

ULSTER COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Dave Haldeman, Chair
Margot Becker, Vice-Chair
Kenneth Panza, Secretary

Minutes for the EMC Meeting of October 28, 2020

A quorum present, the regular meeting of the Ulster County Environmental Council was convened by Zoom video conferencing at 6:40 PM by David Haldeman, Chair. Meetings of the EMC are open to the public, but Zoom invitations are sent only to members of the EMC. If others wish to attend, please notify the secretary or the chair to obtain Zoom login instructions and passwords.

Municipal Members Present

Mark Ellison, Town of Esopus
Dave Haldeman, Town of Shawangunk
Emilie Hauser, City of Kingston
Jim Mays, Town of Olive
Mary O'Donnell, Town of Saugerties
Kristen Schara, Town of Hurley
Simon Strauss, Town of Olive
Sarah Underhill, Town of Wawarsing

At Large Members Present

William More
Kenneth Panza

Department of the Environment

Amanda LaValle, Coordinator

Guests

Ulster County Legislator Laura Petit, District No. 8 - Town of Esopus, Member of the Energy and Environment Committee

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of **September 30, 2020** meeting of the EMC were presented, discussed, and approved by unanimous consent with the following correction.

Mary O'Donnell, Town of Saugerties, corrected the minutes stating the new protection bill (S.5612-A / A.8349) that applies to class C streams and waterways in New York State is not titled the "NY Streams Protection Act." These waterways are now being included in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Protection of Waters Regulatory Program.

Speaker/Presentation

Ulster County Legislator Laura Petit, District No. 8 - Town of Esopus and Member of the Energy and Environment Committee

Laura discussed the essential elements of the proposed solid waste management plan and the zero waste legislation.

Resolution No. 242 – Approving Ulster County's Solid Waste Management Plan.

Resolution No. 265 – Establishing A Zero Waste Implementation Plan for Ulster County.

Solid Waste Management Plan

The Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency board adopted a 10-year solid waste management plan in June, 2020 that calls for reviewing whether a landfill or waste-to-energy plant should be constructed. The plan was sent to the County Legislature for consideration.

A new plan for solid waste disposal is required because the Seneca Meadows landfill is expected to close within five years. The county Legislature must approve the 10-year plan for it to take effect. Lawmakers have been part of the process that resulted in the 308-page document, but each step has drawn scrutiny and requests for changes.

The plan gives high priority to composting, which the County Executive's Office supports. The agency hopes composting can reduce food in the solid waste stream by 30 percent.

Zero Waste Implementation Plan

Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency officials held off discussion of whether they want to adopt a goal of achieving zero solid waste and what steps would be taken to get them there. The Solid Waste Management Plan contains eight pages that identifies zero waste as the county's highest priority. However, county Legislator Manna Jo Greene does not consider the document to be enough and wants the agency board to pass a resolution promising to work with legislators and the County Executive. In an email to the board, she noted the zero waste plan should be created by the end of the year

Confusion about SEQR

Approval of the solid waste plan was held up because of confusion about whether lawmakers needed to conduct a State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) before voting. UCRAA received two emails from DEC saying SEQR wasn't needed, but Legislature Attorney Dave Gorden claimed it is.

Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency board members have agreed to rescind a declaration stating there would not be a harmful environmental impact as the result of a long-term solid waste plan. "We're doing this at the request of the (county) Environmental Committee and Chairman (David) Donaldson ... to acknowledge that we still request to be lead agency," agency attorney Kenneth Gilligan said. "Then we would do our due diligence in the next 30 days or more and then decide whether or not it's a negative or positive (declaration)."

Report from Department of the Environment

Amanda LaValle, Coordinator

UC Water Quality Coordinating Committee (UCWQCC)

An open meeting was held on October 19, 2020 with community partners, watershed groups, and interested individuals. Ashley Inerillo, Dept. of Health, presented the Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) and Riverkeeper discussed the proposed NYS stream protection legislation

UCWQCC Mission: Provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to protect and improve the waters of Ulster County and ensure the resilience of our watershed systems.

UCWQCC Vision: The Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee envisions a resilient watershed system serving the health and welfare of the community and ecosystem within the County and the region.

Ulster County Climate Smart Committee (CSC)

The Ulster County Climate Smart Committee meets once a month to review progress on achieving the County's environmental goals, and each town is asked to report on its activities with the Climate Smart Communities program. The Legislative appointed members to the CSC are Chairwoman Manna Jo Greene, Legislator Peter Criswell, Elizabeth Broad, Kim Mayer, and Cal Trumann.

CSC Goal #1 for 2020 is for “100% of Ulster County municipalities to adopt the NYS DEC Climate Pledge to become a Climate Smart Community, form a Climate Smart Committee (can be part of an existing CAC, ECC, etc.) and begin to work on High Impact Actions (HIA) with help from Clean Energy Communities at HV Regional Council.”

To facilitate this objective, Europa McGovern of the Dept. of Environment is working with Manna Jo Greene to encourage non-participating communities to take the pledge and engage with the Climate Smart Communities program.

Central Hudson Rate Case

Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corp. filed with New York State regulators and independent parties to establish a new rate plan, to become effective following the June 30, 2021 expiration of the utility's current plan.^{1,2} The NYS Public Service Commission held remote public hearings on October 28.³

The utility wants to increase its annual electric and gas delivery revenues effective July 1, 2021. Central Hudson proposes to increase its electric delivery revenues by approximately \$32.8 million, an 8.4 percent increase in base delivery revenues, or 5.1 percent in total system revenues. That would increase the average monthly residential bill by \$7.76, or 6.22 percent on the total bill.

