

## Environmental Board January 20, 2010

Members Present: Jennifer Barrows, Susan Holland, Kate Landi, Catherine Quick, Don Cole,  
Emily Pereira, Chair; Gloria VanVliet, Town Board Liaison

Guests: John McAuley, Bob Hare, Mrs. Hare, John Quick, Dan Shapley, Dave Murray

Meeting called to order 7:04 PM by Chairman Emily Pereira.

### Membership:

Emily addressed the change of membership in that two enthusiastic committed members, Dan Shapley and Dave Murray were not reappointed. She was surprised and quite taken back by this move because they both helped bring the board back to life. Emily felt that she would like to further discuss the issue with Gloria hoping that she may share some insight on the Town Board's reason for not reappointing Dan and Dave.

Catherine stated that it should be on record that the members of the 2009 Environmental Board are all surprised and are concerned about what this means. We are very disappointed. Every single member of this board has volunteered to serve because they felt that they have special skills and knowledge regarding environmental issues. Every member who has participated did so with the most sincere desire to share their knowledge to help the town understand environmental issues, be a better place; and as in the case with the issues that Dave and Dan have been working, quite possibly save the town a significant amount of money.

We are also concerned with the message the Town Board is sending not only to the rest of the Environmental Board but the other volunteer boards as well. Two people that sincerely worked very hard on some issues that certainly could benefit the town, were dismissed and their work was minimized and ignored by the Town Board. The entire Environmental Board strongly supported and still supports Dan and Dave on their research and suggestions for the town. Every member of the Environmental Board contributed quite a few hours of work on the lighting survey.

I am hurt, I am sure Dan and Dave are hurt and I feel like this action was like a slap in the face to the entire Environmental Board. We really need some clarification from the Town Board as to the reasons that they seemed to ignore all of this work. We are concerned and are hurt and upset. We need to speak to Gloria and perhaps she will be able to give us some clarification as to the reasons for this action. We don't understand this. Dave's work on the street lighting survey has been the subject of some of the sharing that I do when I attend the County Environmental Management Council. People ask me about the progress Dave has been making. He has gotten much further with Central Hudson than other towns that have tried to do similar projects. He did get a Central Hudson official to commit to replacing up to 5% per year of any fixtures we choose. We did as a group express that we certainly would like the energy wasting fixtures and bulbs to be replaced. They have already begun working on that. It is not in Central Hudson's best financial interest to do that. The Town of Marlboro has tried to do something similar and was given the runaround by Central Hudson. They abandoned the project. Does anyone else have anything to say about this?

Jennifer Barrows said that she agrees with everything that was just said. She is concerned about getting the Natural Resource Inventory and Mapping projects moving along. She expressed that she thought the project was just about ready to really get started. She is hoping the town board will be committed to that project. Grant money might be available, but we need the support and confidence of the town board in order for that to move forward. Does this change have an effect on that project?

Gloria entered and the board introduced themselves. She explained that she had a conflict and that this time was difficult.

Emily said that we were just speaking about the town board's decision not to reappoint Dan and Dave for another term on the Environmental Board. What does that mean to the board? Dan and Dave are two great members of the Board. They have been willing to give of their own time for projects for the board. They share many ideas with the board. Both of them have great project commitment. They both have brought the board back to life. They attend our meetings and other events. They both participate and are willing to work. We are surprised and taken back by all of this. Would you be willing to help us understand this?

Gloria said that the email requesting who should be reappointed to the Environmental Board was received at 3:42 PM on December 31 when no one was there. There had been no communication from your board as to who wanted to remain on the board and who did not. We had two people that were interested and possibly more. We chose the first two names and would replace them. Their terms had ended. It was not like we just took them off the board. It was the end of their term. We wanted to replace them with two other people that are definitely interested and give two other people a chance to participate

Catherine asked about the projects that they had started. They both presented them at the sharing meeting of the Ulster County Environmental Management Council in November. People have asked about them and how their projects are coming along quite frequently.

Gloria said that she has a problem with the minutes of this board. The last minutes that are in the Town Clerk's office are for March 2008. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to have the minutes in the town clerk's possession within two weeks of the meeting. All other boards make sure their minutes are presented to the town clerk within two weeks of the meeting. We are going through all of the minutes of all of the meetings as there is an audit coming up and they need to have all minutes available. We are required to have all of these minutes. This lack of minutes has made communication difficult. I did not know much about this Natural Resource Inventory Mapping you have been talking about. I did know that Dan came to the Town Board meeting in February, with some of the things he has been working on regarding the transfer station. There has been a lack of communication. The Town Board should be aware of what you are working on and say yes we are in favor of it or no we are not in favor of it. You are an Advisory Board. I wonder how far you are going and maybe the TB should be more involved in some of the items you have chosen. They know you do the sapling give away and I think that is great.

