

**Town of East Greenbush
Conservation Advisory Council**

TOWN HALL, 225 COLUMBIA TURNPIKE, RENSSELAER, NY 12144 (518)477-2005 FAX (518)477-2386

Conservation Advisory Council monthly meeting

August 23, 2021 - 7PM
East Greenbush Town Hall
Community Room

Attendees

Members: Jennifer Dean (JD), Chair; Fred Henson (FH); Jennifer Hixon (JH); Victoria Manieri (VM); Adam Tobey (AT)

Also present: Adam Yagelski (AY), Director of Planning

Call to order

JD called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. The minutes of the July 19, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved, as amended. JH volunteered to be the recorder for this meeting.

Reports of Board agendas/minutes

- PRT: JH reported that the August 9 PRT meeting concerned the renovation of two EG Fire Departments and did not call for input from the CAC.
- Town Board (TB):
 - FH reported that the TB meeting of July 21 did not address matters that required input from the CAC.
 - AT reported the following items of interest at the August 18 TB meeting:
 - A Resolution to Set a Public Hearing on the Town Center Planned Development District Phase 1 Major Site Plan for 9/8 at 6 pm.
 - A Resolution to Adopt the Lakeshore Drive Complete Streets Traffic Study as part of a multi-phase effort to transform Lakeshore Drive permanently into a one-way street and implement complete streets enhancements. AT noted that this may concern CAC because of Lakeshore Drive's proximity to the lake.
 - A Resolution Scheduling a Public Hearing on a Proposed Local Law Imposing a Moratorium on Applications for Permits, Site Plans or Other Land Use Approvals for Large-Scale Solar Energy Systems for 9/8 at 6:30 pm.
 - A Resolution to Appoint Members to the Zoning Law and Subdivision Regulations Update Steering Committee - VM noted that the Update Steering Committee will be updating the zoning law and subdivision regulations to comply with the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- Planning Board (PB):
 - JD reported that the July 28 meeting did not address matters of significance to the CAC.
 - At the August 11 meeting, the PB unanimously approved the major site plan for the Town Center PDD, for 78 residential units and approximately 19,000 square

footage of commercial space. The PB found that the plan was consistent with the Town Board's negative SEQRA declaration and "would not result in any significant adverse environmental impact not previously addressed by the Town Board." AY noted that the stormwater/pollution treatment plan for the project had been approved by the Town Designated Engineer (TDE). AY said that the PDD was the sort of project the CAC could be expected to comment on, but that it was procedurally too late, the negative declaration under SEQRA for the PDD had been issued in January 2020.

- The PB also conditionally approved a small canopy at Regeneron, which, would only disturb .014 acres and is considered a Type II action under SEQRA. Nonetheless, a SWPPP is required, because it is part of a "larger common plan of development." AY explained that this designation guards against the accumulation of small projects that separately would not require a SWPPP but taken together have a large impact on stormwater.
- At their August 25 meeting, the PB will consider a solar installation proposed for Lashway Lane, close to Mannix Road. It is a 13 kW ground mounted system; .25 acres disturbance. A public hearing is proposed for September 8, 2021 at 7pm.
- Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA): VM reported that the ZBA had a meeting on 8/10 and will have another on 8/24. Nothing of note for CAC - residential variances for garages; work being done to pump station on Third Avenue Extension; and a variance to a .28 acre parcel that is part of the cemetery. AY noted that this variance was approved at the 8/10 meeting.

Business items updates

- Budget discussion
 - Now is the time to propose a budget to Jack Conway and Meaghan Hart.
 - What to propose?
 - \$200 for GIS software access - we are eligible for the ESRI conservation grant. We must apply every year, or it will renew at the retail rate. AY will talk with Meaghan about details of procurement. We may need formal quote from ESRI person. Need to make sure CAC is set up in ESRI so it can share information with Town while remaining autonomous. ESRI representative said that this could be easily accomplished, according to AT. JD said the Town of Ancram CAC has also applied for an ESRI conservation grant. AT said he would open a communication channel to this sibling organization.
 - ~\$700 meetings/events/printing/public notices/Zotero storage
 - ~\$250 training/publications/memberships/resources
 - AT said there were enough training resources online for us to build our knowledge before we need to investigate paid ESRI training. The group agreed.
 - This budget line request would be for paid trainings, publications, etc.
 - ~\$200 Zoom account

- JD will follow up with Meaghan.
- Esri update
 - AT used ESRI to put all of NRI maps into one document allowing user to turn layers on and off. Still working on geocoding to enable a user to enter a street address. Street address more user friendly than tax parcel. High hopes that we can turn this into a tool that we can use to investigate all attributes for a given street address.
 - Because of the size of the file, constraints might have to be added to a web-accessible version, but AT is optimistic a useful and usable public-facing tool can be developed.
- Website - agendas/minutes posted Meaghan
 - JD will work with Meaghan to move NRWG content under CAC heading and remove NRWG from top level drop-down.
- Handouts for meetings
 - VM volunteered to work with someone from Town Hall to print out agendas and other handouts by Monday of meetings. JD suggested that Town Hall would need materials by Thursday before meeting.
- Schedule for assignments - VM prepared chart of assignments through December - also stored in Google drive.