The utility proposes to increase its gas delivery revenues by approximately \$14.4 million, or a 12.1 percent increase in base delivery revenues, or 7.7 percent increase in total system revenues, which would result in a monthly bill increase of about \$9.45, a 7.96 percent increase on the total bill.

¹ Central Hudson Press Release, August 27, 2020, Available at <https://www.cenhud.com/news/2020/central-hudson-supports-communities-and-customers-proposes-new-rate-plan/>

² Cover Letter, Central Hudson Proposed Rates, August 27, 2020, Available at <https://www2.dps.ny.gov/ETS/search/showPDF.cfm?5%3A%28%23%25%3B%2BUQH%25%5ECC%3C%26V%3DL3%5E%289U5Y%2FH%26%0A>

³ Case 20-E-0428: Virtual Public Statement Hearing to be held on Central Hudson's Proposed Electric and Gas Delivery Rates, September 30, 2020, Available at [https://www3.dps.ny.gov/W/AskPSC.nsf/96f0fec0b45a3c6485257688006a701a/fecbcaecf69913988525860200478c47/\\$FILE/Central%20Hudson%20Rate%20Case%2020-E-0428.pdf](https://www3.dps.ny.gov/W/AskPSC.nsf/96f0fec0b45a3c6485257688006a701a/fecbcaecf69913988525860200478c47/$FILE/Central%20Hudson%20Rate%20Case%2020-E-0428.pdf)

Old Business

Letter to Governor Cuomo

Ken Panza offered a motion for the EMC to approve the letter to Governor Cuomo drafted by Mary O'Donnell, Town of Saugerties, in support of bipartisan bill (A8349/S5612 A).

Motion seconded by Mark Ellison, Town of Esopus.

Mark Ellison suggested that the phrase, "drinking water for 100,000 people," be revised to read "drinking water for more than 100,000 people." This change was accepted by the letter's author.

The motion to send the draft letter to Governor Cuomo, CC to other elected officials, was approved by unanimous consent.

850 Route 28 LLC Site Plan / Special Use Permit Application

Nothing new to report. The project was not on the agenda for the October 19, 2020, Town of Kingston Planning Board meeting. Next planning Board meeting is on November 16, 2020.

In March 2019, the Planning Board issued a Negative Declaration determination for Environmental Impacts, but considering new information submitted during the summer of 2019, the Planning Board rescinded its determination in late August 2019. In December 2019, the applicant submitted a revised Environmental Assessment Form, which is currently under review by the Town Planning Board and interested public.

The Woodstock Land Conservancy and Catskill Mountainkeeper submitted consultant reports on noise impact, historical/cultural significance, and hydrological issues to the Town of Kingston Planning Board and continue to call for a Positive Declaration and a proper SEQR.

EMC has filed two letters with the Town of Kingston Planning Board encouraging a full SEQR review.

Danskammer Energy Center

Nothing new to report.

Town of Gardiner ECC

Last month, it was reported that the Gardiner Town Board dissolved the ECC with the expectation of reorganizing it at the beginning of next year. That action was rescinded. The Town of Gardiner zoning law requires an ECC review of applications before the Planning Board.

New Business

None.

Legislature Report – Energy & Environment Committee

Dave Haldeman, Chair (See above presentation by Laura Petit)

Council Member Roundabout

City of Kingston, Emilie Hauser

A public hearing was held regarding Kingston's Open Space Plan.

Marbletown, Eric Stewart

Town Board approved the 100% renewable plan developed by Tom Konrad, Chair ECC, and Melisa Everett, Sustainable Hudson.

Town Board adopted a resolution protecting pollinators.

Planning Board is holding a public hearing on a proposed 12-acre solar project. The project is encountering heavy resistance from the neighbors.

A working group removed plastic sheeting from trees planted five years ago by the Trees for Tribes program.

Continued work on revitalizing the Rondout Watershed Alliance.

Hurley, Kristen Schara

Created a Climate Smart working group as a subcommittee of the Hurley CAC.

Wawarsing, Sarah Underhill

A large scale solar array is being built on an existing corn field. This is a state project, so there is little the town can object to.

Continuing with Climate Smart activities.

Rail trail now crosses state prison property.

Saugerties, Mary O'Donnell

A proposed solar array is delayed by the Corps of Engineers because of a 6-acre regulated wetland.

Investigating the feasibility of EV charging stations at multi-family residences.

Submitted a report on the effectiveness of Eurasian milfoil management and removal.

Olive, Simon Strauss

Open Space Institute (OSI) purchased 1,100 acres in Olive with the expectation of adding this acreage to the forest preserve.

Additional hiking trails have been opened.

Woodstock, Kenneth Panza

Applied for participation in Cornell Extension's Resiliency Planning Program in 2021.

Completed update of Woodstock watershed documentation for the Natural Resource Inventory and CSC Action Item P7.

Wrapping up the Natural Resource Inventory work. A presentation to the Planning Board is scheduled for October 29, 2020.

Next Meeting

A combined November and December meeting will be held on December 9th, the second Wednesday in December.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm by unanimous consent.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Panza", written in a cursive style.

Kenneth S. Panza, Secretary

Attachments

Letter to Governor Cuomo in support of (S.5612-A / A.8349)