

Conservation Advisory Commission

August 20, 2020

Via Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Mike Harkavy, Susan Murphy, Skip Arthur, Elizabeth Shafer, Leslie Surprenant, Mary O'Donnell, Nicole Roskos, Carole Furman, Vernon Benjamin, Kathleen Gray, Steve Wehr, Mary Ann Wrolsen

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mary O'Donnell.

I CLIMATE SMART TASK FORCE

Climate Reality Project Report by Vernon:

The training ran over 9 days; 11,000 people participated. It opened with the first full view of Earth, taken in April 1972 from Apollo 11; but the image is a lie because we are spewing 152 million tons of global warming carbon dioxide (CO₂) every 24 hours. The biggest sources are all manmade. The human population is a carbon-making machine, and we all participate. Solar radiation passes through the atmosphere; most is absorbed by the ocean, some is trapped by the atmosphere and warms it. As the CO₂ concentration increases, more solar radiation is trapped. The largest source is burning fossil fuels; in 2019, 10 billion tons were burned. The global surface temperature is 1 degree C hotter than it was 40 years ago. The more the CO₂ concentration grows the hotter it gets. The polar caps melt, releasing water into the ocean. The hotter it is, the more evaporation from the land, brewing rain bombs and micro storms. Such a storm knocked out the internet a few days ago. Bangladesh has lost 1/3 of its land. The Army Corps of Engineers is focusing on the downstate area rather than our area. The training explained how the trade winds produce these mega-storms. In our area, east from Kansas up to NH we have relatively temperate weather but it will change. Hotter years typically have more fires. We now have approximately 800 extreme weather events per year worldwide, and this will only increase. In 2014 the US Dept. of Defense predicted food & water shortages, pandemics, refugees. (Elizabeth asked whether there was any mention of even a small nuclear event causing soot in the air to produce famines. No, nuclear events were not included in the training. Carl Sagan made the first computer model of global climate change in the 1980s. The cost of carbon is the #1 threat to the global economy: political instability, floods, fires, mud slides, melting glaciers, ecosystem loss, infectious diseases, famine, etc. Can we change? Yes - the solutions are already here: wind, solar, renewables. The training didn't discuss small ways such as rooftop solar.

Vernon said he talked with about 150 people during the course of the training, all over the world. Third world countries are moving ahead more quickly because they don't have power wire transmission, so they are developing non-centralized systems.

In 2002 the projected growth of solar was 1 gig per year; this has been exceeded by a factor of 17. Meanwhile the cost of solar has dramatically reduced. England just came out with a solar cell that produces 1/3 more electricity than anything else on the market. Solar means jobs: 15 million at first, then 5 million permanent jobs. By focusing on green power we can eliminate climate change and build a new society. The governor will have no choice but to sign the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act (S2126). Batteries: global cumulative storage capacity is growing, and by 2025 will increase dramatically. The new Tesla tractor semi-truck competes with diesel and enviro-diesel (which doesn't change emissions and there's not enough vegetable oil to keep up). It gets 2000 miles on a charge vs. 680-700 miles per tank of diesel.

Lighting: LEDS will be 95% of the total lighting market by 2025.

Electric Vehicle (EV) markets & charging stations: EVs are getting cheaper. By 2025 there will be 50 manufacturers. The Democratic National Convention changed the platform by calling for an end to fossil fuels night before last. With the Paris Agreement, every nation in the world agreed to reduce carbon emissions. The USA can't legally withdraw until after the 2020 presidential election. We can save the beauty and mystery of our precious planet. Make The World Beautiful Again! Vernon is going to see about getting the slide show on our website and Channel 23.

EV Ambassador Program and Charging Station Event.

Steve has been talking with Melissa Everett and Sustainable Hudson Valley about running a demo program for Drive Electric Week, which starts on September 26. On that date he'll be at a Drive Electric event in Kingston from 10:00am to noon or 1:00pm, and he would like to do an EV charging class at the Saugerties Senior Center from 3:00 to 4:30pm, using the charger there. If the task force agrees, we can start our marketing outreach. Would like to Zoom it also, for a wider audience. He has asked for help from Sustainable HV with the camera, etc. Plans to show a 45-minute power point presentation on charging, then walk outside. The whole program should run about an hour, maybe 15 or 20 minutes more.

On September 27 Sustainable HV will be doing a virtual Drive Electric Week with people showing videos of their EVs.

Steve still wants to work with SHV on a zoom call-in, "Ask an EV driver."

There are now 5 EV charging stations in Saugerties: at the library, the tennis courts, the Senior Center, the Ice Arena and the Town Hall. The town has suspended support for new charging stations at this time, probably because of budget uncertainty.

Carole asked how do you create a connection from a solar panel to a charging station. Steve recommended consulting an electrician. A 110 outlet will charge overnight; a 240 will double that rate. Home chargers run off a 40 or 50 amp breaker, draw about 7 kW (nothing else draws this much). Help needed in advance of the program, to spread the word. Mary Ann, Nicole, Carole and Skip said they will help with flyers. Next week Steve will start sending flyers physical & digital. He doesn't think he needs any volunteers for the event. He will have another EV driver to help and handle the camera. This plan is contingent on the Town allowing 20 or 25 people at an in-person event. Backup plan: chairs outside in the parking lot (up to 50 people outside now ok). John Schoonmaker will follow up about this, and let Mary and Steve know.

