

Town of Esopus
Minutes of the Environmental Board
January 21, 2009

Present: Chairman, Emily Pereira, David Murray, Susan Holland, Dan Shapley, Kathue Quick and pending member Kate Landi.

Town Liasion: Debbie Silvestro

Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m. in the Esopus Town Hall

Membership

Kathie Quick and Andy Bicking have been re-appointed to the board. Emily Pereira is acting chairwoman, pending official acceptance by the town board. There are three vacancies on the board. Kate is awaiting town board confirmation of her application to fill the first. Chris Bowser is also expected to submit an application to fill the second. The town board plans to publish a solicitation in local newspapers announcing open board seats, including for the Environment Board.

There were no minutes or vouchers to approve.

Lighting Survey

Dave reported on the lighting survey, which is now approximately 80% complete.

Central Hudson, by contract with the town, will replace up to 5% of the town's lightbulbs per year, at the town's request. We will recommend the replacement of approximately 100 1950s-era mercury vapor bulbs that use approximately three-times the wattage of more efficient bulbs. Given that we have approximately 400 bulbs in all, it will take five years to swap out all inefficient bulbs. Once that process is complete, Dave estimates a yearly savings of \$10,000. Most of these older bulbs are in Port Ewen, so the savings would be focused on the Port Ewen lighting district.

The goal is to complete the survey by our March meeting, and

complete a draft report to the town board by April. In the meantime, to take advantage of the 5% annual bulb switch-out clause in the contract, Dave will draft an interim letter to the town board outlining which bulbs can be replaced, and updating the board on the progress of the lighting survey. To complete these goals, Dan will continue to canvas Port Ewen, and both Emily and Kathie offered additional help, if they receive instructions from Dave about which areas to canvas.

Deb reported that Steve Aaron, developer of The Birches senior complex, has requested 16 street lights, at expense of electricity and poles to the town, for a stretch of road that the Environment Board feels does not require lighting. Deb reported that there is already sidewalk lighting as part of the development. Dan noted that excessive lighting would be a detriment to the view from the Hudson River, given the development's location on top of a prominent hill.

The board discussed inviting a speaker to educate the board on community lighting best practices, so the board's recommendations to the Town Board relative to removing lights from service can be based on sound principles. Deb will contact a representative of Greene County that has worked on this issue. Dave will contact a representative of NYSERDA. Dave noted that street lighting is not typically based on hard and fast guidelines, but involves many community considerations, such as perception of safety.

Recycling

Deb reported that the town board has approved a request from the town's transfer station contractor, Dankelmann and Associates, to raise the bag fee at the transfer station in 2009 to \$4.50. She reported that Dankelmann complained to the town board about rising costs associated with gas and the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency. She reported that the town board appears close to approving a five-year contract extension for the contractor to continue operating the town's transfer station/recycling center.

Dave reported about a community in Washington State that asks users of a swap shack to sign a waiver before using it. It has come to the board's attention that liability may be a concern of Dankelmann's that is prohibiting the establishment of a swap shack that town residents could use to freely exchange gently used items.

Dan reported that Dankelmann has written a letter of support for a

Hudson Valley Materials Exchange grant proposal to the USDA that would establish a regional reuse network among Southern Ulster County towns. In that letter, he estimated that Plattekill and Esopus transfer stations (the two towns his firm operates) could divert an estimated 200 tons of trash from the waste stream into reuse. Dan reported that Jill Gruber at the Hudson Valley Materials Exchange is willing to work with Esopus to expand reuse services to town residents, but that any effort, including staff time, would be billed for. The Hudson Valley Materials Exchange, which is run out of the New Paltz transfer station, is on shaky financial ground, according to Gruber.

Dan reported on data he'd gathered from the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency showing that among the 14 Ulster County towns that recycle more than 100 tons of materials each year, Esopus recycles the least. He reported that other towns in the county charge residents fewer fees for use of their transfer stations, though he noted that the data may not be fully up to date. The \$4.50 per bag fee appears to be about 50% above any fee charged by any town-run transfer station. The town's annual fee of \$20 is slightly above average (\$18). The tonnage recycled per transfer station permit is two- to three-times lower in Esopus than comparable Ulster County towns. Dan reported that the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency has offered its help in drafting a new contract, or putting the contract out for competitive bidding. While Dankelmann is the only independent contractor of its kind operating in Ulster County (all towns but Plattekill and Esopus run their own transfer stations), UCRRA said there are additional independent contractors in the region that would bid for the contract.

UCRRA also said that one or two towns in the county run their transfer stations at no loss. Deb noted that Esopus runs a loss on its transfer station. The board noted the need for transparency in any contractor's bookkeeping for accountability and enforcement of any contract's provisions.

The board discussed the need to re-write the town's contract for transfer station services so that it clearly expresses a vision for the services that should be offered, and several board members expressed a desire to see the town bid a new contract.

Dan will draft a letter to the Town Board outlining the board's findings and recommendations and circulate to Environment Board members so that the letter can be delivered to the Supervisor before the Town Board's workshop Feb. 2.

Waterfront Advisory Board report

Kathie reported that the board has won a grant to purchase a new water chestnut harvester. Deb reported that the town can trade in its old harvester and get as much or more money than it paid originally, and that the town was exploring options to share the harvester with other towns with water chestnut problems, like Saugerties.

Kathie reported about the availability of a Biodiversity short course offered by Hudsonia and paid for by the DEC Hudson River Estuary Program. It's an intensive course using mapping and site visits to assess the ecological importance of various landscapes. Dan reported that many other town environment and planning boards in the region have taken this course in preparation of Natural Resource Inventories used to assess the impact of development projects.

Web site

Susan said Sustainable Esopus will soon have a subscription service so that board members can receive email updates whenever there's a new post to the blog.

2009 Goal Setting

The board agreed that its goals for 2009 should include completing the Lighting Survey and continuing the Recycling Initiative, beginning a Natural Resource Inventory, engaging the community at additional events, networking more with the Town Board and Planning Board, and holding another tree giveaway with an expert speaker.

The board agreed that it should begin work on a Natural Resource Inventory by inviting a speaker to explain the process, and invite other relevant boards to attend that speaking session. Kathie will ask the Ulster County Environmental Management Council if it has a knowledgeable speaker, and Dan will ask the DEC Hudson River Estuary Program.

The board discussed participating in the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain celebration July 25, the Hudson River Sweep, the Hudson Valley Ramble, the Apple Festival and another water chestnut pull, if

necessary. No decisions were made about how the board should participate, or to what extent.

Deb reported that there will be a fundraiser for the creation of Sojourner Truth park on the site of the old town hall on Saturday, Feb. 28 at 3 p.m. at the Port Ewen Reformed Church on Salem Street. Tickets are \$10 suggested donation, and there will be choir and storytelling performances to recognize the importance of this Town of Esopus slave-turned-abolitionist. She's one of the town's most famous and celebrated residents. The board expressed its support.

Notes for followup

Emily - offered to do more lighting survey work

Cathie - offered to do more lighting survey work, and will contact the EMC to request a speaker about the Natural Resource Inventory process

Dave - will send lighting survey information to Emily and Cathie, draft a letter to the town board about progress to date and savings potential this year, and contact NYSERDA to request a speaker about community lighting

Deb will contact Green county for a speaker about community lighting

Dan will continue the Port Ewen lighting survey, contact UCRRA for additional information about recycling, draft and circulate a letter to the town board about the recycling contract and contact the DEC HREP for a speaker about Natural Resource Inventory.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.