

Town of Saugerties

Conservation Advisory Commission

Meeting minutes for January 13th, 2011

Present: B. Sawchuk; J. Randall; M. Wrolsen; E. Shafer; L. Thornton; G. Marzec; and Rob McEwen (from the Town of Red Hook)

Absent: Sandra Thorpe; J. Barbour

Convened: 7:15 pm, Saugerties Town Hall.

- This meeting consisted of an informational presentation by Rob McEwen of the Town of Red Hook. Mr. McEwen has been a proponent of open space in Red Hook and was asked by B. Sawchuk to provide information on the process to the CAC.
 - o The Agriculture and Open Space Committee of the Town of Red Hook initially made a recommendation to the town board.
 - The financial argument finally won over the town board. The convincing factor was the cost of services that would be required with additional developments as compared to conserving open space.
 - o They used a permission referendum whereby a petition including 5% of the voters in the town is required to put a resolution to a public vote. If this doesn't occur within a set period, then the resolution is passed. This actually helped when it was challenged and became a public referendum.
 - o Their program is a matching fund and they look for a 50% match when trying to purchase development rights.
 - o For Saugerties, Mr. McEwen recommended holding a couple of public forums which would provide information on the process. He suggested that he would be willing to attend. Scenic Hudson, and perhaps other local land trusts should also be invited as speakers.
 - o Agriculture was not the only open space that Red Hook considered. They needed conservation plans similar to Clifton Park.
 - Clifton Park has an option for "opting-in" for a period of 8 to 15 years or more. This helps the land owner by lowering taxes during the opt-in period due to devaluation of the property.
 - Red Hook also wants to centralize business and housing to areas contiguous with the existing village.
 - o Red Hook currently has 12 properties in the program.
 - o They have a community preservation fund that is financed through real estate transaction fees. This fee is based upon a 2% levy on houses above the median home price in Red Hook.
 - o The initial campaign cost \$40,000. Since the referendum passed, they have raised \$0.5 million.
 - o Red Hook is also using an incentive zoning fund where a developer pays a fee and in exchange, gets a higher density when a development is placed in a designated area.
 - o They have a sliding scale whereby large properties (e.g. farms) that have a conservation easement can build one home for each 40 acres. These have to be clustered and not randomly developed.

- Red Hook has over 3000 acres protected, of which over 2000 acres are farmland.
- Mr. McEwen provided several handouts and examples of the brochures used to promote the referendum.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.