

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF ESOPUS  
ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD  
January 23, 2008**

**Present:** Andy Bicking, Chairman; Carrine Brown; Louise Ferrante; Susan Holland; David Murray (prospective member); Emily Pereira; Catherine Quick; Robert Yerry

**Town Board Liaison:** Debbie Silvestro

Chairman Bicking called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Bicking welcomed the group to the first meeting of 2008. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting and meeting attendees introduced themselves. Bicking noted that Secretary Laura Petit was at a training for County Legislators, and Eli Schloss, a prospective member, was out of town on a long planned trip. Michelle Higgins was also excused due to illness.

The Environmental Board's charter was reviewed by the members. Bicking noted that former Chairman Santiago had done a very good job of instilling morale and focusing the group in the previous year, indicated by four successful education events that took place. The group expressed interest in fulfilling the full scope of their responsibilities as defined in the charter in the coming year. An emphasis for the board will be exploration of opportunities to work cooperatively with other Town Boards and Committees to bring its strong and diverse skill sets to bear and advance the interests of the Town as a whole.

The current status of membership in the board was reviewed. There is one seat available and two candidates for that seat. Bicking indicated that he had spoken with Waterfront Board Chairwoman Marion Zimmer, and that there was interest in seeing if Eli Schloss would serve on the Waterfront Board. Bicking also indicated that his expectation was that all board members attend most meetings. Councilperson Silvestro indicated that the Town Board is exploring making attendance at a minimum number of meetings mandatory for volunteers. Bicking also indicated that each board member will generally be expected to assist at weekend events. Several board members expressed that the personal scheduling needs of their households may make attendance weekend events difficult. The group agreed that if members can not make weekend events, they should contribute their time during the week to help the weekend events happen.

The group discussed the roles and responsibilities of each member. Every member will be expected to do outreach within the community. An emphasis this year will be that each member will have specific tasks delegated to them to work on between meetings. Everyone is expected to contribute to the group and to listen to and respect the diverse opinions and view points of the committee. Andy Bicking's role

as chairman involves organizing meetings, hearing from the group members, delegating tasks, and providing direction and leadership consistent with the charter and the wishes of the Town Board. When Bicking cannot attend meetings, Emily Pereira will serve as stand in chairwoman. Deborah Silvestro serves as Liaison to the Town Board and does not have a vote on the committee, but counsels and advises the group to keep it focused on Town affairs. Laura Petit is the paid Secretary to the board and does not have a vote in the group. Catherine Quick, a member, is the Liaison to the Waterfront Board. Robert Yerry will consider being a Liaison to the County Conservation Advisory Committee and would like to know more about that group before committing. Bicking will follow up and provide the information to Yerry.

The group decided to keep the regular meeting time of the third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m., in the Town Hall. An effort will be made to keep meetings to one hour, and occasionally the meetings will go over.

### **SHORT AND LONG TERM PROJECTS 2008**

Bicking indicated that he had spoken to the board's members over the past month and a half to understand the group's interests and ideas for the coming year. Based on these conversations, he laid out the architecture of a plan for 2008, which included: 1) three to four short term projects, led by a project leader within the committee, 2) one or two long term projects, worked on by the entire group over the course of the year, 3) to fulfill the board's charter, provided that the necessary capacity be present, and that support existed from the majority of the Town Board and the Supervisor.

The group discussed the potential of the following proposed short and long term projects to advance in 2008.

**A) RECYCLING.** There was agreement that recycling, in terms of cost savings and efficiencies at that Town Transfer Station as well as education of town residents about the benefits of recycling, should be at the top of the list. Robert Yerry agreed to report back to the group with recommendations for working with the Transfer Station at the February meeting. He will also invite Recycling Coordinator Curt Dankelman to attend. Susan Holland agreed to report back to the group with recommendations for educating town residents about the benefits of recycling at the February meeting.

**B) SAPLING GIVE AWAY.** Building on the success of last year's sapling give away on Arbor Day, Emily Pereira will report back to the group with a recommendation for how to proceed with a similar event this year.

**C) COST SAVINGS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY.** It was proposed that an energy audit of town buildings (excluding the current Town Hall) could generate recommendations for how the town could cut back on costs while saving energy. Andy Bicking and David Murray will investigate this possibility and report back in February.

Other ideas were discussed, including raising money to do landscaping at the new Town Hall, making an inventory of existing environmental resources in the town, promoting local agriculture, and insuring that new residents are fully aware of the Town's incredible network of parks and river access points. It was noted that member Michelle Higgins was absent due to an illness and should be contacted for other ideas. Bicking will reach out to her.

It was noted that we might learn something from how boards in other towns operate. Louise Ferrante will research this and share her findings in February.

It was also noted that the Town website had not been updated recently. This is an obstacle to the Environmental Board fulfilling its educational mission. Councilperson Silvestro will look in to the issue.

A major next step for the group will be to draft a strategic work plan for the coming year. Bicking will begin work on this and share it at the February meeting. The goal is to get it to the Town Board soon there after for approval.

Several events of interested were noted and read into the minutes, including 1) a January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of stakeholders for the Port Ewen Main Street Grant, 2) an April 19<sup>th</sup> Waterfront Board sponsored cleanup of Sleightsburg Spit and Lighthouse Park, and 3) a possible weeding of water chestnuts in the Hudson River. The Environmental Board will consider co-sponsorship of the April 19<sup>th</sup> event.

## **ADJOURNED**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.