

Conservation Advisory Commission  
Minutes of October 21, 2010 Meeting

Present: Steve Appel, Curt Pueschel, Cynthia Stephens/Westerman, Linda Green, Shepard Bennett

Excused: Richard Pastore, Michael Restuccia

Minutes of the September 16, 2010 meeting were approved after corrections. The next meeting will be on November 18, and the last meeting of the year is scheduled for December 28 (our former meeting time, because the board room was already booked at the new time).

A letter dated Sept. 23, 2010 was received from Pete Andreasen indicating that the terms of all CAC members will expire on Dec. 31, 2010. Members wishing to be reappointed should submit a resume and cover letter to him. Attendance records are also requested. Members are welcome to send their resume to Curt, who will send them under one cover. It was observed that in the past, CAC members were appointed for two-year terms with half the terms expiring in alternate years.

It was noted that the Binghamton University Foundation has signed leases with Chesapeake Energy for natural gas drilling on their properties in the Town of Union, but the Foundation has not yet leased their properties in Vestal. Foundation land is separate from the campus proper, which is state land.

A copy of the proposal made by a citizens group to the Town Board regarding Jones Park was discussed. Curt noted that there is expertise at Binghamton University in forest ecology, the biology of many members of the local flora and fauna, and management of the campus Nature Preserve. Members of the CAC felt that many of the faculty would be happy to contribute their expertise to a Jones Park management plan at no cost to the Town. In addition, there are avid naturalists in the community who possess considerable knowledge. The park plan should clearly articulate specific objectives for which the park, or areas within the park, is to be managed and the means by which each objective can be reached.

Cindy Westerman discussed the widespread concern over the recently announced EPA goals for total maximum daily loads in the New York region of the Susquehanna River. Reducing the nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment load of the Susquehanna River is necessary to improve the water quality of the river and the Chesapeake Bay, into which the Susquehanna flows. However, the target values for reducing New York State nutrient load are viewed by New York groups, including the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and NYS Soil and Water Conservation staff, as unrealistic and unfair.

Cindy reported that the staffing of the Broome County EMC is in danger of being completely eliminated. Stacy Merola's position as Director and Senior Environmental Planner was cut from the County Executive's proposed budget. This cut follows loss of the environmental analyst position. The shedding of environmental planning and protection staff at a time when the natural gas drilling will create the need for the exactly such expertise is extremely unfortunate. The position could be restored by the county legislature, but such a move could still be vetoed.

Information about the Route 201 bridge replacement project was shared.