I know Dave has spent a lot of time on the lighting survey which had a lot of good but some negative parts, people were not happy with the idea of removing some fixtures. The replacement is going on and that is good. You are in a way going against other boards. It is up to the planning board to monitor development.

Emily replied that it is not our vision to go against other boards. Deb was our liaison and we thought that she was reporting our activities to the Town Board.

Gloria said that she not sure everything was communicated. It was even more difficult not having minutes available to refer to.

Emily stated that perhaps we should give a little background as to what our responsibilities are and share our vision as to what our function is and what Dan and Dave have been contributing. When I first joined the board, we had members that did not regularly attend, came in late and did not participate in the discussions. Many did not have a background or knowledge of environmental issues. Some of the people talked but did not do anything.

Gloria stated that we should be in sync with the wishes of the board. I remember that Dan was working on the transfer station issues. Is there going to be a report about this? The Town Board was totally in the dark as to what was going on. The liaison never mentioned this.

Emily said that we know we are an advisory board to the town. The Waterfront Board has been asked been asked to review and comment on proposed building projects. We are trying to find ways to help. We have been doing the sapling give away so that they know we are here. We were trying to find other things we could do that would be helpful to the town and residents. We would like to build a relationship with other boards in the town so that they know we are here and we are willing to help. We are committed, we are smart and we are willing to help. The one of two projects that came out of that is the lighting survey. Saving energy is good for the environment and it also can save the town money. It is a win-win situation. That is what Dave has been spearheading for the last year and a half. The second thing came up when the contract of the transfer station renewal came due. There were questions as to the management of the transfer station. It was a good time to bring up some of these issues that we were concerned about.

Catherine said that when we invited Mr. Dankleemann to come our meeting and explain the operation of the transfer station we asked how we could help support his efforts. We also were not satisfied with his answers to helping facilitate recycling and chipping the yard wastes to mulch for residents as other towns do instead of burning it as Mr. Dankleemann does. We were particularly concerned when the price of metal was so high, why didn't we see any of that money from recycling. We questioned the possibility of implementing a swap shack that is successful in Rosendale and New Paltz.

Gloria said that a swap shack was discussed in years passed and it did not work.

Dan Shapley said that the town board did not comment on the transfer station reports one way or another. He felt that this investigation was in line with one of the things an Advisory Board should do.

Gloria said a lot of work went into that lighting survey. The town board did not tell you to proceed.

Emily said that those are two of the main things we have been working on; to save environmental resources and to save the town money.

Gloria said she would like to learn more about the Natural Resource Inventory that was discussed earlier.

Emily said that we wanted to proceed with mapping as was suggested at the Biodiversity Workshop that many people attended. We need to figure out what we have to do to make these maps that would be helpful to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board. We were disappointed to find that the Town of Esopus is way behind neighboring towns in that we do not have any of this mapping attempted.

Gloria said that over ten years ago the town board was approached regarding this, but they did not want to be involved because they thought it would involve walking on private land, ponds, etc.

Dan Shapley added that it is mostly mapping, and it can be as simply as just mapping where all of the parks are located or where the ponds are located. It can be more complex if the information is available. Much of the information is available on the state level. It is just a matter of putting it all together on a map.

Emily added that Scenic Hudson made a short presentation last month on this and they have some maps and have a lot of this information. We need some help and direction as to how to put this all together so that it will be helpful to the town. They have referred us to Wallkill Valley Land Trust.

Emily also wanted to share some information on the lighting survey. Many of the poles and fixtures that we are being charged for as per the CH maps, do not exist. We also questioned as to the need of some of the fixtures being where they are since there have been other new ones that have been added to take their place.

Dave Murray said that as for the lighting survey, it not just about turning off lights or eliminating fixtures. These fixtures were put in 50-60 years ago when electricity was cheap. Many towns across the country are taking a closer look at their lighting fixtures. Each lighting fixture that has been questioned can be evaluated on its own merit. Safety is the number one concern. Other lighting may have been placed nearby thus eliminating the need for so many fixtures. We are just saying that it needs to be looked at. This was just a small part of it. We did not have much feedback. Everyone was favorable toward the cost cutting part of it. Gloria was not in favor of it because she was concerned about some lights being eliminated. The change-over to more efficient bulbs and fixtures is going to result in huge savings.