Trees in Trouble Nicole reported on a webinar on Trees in Trouble by the Carey Institute of Ecosystem Studies about invasive pest problems in the US. Since 1850, 450 types of invasive pests caused by international trade have come in on ships in pallets, crates or exotic plants. In the Northeast: gypsy moths (oaks), spotted lantern fly (fruit trees and ailanthus), elm ash borer (ash), wooly adelgid (eastern hemlocks), Asian longhorn beetle (maples). These pests affect the whole ecosystem: air and water quality (runoff), carbon sequestration, biodiversity, bird population decrease, streams warm, fish die. The cost of all this is borne by local governments and homeowners. Hardest hit is the Northeast, New York State #1 in the whole country.

The Carey Institute is working on 5 policy initiatives: restrict imports; switch to pest-free packaging materials; tighter enforcement and rapid response; work with trading partners to improve pest prevention programs; restrict the importation of live plants in the same genera as native woody plants in the US. Opponents to these changes are pallet manufacturers and international traders. There have been some successes: customs and border inspection has increased inspection of wood packaging; crates are being treated with heat or methyl bromide and stamped but illegal stamps are being used. Representative Delgado and John Fasco both support a farm bill with comprehensive policies on solutions. The US Dept. of Agriculture is having weekly meetings on reducing pests.

What can we do: • Buy native plants, not exotics. • Don't move firewood. • Contact your congress people and environmental organizations regarding this priority. The Nature Conservancy has a small program. • Support the Carey Institute. • Think about how the CAC can take some action.

40% of hardwood production in the USA is to make pallets.

Leslie said she has an e-mail from Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership, info on "don't move firewood."

Question: Did they offer any ways to combat these pests? Every tree is treated differently. You can report them to your Coop Extension. Vern Rist is an arborist who treats trees for pests (using nicotinoids). We may be able to save hemlocks by spraying with neem oil.

Mary suggested that Nicole could record this presentation and get it on Ch 23. Nicole said that the Carey Institute has an excellent hour-long presentation.

Central Hudson Mike commented that Central Hudson is limited in its ability to accommodate alternative energy sources because it's working with an archaic grid. He asked a member of the Public Service Commission who said you can't place the blame on CH or providers, and he hasn't heard complaints from solar providers; the grid can't handle increased input (due to transformers?) This is a climate change issue because it is delaying our ability to increase alternative energy sources.

II REGULAR CAC BUSINESS 7:21 pm

Present: Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Leslie Surprenant, Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Maryanne Wrolsen, Town Board Liaison John Schoonmaker, Special Operations Coordinator Vernon Benjamin Assistant Special Operations Coordinator Kathleen Gray, Carol Furman., Nicole Roskos, Mary McNamara

Approval of Minutes - July meeting minutes approval deferred to September due to need for clarified notes on MS4 (municipal sewage, storm water system) notes.

Action: Mary O. summarize Mary McNamara's notes and send to Leslie Surprenant for minutes

Esopus Creek Updates – Leslie Surprenant's completed aquatic vegetation survey report was accepted by CAC. Leslie showed maps of Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed collection points. CAC recommended an Executive Summary be completed and presented to the town with the report. CAC discussed what entities should receive the report. Data should be reported to NYS Invasive Species Database. Town of Saugerties will purchase aquatic plant identification book as recommended to help in future monitoring surveys.

John Schoonmaker updated the CAC on the status of the vegetation harvester operations. The harvester has not been employed many days and has broken down three times. Village will hire 2 part time seasonal employees to operate the harvester. The town will contribute \$12,600 in 2021 to support the harvesting operations.

CAC discussed the need for a DEC permit to conduct the harvesting. A General Permit (GP-0-15-005) is likely needed due to the Esopus Creek in the Town of Saugerties is a protected stream and the wetland in the village portion is a regulated freshwater wetland.

CAC discussed whether harvested vegetation can be brought to a sandbar on Esopus Bend Preserve and moved upland for disposal. The ECC has requested a plan and proposal from the CAC for consideration.

CAC discussed the need to have a village representative on the CAC. January starts new appointment period for CAC.

- Action:** Write and submit to CAC for review Executive Summary of report with recommendations summary – Leslie S.
- Action:** Provide report to town, village, Cornell Cooperative Extension, DEC, Catskill PRISM, Lower Hudson PRISM (Partnership/s for Regional Invasive Species Management) – Mary O. and Leslie S. (PRISMs)
- Action:** Present findings to Town Board and Village Board .Leslie Surprenant will participate in Sept. 16 Town Board meeting; Village Board TBA.
- Action:** John S. will follow up with the village.
- Action:** Mary O. will send a letter to the town suggesting it investigate the potential need for General Permit GP-0-15-005.
- Action:** Develop conceptual plan for upland disposal for ECC consideration – Leslie S.

Culvert Assessment Project – Mary O’Donnell reported on a virtual meeting on collaborative effort between Ulster Co Office of the Environment, Cornell Cooperative Extension under a grant from the Hudson River Estuary Program with the goal of developing a report (in spreadsheet form) on culvert condition. Towns of Saugerties, Woodstock, and the Town of Kingston are covered. Need to know if this report can be applied toward Climate Smart Community “Silver” level certification.

Town Board Report - John S. The town is moving forward with a contract with Joule to manage Community Choice Aggregation. John S. will request “privilege of the floor” for Leslie S. to present aquatic vegetation survey results and report recommendations at board’s Sept. 16 meeting.

- Action:** Prepare presentation for the board – Leslie S.

Planning Board Report: Carole F. – 15 projects under consideration; no new solar proposed and one solar project is on hold.

Adjourn: 8:40 p.m.