

Vestal Conservation Advisory Commission

Minutes of the January 15, 2015 meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Steve Appel, Cynthia Stephens/Westerman, Linda Green, Michael Restuccia, and intern Megan Larson

The minutes of the December, 2014 meeting were approved by e-mail. The next regular meeting of the CAC is scheduled for February 19, 2015.

Curt reported that the first full draft of the park conservation management plan has been completed. It is being reviewed by Dr. Julian Shepherd of the Department of Biological Sciences at Binghamton University; Dr. Shepherd has done a survey of natural areas in Broome County and is familiar with many of the parks in Vestal. The previous weekend he and Curt spent two hours exploring the northwest part of the Jones Park. After Dr. Shepherd has a chance to comment and a final round of editing is done, the report will be distributed for CAC members to read.

Much of the emphasis to date has been on describing the features of parks; attention now needs to focus on the particular recommendations we might propose and the services that the CAC may wish to volunteer. The numerous properties in the Castle Gardens that flooded and are to remain “forever green” might also be addressed. Thinking about this area raises the question of whether FEMA has recommendations about how “forever green” should be maintained: should they be mowed, which incurs a permanent cost to the Town in labor, equipment, and gas, or should they be allowed to revegetate on their own?

It was agreed that the Jim Bukowski of the Parks Department should have an opportunity to see the report as soon as a completed draft is ready for distribution, and we should move forward with request to meet with the Town Board in March. It was reported that Councilwoman Susan Messina has been appointed to be the Board’s liaison to the CAC. The DEC’s Trees for Tribs Program should be studied as a possible source of funds to supporting our proposals to revegetate stream corridor buffers.

Discussion then turned to the topic of spreading of brine on roadways, which was in the news recently. Highways in some areas are being treated with brine water from gas storage facilities. The concern is that water from these sources been found to have chemical contaminants including such hazardous chemicals as benzene and toluene. A second concern is that testing for radioactivity is not adequate.