Dan Shapley has a draft letter asking to make a presentation to the board. He felt the contract with Dankelmann was weak. He felt the contract should be sent out to bid so that we could get a better deal. When he started looking at other towns in the county he found out that our bag fees are high. We are losing on average about \$3500. per month. Several other towns are running at cost, some at a small loss and one has a small gain. If we could find out what they are doing, and adapt similar practices, we could be saving tens of thousands of dollars a year. Our Recycling rate is lower than other towns. The cost of a ton of recycling is about \$17. per ton. The cost of mixed garbage is \$105. per ton. I think that we could boost our rate of recycling. For all of the recyclables that are thrown away with trash we are paying about \$88. per ton more than we should. One of the things I would like to suggest to the town board is that they spearhead some education for the citizens. Perhaps if there were signs with what it costs the town and the taxpayers on trash bins and on the recycling bins people would get the message.

Gloria said that she believes in recycling and always does it. She also said that the town should be doing something about educating people about it.

Dan said that in the current contract there is something that says the contractor is to carry out education efforts at his own costs. So, it might not cost the town anything to better educate the residents about recycling. I also would like for the board to revisit their hours of operation. They may be able to adjust and increase their hours on the peak days and shorten hours or eliminate hours on days when they are not busy. This is just a suggestion that might help town residents that may benefit from different hours. When people are actually using the transfer station might be worthy of study.

Gloria said that it did not work when we had employees run the transfer station. We have discussed that at other times and decided against it.

Dan suggested that we have a dialogue with other towns that are running it successfully and try to find out what they are doing that seems to work, and what definitely does not work. There is quite a loss of money for the town regarding the transfer station that it is worth a closer look.

Gloria stated that she does agree that this contract does need to be addressed this year..

Dan and Dave asked for suggestions as to how they might address the town board regarding these issues. Should they write letters to the town board?

Gloria suggested that they write a letter and ask for a response. We can read this and digest this and then ask for a representative to come before the board.

Dan said that since he did all of this research he should be able to present this to the board.

Gloria thought that was possible and Emily should go with him to show the environmental board is supporting this effort. We do have some new members on the town board and perhaps it would be good for them to be informed on this issue.

Emily said that she did not want to speak for Dan and Dave and perhaps they should ask about being on the environmental board. Does the town board have any procedure?

Dan said he would like to be on the environmental board. Dave said he would like to be on the environmental board.

Gloria said she was not sure where everything is at but perhaps they should write letters to the town board stating that they are still interested in serving on the environmental board.

Emily said there seems to be one regular opening and perhaps Olivia is no longer interested. She will contact Carl to see if she is still interested or able to serve.

John McAuley was questioning if they shortened the hours, what would the employee do the rest of the day?

Gloria said this could be a part time employee. She also said that this issue of the transfer station needs to be addressed. We need to look at how we can save money for our taxpayers.

Emily also said we need to decide if we want to do the sapling give away this year.

Catherine said that other Environmental Boards are taking a more active role and are being sent out to building sites and being asked to comment. I am not sure we really want to do this, but it is interesting. We would like to be able to help the Planning Board if we can.

Gloria said this is a sore spot. Many people in the county planning departments feel that the environmental boards that are doing that are stepping on their turf. The planning board needs to direct their own decisions and does not want other boards interfering. She suggested that we leave some of this alone.

Jennifer noted that one of the objectives of the mapping projects is to make all of this environmental information readily available to the planning board.

Gloria said this is a good reason to proceed with the mapping.

Catherine said that we really want to help. We do not want to take it over, we just would like to help.

Gloria said that is a good reason that we need to have much better communication. A planning board member could also come to explain things that are going on. You also may attend the planning board meetings.

Emily said that is one of our main goals to be an advisory board and to let the town know that we are here to help.

Robert Hare said he is here representing the Wallkill Valley Land Trust to let the environmental board know that they can help us with our Natural Resource Inventory.

Catherine asked if he has maps?

Robert said yes they have many maps! The Wallkill Valley Land Trust is mainly focused on the watershed area. We deal with easements.

Emily said that maps can be simple and more complex. There is help but they are backlogged. The county has maps and we need to be patient. Soil and water conservation department has a lot of resources for us to use. She also noted that Dave has been very interested in the study of the watershed area. We just need to coordinate the effort!

Don Cole made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Susan Holland. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine L. Quick February 1, 2010