

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the December 19, 2013 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Shep Bennett, Linda Green, Michael Restuccia, Victor Lamoureux, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman

Excused: Steve Appel, Cole Moore

Guest: Megan Larson, and observed by two CV Participation in Government students

The next regular meeting of the CAC will be on January 16, 2013.

Adam Flint, who works for Cornell Cooperative Extension and met with the CAC two months ago, has expressed interest in joining the CAC. If approved by the Town Board, he could fill the alternate member seat vacated by Dick Pastore. Curt will direct Adam to send his resume to Nancy Olmstead and will mention to him that we are also in need of a representative to the EMC, in case he might be interested.

The principal goal of the meeting was to consider that possibility that Megan Larson and perhaps, a fellow Biology graduate student could work with the CAC as interns for outreach and education, as well as contributing their expertise on wetlands and stream ecology/ geochemistry. The CAC could provide information to Vestal residents about three invasive pests that will lead to the destruction of a large number of planted and wild trees. The emerald ash borer is probably already present in the local area, but it may take one or two years for it to have any visible effects on the ash trees. The woolly adelgid is an aphid-like insect that attacks hemlocks. It has been reported in the Town and will eventually eliminate hemlocks from the region. Austrian pines, also called black pines, are being destroyed by a fungal disease. This tree species is not native and is not extensively planted, but some people may have them in their yards.

The first part of any public information about these diseases is tree identification and resolving the confusion created by common names; for example, the mountain ash is unrelated to the ash family and will not be affected by the emerald ash borer. We should create a document containing descriptions and drawings or photographs of leaves, bark, flowers, and fruits of each of the affected trees and features that distinguish these species from trees that could be confused with them. The information could be posted as pdf documents on the CAC website, and fliers could be placed in the Vestal Library and other public places. The information could also be sent to the Vestal Town Crier and the new publication, Vestal Life. Another approach is to label specimen trees in parks to provide correctly identified living examples. We might also man a table at the Vestal Farmers' Market or other public events. If interest is strong, we could create a Gmail account through which people could send questions and photos to confirm tree identifications. In addition to identification, we should also summarize information on the course of infestation, time to death, possible treatment options, and references to web resources.

Cindy reported that the EMC has reacted positively to the proposal from Adam Flint to bring bringing the annual statewide conference of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions and the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils to Broome County in October of 2014. She also drew attention to the Broome County Comprehensive Plan, which is available online at GoBroome.