

# **Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission**

October 17, 2024 Zoom Video Conferencing

## **MINUTES**

### **CLIMATE SMART TASK FORCE 5:00 pm Start**

Present: Skip Arthur, Mary O'Donnell, Mike Harkavy, Ken Goldberg, Elizabeth Shafer, Stephen Shafer, Carole Furman, Kathleen Gray, Mary McNamara, Bill Barr, Nicole Roskos, Adriana Beltrani (Senior Planner Town of Saugerties)

### **Approval of September 25, 2024 Minutes**

The previous meeting minutes were reviewed and approved with minor corrections.

### **Questions and discussion of Winston Farm DGEIS**

Skip introduced Adriana to address the questions submitted about the Winston Farm project.

Adriana provided an in-depth explanation of the SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) process:

The Preliminary Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) was submitted on August 16, 2024, for the Winston Farm Plan Development District. The town board is tasked with determining if the DGEIS is complete for public review. The process involves:

Initial Review Timeline: The town has 45 days to review the DGEIS but can request extensions with mutual consent. Two extensions were granted for this project, extending the deadline to November 4, 2024.

Various experts and firms are reviewing the DGEIS:

- Nelson Pope Voorhis: Covers ecology, landscape design, and economics.
- Bernier and Larios: Focuses on site and civil engineering.
- Collier's Engineering: Handles traffic review.
- H2M Associates: Reviews groundwater quality and quantity.

Adriana outlined the deficiencies in the submitted DGEIS:

Baseline Data: Lacks clear and consistent baseline information, making it difficult to evaluate impacts or alternatives.

Alternatives Analysis: Project alternatives, including No Action and Reduced Density, were inadequately detailed. For example:

The LEED Neighborhood Development alternative lacked explanation of how the project aligns with LEED principles.

The DGEIS failed to provide a clear map or rationale for reasonable worst-case scenarios.

Clarity for Public Understanding: SEQRA requires the document to be accessible and understandable for the public, which it currently is not. Technical details cannot be buried in appendices without proper summarization in the main text.

Mary O'Donnell asked about the role of the DEC Office of Climate change in the process. Adriana confirmed DEC's involvement but will verify if their Office of Climate Change is included. NYSERDA is not currently listed as an involved agency because it does not fund or permit the project. However, their input could still be sought during the public comment period.

Mary highlighted the town's designation as a Clean Energy Community and emphasizes the need to align the project with clean energy goals and stressed the importance of considering climate change impacts and compliance with the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Skip raised questions about the repeated back-and-forth exchanges between the town and the project sponsor. Adriana explained that while the town has strict timelines for review, the sponsor has no set timeline to respond to requested revisions.

To streamline the process, the town is organizing workshops where their experts can meet directly with the sponsor's team to clarify expectations and avoid miscommunication.

Adriana noted that certain key details were missing from the DGEIS, such as:

**Project Phasing and Milestones:** The timeline for infrastructure development (e.g., roadways, wastewater systems) and the sequence of sub-area buildouts.

**Substantive Analysis:** Specific methodologies for alternatives and their impacts were either unclear or absent, leaving the document incomplete.

Mike Harkavy inquired about the 12 alternatives the sponsor was asked to submit. Adriana stated that most alternatives lacked sufficient detail to evaluate impacts effectively. Even minimal additions, such as a few paragraphs of context, would have improved the submission.

Mary O'Donnell stressed the importance of considering climate change impacts and ensuring compliance with clean energy programs. Adriana reassured her that these aspects will be addressed during the public comment period.

The group concluded with a plan for continued engagement:

Mary O'Donnell offered to connect with NYSERDA representatives to ensure their input is included in the review.

Skip thanked Adriana for her insights and emphasizes the importance of the upcoming workshops to resolve outstanding issues.

### **Town Liaison Report**

Zach was not present.

### **Announcements**

Kathleen announced that the Town Supervisor had signed the contract for the two new electric vehicles. Mary O'Donnell volunteered to draft the press release for when the trucks are delivered.

### **Adjournment**

Mary moved with Carole seconding. The motion passed.

Adjournment at 7:40 pm

*Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary*