

Conservation Advisory Commission

Thursday, July 16, 2020

Via Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Vernon Benjamin, Carole Furman, Patti Kelly, Mary McNamara Tashjian Susan Murphy, Mary O'Donnell, Nicole Roskos, Elizabeth Shafer, Leslie Surprenant, Steve Wehr, Mary Anne Wrolsen. Town Board Liaison John Schoonmaker. Guests: Tim Guinee, Climate Reality Project. Steven Shafer, Mary McNamara Tashjian

Meeting convened via Zoom, Mary O'Donnell presiding.

I CLIMATE SMART TASK FORCE

Presentation by Tim Guinee on Climate Reality Project, 100% Committed Campaign

Tim Guinee explained the 100% Committed Campaign pledge saying that it asks a municipality to pledge to switch to 100% renewable energy sources for all municipal buildings, excluding heating, cooling and transportation by 2030. As of three days ago, signees included 118 businesses, a number of municipalities, and Ulster County for all its municipal buildings.

QUESTIONS Will we be asked to promote any legislation? No. Is the organization a 501C3? Yes.

What if the town takes the pledge and doesn't make the goal? The only consequence would be that the town logo would be removed from the Climate Reality Project materials, and the project's logo would be removed from town material. Will residences be included? No, this pledge is just for the town's municipal buildings, not residences or businesses (any of them can sign on, voluntarily). Will this cover the village also? No, since it's a separate government they would have to sign on for themselves.

DISCUSSION Mary noted that if the town agrees to take the pledge, the Climate Action Plan (CAP) could be amended to include this 100% pledge. Vernon said this would be an advancement for the entire region, an admirable way to publicize ourselves.

The project has a narrow focus: just electricity generation (not methane reduction, tree planting, etc.).

Mary asked what percentage are we at now in our town buildings. Will there be any assistance in implementing the goal of the campaign? Tim's answer: Presume the solar panels at the Transfer Station must tell how much energy we're producing, and there will be records to show how much the municipal buildings are using. At the Ashokan Center they are producing 108% more electricity than they need, and they have a display that shows how much they are producing. Opportunity for such a display in our Town Hall? Patti noted that every year the inventory needs to be updated, now to be updated with 2020 numbers. Central Hudson (CH) has to play along; last year they did a month-by-month dump for us on all our accounts. The departments will give us numbers on diesel, gas, etc. but the data on electricity comes from CH. This is supposed to happen automatically. As our solar panels start to pay off, the town will be able to show it's spending less money. CH is getting in the way of getting more solar fields going. Do we have to produce all the alternative source electricity ourselves? No, we can purchase from other producers. Vernon noted that joining the 100% campaign could advance our CAP goals.

Motion Mary moved to recommend that the Town Board join the 100% Campaign; Patti seconded. All in favor.

Citizens Climate Lobby Re: Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (EICDA)

Steven Shafer, who has been working on this for a year, joined the meeting. He thinks the bill has a lot of good ideas in it, but has a serious reservation that the rise in the price of fossil fuels will be seen as

harmful to farmers. He is therefore ambivalent. Suggests it isn't something that the CAC or even a regional commission needs to get involved with because we're involved with so many other things. The only bill that Big Ag will look at is the Growing Climate Solutions Act. Mary recalled that a couple of years ago we voted not to endorse any federal legislation, John noted that this kind of matter would be more for the Town Board. Vernon noted that it is a prime directive of the committee to make recommendations to the Town Board. We as individuals are free to talk to the Town Board about any legislation, any time. Mary quoted from the legislation that established the CAC in 1972 to clarify the role of the CAC. "Its duties are to survey and monitor area natural resources and environmental conditions. It makes recommendations to the Town Board regarding conservation and protection of our natural resources and the environment." She pointed out that we don't have the resources to research legislation, and she would not be comfortable making recommendations to the Town Board without thorough background knowledge of the issues. No recommendation will be made regarding this Act. No motion or vote was deemed to be necessary.

Updates on EVs, Central Hudson and Green Group Purchasing Program

ELECTRIC VEHICLES /BATTERIES Steve talked about EVs. Really interesting things are coming along. At Battery Day in September, there is going to be an announcement of a battery that will last one million miles and is priced affordably. Price continues to drop. Once the price drops to around \$100 per kWh it will be possible to build and sell an EV competitively. He's waiting to be able to start his charging classes at the library. Due to Covid19, Sawyer Car Show was cancelled, his biggest opportunity to show EVs.

CENTRAL HUDSON Patti said she sent the breakdown from Central Hudson of the categories of alternative energy sources that are available: hydro, solar, biomass. The last one from 1996 was almost the same as the current one. No coal, but NPG, biomass and nuclear. This is why we don't want people to "opt out," because it will bring them to non-renewable sources. Is CH dragging their feet on allowing solar projects in their area? Perhaps they are not accommodating solar as best they could on allowing connections to the grid. That would be the kind of thing for a memorializing resolution by the Town Board. Patti called the Director of Marketing, John Maserjian. She suggested that he be invited to a task force meeting to explain what CH what is going to do to fix this. The one thing we can do as a task force is to hold their feet to the fire. Some of the planned solar farms have had to downsize because CH could not carry the load. Carole said that Total Tennis was not able to do their solar array for the same reason. Vernon noted that Geronimo only signed contracts last month. The processes takes a lot of time. Doug Myer was not able to hook up, had to go to the Town of Ulster.

Patti suggested we get word to the governor that we are doing our best but are being held up by CH. Vernon suggested the Public Service Commission (PSC) might lend a sympathetic ear. Should the letter come from the Task Force or the town? Steve said he would be uncomfortable with having a CH rep come to our meeting, because we don't have enough info to refute whatever arguments he might use. Suggests that first, we have Geronimo and East Light come and give reports on their status and what's holding them up. There was general agreement that this is a good idea.

TO DO: Vernon will contact Geronimo to get its perspective on the matter.

Mary suggests we digest these ideas over the next week or so, decide how we're going to address this problem.

GROUP PURCHASING PROGRAM Mary sent info on Group Purchasing Program initiated by Sustainable Hudson Valley. She asks us to e-mail blast it to all friends and associates.

The Task Force portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

II REGULAR CAC BUSINESS 7:04 pm

Present – Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Leslie Surprenant, Mary Anne Wrolsen, Carole Furman, Mary McNamara, Town Board Liaison John Schoonmaker, Special Operations Coordinator Vernon Benjamin. Assistant Special Operations Coordinator Kathleen Gray

Approval of Minutes May 21 and June 18 meeting minutes approved.

Esopus Creek Updates – Leslie Surprenant reported she completed the aquatic vegetation survey proposed in her monitoring plan presented to the CAC for approval at the June CAC meeting. The survey took two full days to complete and she will submit a draft report to the CAC for review. She recommended purchasing a book on aquatic plant identification to help in future monitoring surveys. CAC approved the purchase.

Aquatic Vegetation Harvesting CAC expressed concern that a schedule or plan for vegetation harvesting using the mechanical harvester has not been developed. John Schoonmaker will discuss with Town Board.

Actions

- Complete and submit draft report on vegetation sampling to CAC for review – Leslie Surprenant
- Purchase aquatic plant identification book and submit receipt for reimbursement – Leslie Surprenant
- Address harvester schedule / planning with Town Board – John Schoonmaker

Storm water / MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Report Mary McNamara informed the commission about the annual MS4 Report prepared by the town. The Storm Water Management Program Plan 2019 with digital maps can be found

at <https://townsaugerties.digitaltowpath.org:10234/content/Generic/View/14:field=documents;/content/Documents/File/1717.pdf>, A discussion on what role the CAC could have in outreach and education took place. Flyers about storm water prepared by the Ulster County Soil and Water District are available at Town Hall. The MS4 Report asks for documentation regarding public outreach. Discussion of storm water-related topics at CAC meetings can be part of the outreach documentation submitted in the MS4 Report.

Watershed Assessment Mary M. reported that watershed Assessment has been added to the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Pledge Element 7 (PE 7) and it was suggested that the task force explore obtaining CSC points for this PE 7 Action.

Town Board Report - John reported that the town's vehicle use policy which includes vehicle idling has been approved.

Planning Board Report: Carole reported that four solar plans have been approved; one is under review. The only completed facility is at the town's former landfill site.

Adjourn: 8:00 p.m.