

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the March 21, 2013 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman, Shep Bennett, Linda Green, Victor Lamoureux, Steve Appel

Excused: Cole Moore, Michael Restuccia, Dick Pastore

Two members of the public were in attendance as observers.

Minutes of the February meeting were reviewed. The next regular meeting of the CAC will be on April 18, 2013.

Recent information about natural gas drilling was discussed. In Pennsylvania, there is discussion of using acidic waters draining from abandoned coal mines for hydrofracking. While the idea sounds appealing, the high acidity of these sulfur- and iron-rich waters would be corrosive to the steel pipes, so the acidity would have to be neutralized, which would require caustic chemicals. New York does not have coal mines, and it is unlikely that acid mine drainage would be imported from Pennsylvania for use in hydrofracturing. However, should it happen, it would increase truck traffic and spillage hazards.

Curt Pueschel reported that he had a conversation with Jim Bukowski, the Vestal Parks Superintendent about our interest in a parks plan. Mr. Bukowski suggested that our plan should be clearly identified as a parks conservation plan to distinguish it from a recreation management plan that is already in existence. He will provide us a copy of the recreation plan.

Steve Appel spoke with Town Board member Steve Milkovich, who is on the Town committees that deal with parks and recreation. Mr. Milkovich indicated a willingness to work with the CAC towards developing plans for the parks.

According to the Town website, Vestal has 25 parks and 26 municipal maintenance areas for a total of 768 acres. Curt suggested that we take a broad view and consider all Town properties, because conservation issues are not limited to properties designated as parks.

Steve shared downloaded Google map images of all the Town parks and gave brief descriptions of their locations, access, use, and features. In the course of this discussion, it became clear that it would also be beneficial to download parcel maps for each Town property from the Broome County website so that we could better determine exact boundaries. The Town Engineer should also be consulted.

It was also decided that we would create a checklist of features that we would assess for each property. These would include such things as trees that face potentially lethal fungal or insect infestations (ash, hemlock, Austrian pine), streambank erosion, noteworthy native plants, and nuisance invasive plants.

On another topics, Steve noted that the projects that come before the Planning Board have to fulfill requirements for handling stormwater runoff, but he is concerned about the long-term effectiveness of detention ponds in reducing flow volumes and rates. The cumulative effects of numerous properly done runoff plans still might not provide the protection from flooding that is needed. The intersection of Rte 26 and Sheedy Road is an example of where potential drainage problems could occur due to the fact that there are to be two new

developments and extensive road work in the next months. Each of these developments has been reviewed separately and is compliant with state regulations, but together they could adversely affect Choconut Creek, which has experienced major flooding in past years.