



TOWN OF COLONIE

347 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD

LATHAM, N.Y. 12110



Town of Colonie Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Minutes – October 1, 2015

Attendees: Bob Ulrich, chairman and members Don Allard, Mike Brennan, Sudhir Kulkarni, Ellen Rosano, Laura Weed and Linda Welton.

Previous minutes of September 17, 2015 were approved by member Weed and seconded by member, Rosano.

Visitor, Susan Weber, representing the Green Meadows Neighborhood Association was welcomed. Ms. Weber expressed some concerns regarding the clear cutting that had been observed at the Residences at the Crossings, in preparation for construction at that site. She referred council members to Chris Churchill's article in the Times Union 9/29/15 about the same issue. The concern is to what extent consideration is given by developers and the Planning Board, with regard to saving larger trees and significant greenery, to be retained and left alone, in the project designs, and how to avoid "clear cutting". An article in the Colonie Spotlight by Patrick Quinn was also noted on this subject matter.

Dates for CAC Planning Board observer assignments and CAC bulletin boards were reviewed again. (See September 17, 2015 CAC Minutes).

It was noted by chairman, Ulrich that he had forwarded an email to members from Ingrid Haeckel of NYS DEC regarding a planned Albany-Schenectady County Conservation Advisory Council Roundtable to be held Tuesday November 10 6:30-8:30 pm at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Center. Several CAC members plan to attend.

Member, Whelton reviewed Planning Board meeting of 9/29/15. There were no significant environmental concerns raised on the projects discussed at that Planning Board meeting.

Joe LaCivita, Director of Planning and Economic Development visited the CAC to listen to members concerns regarding our role as CAC members and to explain process used by PEDD in regards to approving or disapproving new projects or altering developer's plans to meet TOC requirements. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan is guideline for development, as well as Conservation Overlay District map, Zoning Code, Land Use Code and the SEQR process. Mr. LaCivita provided CAC with some background of his involvement with the TOC and his earlier work as a landscape designer. The question was raised as to whether the Planning Board had enough power to prevent developers from unwittingly or deliberately removing natural areas and larger trees from areas under development in order to make for easier and less costly construction. It was noted that 35% green space of grass is significantly different than 35% green space of wooded land. Mr. LaCivita assured members that each project is reviewed on a case by case basis following TOC guidelines. The idea of a town wide inventory of natural areas was mentioned and would PEDD consider such a review. Mr. LaCivita mentioned that this might be a good project for SUNY Cobleskill and that he would bring it up to one of the professors that he has connections with there. Member, Allard noted that current conservation science shows us that the best way to beat invasive species and to keep a healthy fauna and flora is to have 'connected' areas of woodlands, streams and undeveloped areas, which allows for the migration or travel through a corridor by native species. Additionally, wide protected corridors, along waterways are a very good way to assure a healthy ecology. Mention was made by Mr. LaCivita, of the TOC Land Use Committee where CAC or members of the community can request changes to the way Planning Board evaluates projects. An example would be to submit a request, (by writing a letter to the Land Use Committee, (cc'ing Town Supervisor, Building Dept and PEDD) that all trees that are 18" DIA or larger, earlier suggested by member, Brennan, be listed clearly by species, DIA and GPS coordinates on any developer plans going before the Planning Board. Then, clear parameters are set for whether or not such trees could be removed or not. With this in place, at least the Planning Board, in its deliberations, could see that such larger trees were present at a site.

An environmental improvement mentioned by Mr. LaCivita was the recent decision to restrict residential neighborhood road widths to 27 feet.

A motion to close the meeting was made and approved by member, Kulkarni and seconded by member, Rosano.