

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the February 16, 2012 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Victor Lamoureux, Steve Appel, Shep Bennett, Cynthia Stephens/ Westerman, Michael Restuccia, Dick Pastore

Guest: Sue Rapp from Friends of Vestal

Sue Rapp recounted the efforts of Friends of Vestal to encourage the protection of Town roads against damage expected from their use as part of natural gas drilling operations and to bring other concerns about the gas industry to the attention of the Town Board and the public at large. Friends of Vestal were instrumental in arranging for a recent presentation in which attorney David Slottje of the Community Environmental Defense Council spoke to the Board about gas drilling issues. Ms Rapp wanted to explore the idea of CAC co-sponsorship of an educational meeting about the Vestal water supply and possible threats to it. CAC members suggested that if invited participants were clearly non-partisan and were to provide only technical expertise, we would consider it. Suggestions for speakers included the Town Engineer or a representative of the Water Department. Discussion then turned to trying to project the extent and effects of the network of pipelines that will be required to move the gas from wellheads to storage sites and trunk lines that are likely to be north and possibly west of the Town. Based on reports from other areas, this may involve the use of eminent domain. Thus, the pipeline development associated with hydrofracking may directly impact many Vestal residents who are not expecting to be personally affected by gas development and therefore may be unaware of what lies ahead for their properties.

Returning to our regular agenda, minutes of the January 19, 2012 meeting were reviewed and approved pending revisions. The next scheduled meeting will be on March 15, 2012 in the Town Board room. Cole Moore's application to join the CAC as an alternate has been approved by the Town Board. His term will expire at the end of 2012. Cindy has been reappointed as our representative to the county Environmental Management Council (EMC).

Cindy distributed keys for the CAC file cabinets in the Vestal Public Library.

Curt shared information about the Ross Fund for Community Project Grants, which requires a collaboration between community members and units or members of the university. Some ideas were discussed, such as involving members of the Biology Department to aid in the identification and removal of invasive plant species from Town parks, and possibly the Geography Department to help use GIS to allow the invasive plant sites to be monitored over time to ensure that removal was successful.

At our next meeting, we will review a document that Victor is assembling which summarizes projected impacts of future gas drilling in Vestal. Once we are comfortable with this document, we will request to meet with the Town Board at their earliest convenience to discuss the contents of our report.

Cindy reported that the last EMC meeting addressed issues of flood mitigation. Broome County is also interested in developing a Sustainability Plan. On March 14, Adam Flint will speak on green jobs and energy.

Cindy announced that the Sierra Club meeting on Tuesday, February 21, at 7:30 PM at the United Methodist Church in Endicott may be of interest to CAC members. Speakers will discuss municipality rights and home rule, and protection of water and public health.