

Esopus Environmental Board Minutes
November 16, 2022 Meeting Via Zoom

Present:

Mark Ellison, EB Chairman
Laura Petit, Climate Smart Chairperson
Noel Russ
Nina Nichols
Lee Gough

Meeting commenced at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Old Business:

Minutes – October 2022 Minutes were tabled until following meeting.

Leave the Leaves – Lee Gough had obtained material which encouraged allowing leaves to remain on the ground and what benefits it provided. Mark Ellison suggested that website be shared on the Town's EB website. Leaving leaves on the ground provided habitats for pollinators and the use of leaf blowers was fossil fuel intensive. The breakdown of leaves promotes healthy soil and mulching would help with that process. Cynthia McVay concerned with accumulation of excessive leaves and preferred methods of removal and/or composting. Nina Nichols was applying for a grant to provide funding to steward an open space area and examples could be shown as alternatives to lawns. Cynthia McVay suggested "no mow May" for Earth Day promotion in 2023, create page for EB website.

Minutes – Noel Russ would provide New Paltz Tree policy as stated in the October Minutes. Mark Ellison stated that the Town may have to provide permission to plant at the Town Hall entrance. Laura Petit stated that outcome of the grant applications for the EV stations may not be provided until December.

Membership – One position still open.

UC EMC Minutes had been provided to Members.

Clean Water Protection Plan/CHPE Update – Community Group called Mohegan Water Protectors that gives power that some of the non-profits are not afforded. All Environmental Boards are invited to collaborate to gain support for a proposal for a local law for a clean water rights for people and Rights of Nature. Rights of nature is a new area of emerging area of law based upon indigenous principals to give civil rights type existential law to nature and gives the river and the people drinking water from the river legal standing upon river damages by corporations (not individuals). Phil Erner is looking for co-sponsors and will be introducing the proposal to the Ulster County Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee. Lee Gough could provide email address of Clerk to anyone interested in stating support as well as the draft local law. On November 22, 2022 Invisible Hand movie is being screened and how locality was able to protect waters. Laura Petit suggested that screening of the movie at Town Hall could be paid from the EB budget if there was interest. Film trailer could be accessed at invisiblehandfilm.com. Lee Gough had attended a Natural Resources Inventory presentation and the number one concern was water and protection of water as a resource.

Repair Café – October 29, 2022 was the last event. Nina Nichols, Laura Petit, Lee Gough and Mark Ellison attended.

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Laura Petit stated that there was good turnout and suggested music at the next event. Sign in sheet was needed for Laura to submit report. The next event would take place in January 28, 2022 and then the end of March. Nina Nichols suggested that making fun screens to silkscreen old t-shirts with environmental messages on them or give away recycled silk-screened t-shirts. Laura Petit added that artistic attractions may also be incorporated. Nina Nichols would forward her friend's contact information for silk-screening.

Environmental Bond Act had been passed on Election Day.

No responses had been provided in regard to letters sent by the EMC or the Environmental Board in opposition to CHPE or the Indian Point Decommissioning.

Laura Petit did have kitchen recycling containers. Mark Ellison suggested introducing for Earth Day. UCRRA also has alternative composting method that could be introduced. Mark requested that the January 2023 be utilized to plan for Earth Day and that the saplings should also be ordered in January.

New Business:

Ulster County Natural Resources Inventory Workshop – Cynthia McVay had attended Monday and Lee Gough attended Zoom workshop. The County is developing a Natural Resources Inventory to be used by Planners. There will be another public forum in the Spring and the inventory is expected to be completed June 2023. Invitation had been extended which could provide possible assistance for the EB to develop its own inventory. The EB had been holding off developing an inventory until the County had completed the Countywide inventory. Cynthia McVay requested clarification on differences between the County inventory and what would be detailed in an inventory specific to Esopus. Mark screen shared Natural Resource Inventory application which needed to be submitted by November 30, 2022 and asked everyone to review to determine if Esopus EB should consider and two Townships were needed. Ingrid Haeckel would be an excellent resource and may be able to advise. At the County Workshop on Monday evening, the Town of Lloyd CAC Chairperson had asked Mark to consider partnership in studying invasive species along the Black Creek.

Watershed Conference Recap and Water Protector Brunch – Nina Nichols provided update. Most common concern throughout was the public education and press regarding protecting the water resources. Nina suggested adding to the existing 2 mini libraries throughout Town and work to provide educational materials to be placed into the mini-libraries. Laura Petit stated that picketing the Legislature may be newsworthy and gain public attention to the environmental issues like CHPE and Indian Point Decommissioning. Zoom meeting was being created and Nina would create email chain.

Conserving Natural Areas – Asked everyone to review document, especially financing future conservation. Site provided useful local ideas.

Bee City – Lee Gough had provided program information wherein Towns create educational information on pollinator habitats. Town must create a Pollinator Committee to participate and may be a subcommittee of the EB. Laura stated Steve Cerini may be interested.

Lee had received mailer for native plant seeds available to teachers for pollinator gardens. There were several teachers available and Lee would provide link to distribute to teachers.

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Mark reviewed balances left in the 2022 budget. There was \$833.87 left in the general fund and suggested that Nina and Lee look into pricing for the purchasing of seeds and provide by December. There were 3 grants NYSERDA \$3,300.00, recycle grant \$3,700.00 and NYSERDA \$5,000.00. Hoping to use part of this for the charging stations.

Climate Smart Task Force –

Laura Petit recapped the presentation to the Town Board. Steph Herbstritt from Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) gave an update on the NYS Climate Smart Communities Program Certification Assessment for the Town of Esopus. She reviewed what has been completed and provided a chart on how the Town can gain the necessary points to reach the Bronze – level certification. PE 9 Climate Outreach and Engagement (see attached letter from Esopus Town Board to DEC). Laura asked for two persons to participate in at least 2 additional meetings.

Climate Smart Action Steps – Laura needs to see what has been done and enter information into the portal. Mark asked for assignments.

Safer Streets – Mark agreed to provide photographs.
Safe route to school –
Tree policy –

EB Members agreed to meet on December 21, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Will discuss changing the meeting night from Wednesdays.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa K. Mance, Secretary

Dated: December 1, 2022

Approved: