

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of September 16, 2010 Meeting

Present: Steve Appel, Curt Pueschel, Richard Pastore, Cynthia Stephens/Westerman, Linda Green, Shepard Bennett, Michael Restuccia

Guests: Lewis Trelawny-Cassity, Francesc McMahon

Minutes for the August 19 meeting were approved after corrections. The next meeting was agreed to be on October 21.

It was reported that Jim Bukowski, Supervisor of the Town Parks, responded favorably to the idea of meeting with CAC but we have to work out a time that he can attend. Questions about records of past forestry in Jones Park were put to him by e-mail, but no response was received. It was suggested that the Clerk's Office should have records of the lumber sales from the previous logging in Jones Park.

David Berger, Town Attorney, responded to an e-mail query about the legal restrictions on logging in parks purchased originally with state funds, as was Jones Park. Under an opinion issued 7 April 2000 by the AG's office, the town may engage in selective lumber cutting to enhance use of the park by the public, but revenues cannot be used for purposes other than park improvement. A strict interpretation would limit use of revenues gained to only that same park: funds generated from Jones Park could not be used to enhance other Town parks or to offset the normal operating budget of the Parks Department by purchasing general-use equipment. It was observed that these interpretations should apply also to natural gas leases and royalties involving Jones Park. A comment on these interpretations will be sought from Mr. Berger.

The visitors, Lewis Trelawny-Cassity and Francesc McMahon, expressed their views that too much of the Town's discussion about the forestry plan for Jones Park focused on logging rather than on preservation of the natural community, and they felt that the candidates interviewed for developing a management plan were foresters rather than ecologists. They also expressed concern about the lack of opportunity for public input into what the goals of the plan should be. The means by which the public might contribute to articulating goals for Jones Park management were discussed.

Ms McMahon is a nearly daily user of Jones Park, and she was surprised to find heavy equipment in the park. When she approached the equipment operators, she learned that they were from Upper Susquehanna Coalition and they were building wetlands in the park. She reported that the excavation was completed quickly and the equipment was removed.

Cindy and Linda attended the EPA meeting at the Forum about hydrofracturing and found it very informative. Both were pleased with how the meeting was structured and how well the speakers conducted themselves.

Cindy also reported on the EMC meeting at which a representative of the Emergency Services of Broome County spoke about needs associated with natural gas drilling. Although there are two hazmat units in the area, they do not see particular concerns arising from hazardous materials trucked in association with the gas drilling. Worse materials pass along our highways all the time. Regarding rescue concerns, 90% of fires are handled by the gas companies. In most cases, the area is evacuated and the well fire is allowed to burn out. Wells will be assigned addresses to locate them by the 911 system. Local trauma centers are adequate for emergencies.

Also related to the EMC, Cindy expressed concern that the county had already reduced the EMC budget 10% and wanted still more cuts. She felt that loss of any more staff will compromise the viability of the EMC.