

# Ulster County EMC Meeting Minutes January 25, 2017

## Members in Attendance:

Dave Haldeman, (Chair), Shawangunk

John Sansalone, Gardiner

Kristen Schara, Hurley

Virginia Starke, At Large

James Mays, Olive

William A. More, At Large

Mandy Wolfson, UC Dept. of the Environment

Mary O'Donnell, Saugerties

Jim Littlefoot, New Paltz

Emilie Hauser, Kingston

Judith Karpova, Rochester

Eric Stewart, Marbletown

Guest: Mark DeDea, President, John Burroughs Natural History Society

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.

December minutes were approved as amended.

## **Presentation by Mark DeDea**

The John Burroughs Natural History Society was established in 1950. It is not affiliated with the John Burroughs Association which maintains The John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary and Slabsides. The JBNHS have been participating in a survey of bird species in UC. A total of about three hundred species have been identified in UC. There are a wide variety of habitats for species in NYS. Some species have increased recently possibly due to people feeding birds, changes in pest control practices and pesticide application, and some species have adapted (e.g. Cooper's Hawks). Blue Winged Warblers are thriving in power line clearings for example. The Merlin Falcon is not considered a breeder in our area but had a nest in Forsyth Park. Some species are starting to move into our area and compete against and possibly displace natives due to climate change. The Shawangunks Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge on the site of the former Galeville Airport was preserved and native plants were reintroduced. It has become a popular stop for birding tourists to view birds such as Short-eared Owls. The JBNHS sponsors free walks that are open to the public. Visit their website for more information. Nationwide there are 432 bird species that are of concern due to reduced numbers. (Q) What can people do to protect birds? (A) Keep cats indoors; reduce night lighting that can disorient migrating birds and birds that hunt at night. The birds are a visible indication of ecosystem health. Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website is a good source for bird information.

## **Dept. of Environment Update/ Legislative Update**

- The DEC announced that a draft of new SEQR regulations have been released for public comment. Rules for solar installations up to 5 MW and certain green infrastructure projects have been streamlined. Some changes may be of concern and everyone is urged to review the draft package
- The NYS Public Service Commission is proposing to phase out net metering on PV projects. Rules will differ for commercial/institutional versus residential systems. More detail is needed to understand the changes.
- UC was awarded a DEC grant to work with the UCRRA to expand composting programs. The UCRRA plans to provide compost bins for food service and institutional customers (restaurants, law enforcement centers, hospitals, etc.).
- Five to six more EV charging stations will be installed this year at UC facilities. UC is also expanding the EV fleet. Municipalities can piggy back the on the state bid for EV vehicles for institutional prices.
- For MS4 municipalities, there is a new SPDES draft permit ready for comment. It will have more measurable goals.
- UC is working on final revisions of a hazardous mitigation plan. It will be submitted to FEMA.
- Removal of about 1000 ash trees from UC right-of-way roadsides that were infected with the Emerald Ash Borer from will be completed soon. Forty trees were removed on Binnewater Road alone. A contractor performed the work. Homeowners could elect to keep the wood or the contractor would dispose of it within the quarantine zone.

## **Old Business**

The Plastic Bag law is still in committee.

## **New Business**

Indian Point nuclear power plant is scheduled to close in the next 3 years. Fuel rods will have to be stored onsite. There is a possibility that the plant could be converted to a gas generation site. A 90-MW wind farm off Long Island has been approved. There is also a proposed project to transmit Canadian hydropower to NYC.

## Roundabout

John Sansalone – They are looking at their zoning code to address solar power installations. The next NYWEA conference is planned for Feb. 6-8 in NYC. The NYWEA Government Affairs Committee received a draft of a new section to NYS environmental conservation law which will affect funding for spill cleanups, leachate from landfills, replacement of lead water lines, PFOS contamination, etc. A legislative forum day is scheduled during May in Albany. There is a draft of NYS Open Space Plan for this region. It prioritizes areas to be preserved based on input from local groups.

William A. More – The EPA is going to change hazardous waste rules and regulations in May. In the fall, there will be updates concerning pharmaceuticals and hazardous waste at medical facilities. NYS is finalizing pharmaceutical disposal guidelines for national pharmacy chains. Kingston will have presentation on their NRI next Monday at 6 PM for public input at city hall.

Kristen Schara – The CAC is finalizing the draft Open Space Plan for presentation to the public.

Virginia Starke - Hudson Valley Farm Hub sponsoring an informational meeting on Jan. 28, 1-4 pm regarding the Pilgrim Pipelines at Kingston City Hall.

Jim Littlefoot – The New Paltz Town Board may impose a moratorium on building in the town. There is concern about the Ferris Road development for 60 units of senior housing and a proposed CVS on the corner of 299 and N. Putt Road. They are updating the master plan.

Dave Haldeman – The library got a grant for a speaker from the weather service in Albany to give 3 talks about climate change. The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is sponsoring a series of lectures. Dave will post information via email.

Judith Karpova - They continue to work with Wawarsing on an open space plan. Issues include establishing a greenway corridor, viewsheds, water quality, and biodiversity. They are performing energy audits of town buildings and working on a Solarize campaign with Marbletown and Wawarsing.

Eric Stewart – The received a \$12,000 grant for an EV charging station at community center. The project includes landscaping and 2 chargers. The solarize program is reaching out for volunteers.

Jim Mays – The had a meeting with Solarize Hudson Valley program to start a campaign in March. They are benchmarking on all the town's meters. They received a grant from NY Rising to put a new roof on the town office building. It is an electrically heated building. They adopted the Unified Solar Permit and had it registered as a Clean Energy Communities action. LED streetlights are probably too dispersed. They will be using lower wattage lamps.

Mary O'Donnell – The town is considering a beach area for Bristol Beach Park. They are looking at the Clean Energy Communities Program and they are interested in EV charging station. Groups opposed to the Pilgrim Pipeline are working to deny the building permit at state level. One of the Solarize installers donated a 5 KW array for the senior center.

Speakers – Presentations by the Hudson Valley Farm Hub and regarding changes recommended by the Public Service Commission for solar energy projects were suggested.

Handouts – DEC press release dated 1/20/17, "DEC Announces Proposed Updates to Streamline Environmental Quality Reviews"; DEC bulletin dated 1/20/17, "2<sup>nd</sup> Aggregate Purchase of Zero-emission Vehicles"; *The Daily Freeman* article dated 1/17/17, "Mid-Hudson municipal leaders fear budget impacts from phaseout of solar energy credits"

Next Meeting – February 22nd.

Mr. More made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Sansalone seconded. Meeting adjourned unanimously at 8:40.