

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the April 19, 2012 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Victor Lamoureux, Steve Appel, Michael Restuccia, Dick Pastore, Cole Moore, Linda Green

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on May 17, 2012 in the Town Board room.

Curt shared several documents produced by the Local Waterfront Revitalization Project, including "Four Rivers", a 130-page public access plan for waterways in Broome County. Several possible projects are proposed for Vestal. The expansion of Castle Gardens Park to 40 acres and the building of a boat ramp and riverfront trails would convert this property from a neighborhood park to a regional park. Also mentioned for possible improvements is Turtle Tower Park, named for a wetlands observation tower on the DOT property near the Routes 17 and 26 interchange. The expansion of existing walking trails could create loops connecting trails on both the north and south shores of the Susquehanna. A historical interpretative site marked by a kiosk or other signage is proposed for an area near the mouth of Choconut Creek; it would provide information about the long history of habitation by native peoples at this site in pre-Revolutionary War times. The present project is a comprehensive planning effort; achieving the individual goals will require separate funding.

Victor has not yet received notification of this year's program for DEC urban forestry grants. The announcement is supposed to be made in April.

There was an extensive discussion on how to proceed with disseminating information and concerns about natural gas drilling. Steve pointed out that we have been addressing this issue for a long time, as an August 2009 document showed, and that we have not yet offered a public position. The minutes of our meetings are public and are posted on the Town website, but it is unclear whether anyone reads them; furthermore, our minutes typically do not contain explicit recommendations. There was a strong consensus that we need to move quickly to produce a final document with specific recommendations that we would take to the Town Board.

Victor earlier shared an outline of concerns about drilling, and Dick had also circulated draft comments on financial impacts and a broad overview of drilling issues. Some of the topics of concern listed in both documents have been addressed to some degree in past meetings. Curt will compile all the passages of CAC minutes from 2010 to present that are pertinent to gas drilling, and Dick will assemble relevant documents and minutes from before that time, so that they can be integrated into the final report with a minimum of duplication of language. Mike will elaborate on public safety concerns, and Cole will address ground water and storm water issues. The target date for circulating these various pieces is May 1.

One area of concern about which CAC members have limited understanding is the extent and form of the pipeline networks that will connect to the well sites. A tour of a well site or contact with an industry representative could provide a great deal of information. The layout of pipelines in a similar landscape in Pennsylvania could serve as a proxy for the likely system in Vestal. We can try to learn more about the pipeline system while we are completing work on all the other aspects of the report.