

## ROUNDTABLE NOTES

### Columbia County CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL Roundtable

June 13, 2013, Trinity United Methodist Church, Greenport

5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Convener: Columbia Land Conservancy

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- Members introduced themselves and the status and/or activities of their CAC's. Copake, Taghkanic, New Lebanon and Hillsdale CAC members attended, as well as residents of Stuyvesant, Hudson and East Nassau.
  - Columbia County now has five CAC's formed and active: Ancram, Copake, Hillsdale, New Lebanon, Taghkanic.
  - Copake's CAC is newly formed and the first meeting was this Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Taghkanic's recently formed CAC has six members.
  - There has been no new activity on a Hudson CAC since Karen Strong and Ellen Jouret-Epstein attended a Common Council Meeting last summer to discuss one.
  - Stuyvesant has legislation to create a CAC but there has not yet been sufficient support from the town board to appoint members.
  - Chatham also has adopted legislation, but not yet appointed a CAC. Gallatin has legislation and at least one member appointed.
  - Ken York, East Nassau, is interested in creating a Stockport Creek watershed alliance modeled on the Hoosic River Watershed Alliance model.
  - David Farren (New Lebanon) just attended an annual meeting of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions, held at NYSDEC. The organization is unaware of recent CAC formation in Columbia County
- Our guest speaker was Sarah Imboden, member of the Conservation Advisory Council in the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County.
  - The Red Hook CAC was formed in 1972, among the first to be formed. Their members have expertise of various kinds. There is a paid secretary, as for all town committees.

Their early work was rooted in farmland protection, and that dominated the

activities in the '70's. That work grew into a larger effort that has been successful in Red Hook.

The CAC became involved with recycling/solid waste management in the 1980's. A volunteer-run recycling center was formed, which the town took over after a decade. The CAC is still involved with recycling and waste management issues.

They also initiated town tree planting early on -- a popular, uncontroversial issue. An independent town tree committee formed eventually and obtained the town's Tree City designation. Similarly the town's trail committee developed out of the CAC's work on trails. They had been successful in obtaining a number of small grants for that work.

The CAC often fields or vets issues first and then decide if and how they should be brought to the town board. And Sarah advised CAC's to "pick your issues." If a town board opposes an activity, choose another issue.

Red Hook's CAC does comment on planning board and zoning board matters, but the initiative is theirs – they have gotten themselves on the "minutes list" to receive planning board meeting minutes; they speak at public hearings. The boards occasionally will request help.

The CAC spearheaded getting the Climate Smart Community designation for the town, which also provides a kind of framework for the CAC's work. They did a Natural Resource Inventory, but it is many years old now.

- In response to a question, Gretchen Stevens explained the process for designating a Critical Environmental Area. The recommendation must first be accepted by the municipality, and then it is taken to NYSDEC.
- A question arose about whether Columbia County still collects pharmaceuticals. This is an issue that the County Environmental Management Council could pursue. There is room for much more interaction between the EMC and county CAC's.

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