

Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair
Paul Duernberger
Mary King
Gretchen Stevens

MINUTES CAC MEETING, 22 FEBRUARY 2024

The meeting was convened at 7:04 pm at the Town Hall. All members were present. Jamie Carano attended as the Town Board liaison.

Old Business

Approval of Minutes

The January 2023 minutes had been previously approved via email.

Community forest grant

David has found that land costs are high and there are few parcels on the market. He has been looking for “vacant” land (with no residences or other development) and identifying the owners and finding whether those parcels were recently on the market. Gretchen will present the idea to the Town Board at their March meeting to see if they are in favor of pursuing a Community Forest project. If so, the project to find a suitable site with a willing landowners, obtain one or more grants, and purchasing the land would probably take two or more years. (Jamie mentioned the Community Forest idea to the Town Board at the January meeting.) Gretchen will also see if the CLC might be interested in collaborating on such a project.

We discussed the town-owned parcel along the eastern town border. The parcel is surrounded on three sites by land belonging to Thyberg. Is there any possibility of putting a trail through the Thyberg land? (Access only from Massachusetts would be far from ideal.)

Comp Plan/Zoning Revisions

Gretchen will ask the Town Board to initiate a project to update the Comprehensive Plan and the local code and appoint an advisory committee for that purpose. Will explain that grants are available from the NYS Department of State and the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program to fund the hiring of consultants to help with those efforts.

Roe Jan Park Steering Committee

There are now 6-7 members of the newly-formed Roe Jan Park Steering Committee, and the first organizational meeting will be via Zoom tomorrow (23 February). Jamie says that the Hillsdale Town Board wants promoting the park to be part of the steering committee’s mission.

Environmental Management Council

Mary missed the recent EMC meeting, so has nothing to report.

CAC web page

The CAC webpage now has the revised content prepared by David.

Roe Jan Library Repair Clinic

When we asked to donate some of the CAC's budget to the Roe Jan Library to help cover costs for the Repair Clinic, we learned from the Town Board that the town cannot give charitable contributions.

Climate Smart Task Force/Clean Energy Committee Update

A public survey about hazard mitigation is underway, administered by the Columbia County Climate Smart Task Force.

Audrey Kropp (Cornell Cooperative Extension) advises that Silver certification is probably beyond the reach of a small town like Hillsdale; it is designed for larger communities with more financial resources.

If Hillsdale makes progress on some clean energy projects we will qualify for \$100K worth of grants for further clean energy projects.

New Business

Park Improvements

Jamie reported that the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation offers capital grants for park improvements. The current grant cycle opens in May and ends in early July. There may be opportunities for establishing connections between the Roe Jan Park and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

Events

Jamie reported that the Copake CAC is planning an Earth Day event at the Copake Grange on plastics, with talks by someone from Beyond Plastics and by Brian Boom, a CAC member who is a botanist with the New York Botanical Garden.

The next Taghkanic Talks, 28 February, will be on the community solar program, heat pumps, and other clean energy programs.

The NYSDEC's annual spring seedling sale is underway through 10 May.

CAC meetings via Zoom

Jamie said that, under the public meetings law, if we decide to meet via Zoom, the meeting must be recorded and posted. The town has maxed out its recording time for the time being and recordings would be difficult to post.

New York Planning Federation Annual Meeting

Jamie will attend the meeting on April 7-9, and invites CAC to attend also.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09pm.

(see over)

Action Items

Gretchen:

- Talk to the Town Board about the Comprehensive Plan/zoning revisions and the Community Forest idea.
- Ask the Columbia Land Conservancy if they are interested in collaborating on a Community Forest project.

Held over items:

Mary:

- ask EMC chair about accessibility of EMC minutes on webpage
- compose map of potential problem areas for water testing in the hamlet