	Minutes	Recorder	PRT	ZBA	PB	TB
August	Fred H	Jennifer H	Jennifer H	Victoria M	Jennifer D	Adam T
September	Jennifer H	Victoria M	Victoria M	Jennifer D	Adam T	Fred H
October	Victoria M	Adam T	Jennifer D	Adam T	Fred H	Jennifer H
November	Adam T	Fred H	Fred H	Jennifer H	Victoria M	Jennifer D
December	Fred H	Jennifer H	Jennifer H	Victoria M	Jennifer D	Adam T

Projects for review

- Best Rd Solar project proposal
 - JH completed checklists created by VM. Found them easy to use, but in some responses could only suggest avenues for further research rather than providing definitive answers.
 - JD still working on cover letter.
 - AY says Best Rd Solar project review most likely on hold pending moratorium on large scale solar development in the Town. CAC review of project can help inform discussion on moratorium. It will assist PB in eventually performing SEQR, and will also be a chance for them to provide feedback to the CAC on format and timing of input.
- Immanuel Church
 - JD asked how would CAC go about reviewing proposal, if still relevant.

- AY said it would still be relevant. TDE on board, special counsel to help coordinate environmental review. Applicant working on detailed site plan, but sketch plan sufficient for CAC's inquiry. CAC may conclude there will be no substantial influence on mapped resources or natural resources in general. AY can get project file for CAC, including notes from PRT meetings.
- CAC members discussed timing of review, considering other work. Decided to review at October meeting, possibly with applicant or their engineer Steve Hart in attendance.
- Open space at Carver Court 110 lot subdivision on upper Mannix Road
 - AY suggests that CAC make recommendations for best use of open space allotment - recreational trails, grassland for nesting birds, etc. What would be required of Homeowners' Association (HOA) for different options?
 - AY will send information and ideas to CAC and PB, as well as relevant sections of the code.
 - About 40 acres. Mainly for homeowners, or could there be access for general public?

Discussion of solar moratorium

- Public hearing 9/8/21 on local law to establish moratorium on development of large scale solar energy systems. Large-scale defined as designed for offsite sale or consumption. Currently limited to 2.5 acres in size.
- May cover inflight applications as well as future applications.
- Should get done as soon as possible so as not to halt progress - initial term probably 6 months.
- MJ Engineering will be consultants re: changes to zoning laws.
- Town Board may take a number of actions after public hearing - pass moratorium the following week, table until October, extend public comment period, etc.
- Once moratorium is in place, clock starts ticking on changes to zoning law.
- Moratoria are flexible - can be extended, can allow for variances, etc. Lightweight instrument to pause development while considering issues and updating zoning laws.
- Town Board will want to consider CAC's recommendations on solar development as they decide how to update solar law.

Assessment of solar development for Town Board

- Assessment due September 14. (90 days from 6/16/21 adoption of authorizing resolution).
- Progress to date
 - Framework
 - Early drafts of several sections and notes on others
- Format
 - Resource of resources - intro, bulleted list, links to resources
 - Introduction on types and benefits of solar development (VM, JH)
 - maybe add infographic
 - Solar Development in East Greenbush

- Discussion of ideal site (VM)
 - See Scenic Hudson's smart solar recommendations
- Minimizing impacts to natural resources (JD draft; FH, AT review)
 - 5 acres disturbance/mW is rule of thumb suggested by Solar Hudson
- Assessing development feasibility (proximity to power lines, etc.) (AT)
 - Scenic Hudson has good tools
- Construction best practices (AT)
- Mitigation strategies for less suitable sites (AT)
- Recommendations (FH)
 - Open draft document of recommendations ("spaghetti page")
- Style guide - what terms do we want to standardize on?
- Final push
 - Touch base by email August 29 evening
 - Final product expected by September 14 - difficult deadline with Labor Day, etc.

Public Comment

- None

Adjournment

- Meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.