont Properties)

The CAC remembered that Ms. Welo had gone along on a site walk of this land with the Town's wetlands consultant. The secretary stated that there is a lot-line change in-progress now to facilitate the owner's request to change the Planning Board-approved building envelope.

Salem Golf Club

Mr. Towers said club members have been informed that the pool/new building project is being postponed for the time being.

Ms. Pooley said the item will be removed from the agenda until such time as the project is moving forward again.

Hawley Woods

Subject to remain on CAC agenda.

Salem Hills/Gilport Development

CAC to discuss in October.

Minutes of July 27 Meeting

Unanimously approved.

Other

Ms. Selendy said she would like to see the CAC offer a talk to the public on invasive species and maybe the biotic corridor. She thought they could have a panel comprised of several groups to make presentations. She also suggested putting helpful information in the local newspaper.

Ms. Pooley thought the talk was a good idea and said the CAC will discuss it further in October.

To adjourn at 6:10 pm

Motion by: Nancy Welo

All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Janice Will, Recording Secretary