

Conservation Advisory Council, Town of New Lebanon

Minutes for monthly meeting, June 8, 2020, via Google Meet

Attending: CAC Members Jenna Barbary, Cynthia Creech, David Farren, Robert Gilson, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Paul Rix; guest Marc Anthonisen

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 P.M. We approved the minutes for the CAC monthly meeting on May 11 and will send them to the Town Clerk for posting. Bob Gilson had volunteered to draft a first-ever Mission Statement for the CAC and sought help from Gretchen Stevens and David Farren. Although the Town Board created the New Lebanon CAC in 2010, we did not have one. After discussion about specificity in the final paragraph, the CAC unanimously adopted the Mission Statement.

The CAC volunteered to forgo the use of its field tablet to save on expenses as a budget cutting measure for the Town. Use of the tablet can be delayed for 6 months and the CAC will revisit the issue in November with an eye toward resuming the contract.

We voiced our regret at not being able to host the Birds of Prey program with Michael Clough of the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum at the Summer Recreation Program in Shatford Park. Cynthia Creech and Peg Munves spoke about how wonderful the program was. Cynthia suggested that perhaps we could offer the program for the community in the fall, if social distancing becomes less problematic, but would need to promote the program to build an audience. We agreed to continue the discussion next month.

David had summarized the Trees for Tribes program to date for Deb Gordon, our Town Board liaison. Trees for Tribes provided 109 potted tree and shrub seedlings to be planted on Carole Roseman's property on C.R. 9. David has spearheaded the efforts to get everything planted with 19 volunteers pitching in. As of June 8, about 80 percent had been planted. David projected that planting would be completed during the following week.

Steve Powers reported that the Climate Smart Community Task Force held its second meeting on June 3. Its goal is to help the Town of New Lebanon achieve bronze status, which requires 120 points through the State's Climate Smart Communities program. No town in Columbia County has achieved this status. To that end, the Task Force has formed sub-groups to explore composting, a hazard plan, an inventory of greenhouse gasses, and social media strategies to highlight the town's environmental issues and successes.

David gave a brief update on the Corkscrew Rail Trail's parcel on Lover's Lane. An adjoining parcel on Tilden Lane may be available due to foreclosure and Tistrya has suggested it might be a place to locate charging stations for electric cars. The CAC agreed that the location seems out of the way and hoped a more suitable location can be found.

Peg brought up the Flood Plain Study, which hasn't been done by FEMA since the 1980s. A study is supposed to be done every 10 years. We will have to consult the Land Use Office as to whether one has been or will be scheduled. David will reach out to Cissy.

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Paul Rix reported on the PFOA contamination issue at the abandoned town landfill. A problem with NYSDEC's first test required that wells be retested. Of the 10 wells within a half mile of the landfill needing tests, 9 property owners agreed. If wells furthest from the landfill are contaminated, wells further out will need to be tested. It is estimated that contaminants travel through the soil at 58 feet per year and may have reached the Wyomanock by now. The Town received \$650,000 from the County for the landfill cleanup, which has remained in the town's bank account since Supervisor Mike Benson negotiated the 50/50 split. While we have no reliable estimate of the cost for capping the landfill, the work could now cost upwards of \$2 million.

David mentioned that the CAC Roundtable has called for video updates from the various towns, to be aired on June 17 as a virtual meeting. Peg volunteered to film the video. We may be able to provide a link to the video as our contribution to the next town newsletter.

A discussion of 2020 CAC goals ensued. David spoke about proposing cool ravines as a first Critical Environmental Area for the town. These ravines are on private property but worth identifying and bringing to the attention of land use decision makers. We will wait until the Town Board meets again in person to present our justification. Also, the interactive online scenic resources inventory we contemplate awaits a time when Sharon Powers and David can meet again in person. Meanwhile, the Water Study led by Peg and Paul has taken a back seat to the issues surrounding the abandoned town landfill.

Regarding Planning Board proposals, the CAC should have been copied with plans for the proposed laundromat. Does the current septic system have enough capacity to handle the water? The proposal's status before the Planning Board is not clear.

Cynthia updated the CAC on the Zoning Rewrite Committee. Her proposed changes to agriculture definitions, bringing them in line with NYS Ag & Markets definitions, were approved by the ZRC. Other zoning changes were also approved but next need a Public Hearing before the Town Board can consider them. David pointed out that regulation of Short Term Rentals has been a focus for the committee.

The Comprehensive Plan Update Committee has extended the response deadline for its community survey. The committee had planned to hire a consultant but the required RFP has been postponed due to funding concerns. Furthermore, grants that had been promised to help cover the costs have been rescinded due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The next CAC monthly meeting will be on Monday, July 13, 2020, at 6:30 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Bob Gilson