

ONEONTA, NEW YORK - OCTOBER 10, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD PG. 1

PRESENT: Chair David Hutchison
Commissioner Tracy Allen
Commissioner Richard Denicore
Commissioner Dale Burrington
Commissioner George Palladino
Commissioner Lucille Wiggin
Council Member Larry Malone

ABSENT: Commissioner Joan Fox

Chair Hutchison called the regular meeting to order and called the roll.

Chair Hutchison welcomed new City Manager Michael Long.

City Manager Long introduced himself and briefly explained his educational and professional background in various fields including environmental design, landscape architecture and planning.

The board held a brief discussion with City Manager Long.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Without benefit of a motion, the board approved the minutes of the regular meeting held September 12, 2012, as written.

PETITIONERS (limited to comment)

Chair Hutchison recognized Jonathan Gell, Oneonta.

Mr. Gell stated he had nothing to petition at this time.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Hutchison stated that he spoke recently with Oneonta resident Colleen Blacklock who expressed great concern about the proposed Constitution Pipeline construction and possibly with the gas drilling would impact some of the city's infrastructure. He suggested that it be something for the board to think about and if it was a concern to alert the Common Council.

Chair Hutchison spoke briefly on brownfield grants and he distributed material from the New York State Association of Conservation Commission that coordinates and supports the work of municipal commissions. He said it was something the board could look at as a possibility because there was a potential brownfield off of Rose Avenue.

City Manager Long stated Rehab Building Specialist Jeff House did speak to him about this and there were pluses and minuses. He said first of all it depended on who owned the property and then secondly, once it was identified as being contaminated it was classified and nothing could be done with it until it gets fixed. He said it was kind of like opening Pandora's box.

Chair Hutchison questioned if there was an incentive for the board to pursue this.

City Manager Long responded this was really a study to find out if the property was or was not and he believed Mr. House said there were two studies already going on. He said he had to learn more about it.

Chair Hutchison stated as a bicyclist he had expressed concern to the Mayor and Engineering about crossing over the railroad tracks entering Neahwa Park because the crossing was in terrible shape. He said the city was looking into it.

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REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

- Creek Program [Allen-spring –odd years only]
- Tree Program [Hutchison]
- Watershed Protection District [Hutchison]
- Sustainability Working Group

Creek Program [Allen-spring –odd years only]

Chair Hutchison stated that Commissioner Allen and his students do a creek program analysis, the odd years only, of the three creeks that flow through Oneonta. He said it was a great asset.

Commissioner Allen spoke briefly about the program.

Tree Program [Hutchison]

Chair Hutchison gave a brief summary on the tree program process saying over the last several years roughly over 200 bare roots trees have been planted in the medians. He said additionally last spring 31 trees were planted thanks to the Common Council and use of the money from the city's harvesting of trees. He said Commissioner Denicore, Brian Fawcett, Arborist of New Asbury Gardens and he selected about 100 sites for plantings on private property and sent out letters. He said only 8 responses have been received to date. He said City Clerk Koury offered to send out second letters but Mr. Fawcett wanted to plant within the next few weeks. He said if anyone knows of someone who wants a tree planted or knew of a site to let him know.

Commissioner Palladino spoke briefly on the plantings in the Dietz Street Lot and said that oaks had been cut from the plan and replaced with elm. He said there would be 10 elm and 10 plum trees planted in the lot plus there were 8 shrubbery pots and a row along Dietz Street. He said the lot was going to be beautiful when the project was done.

The board held a brief discussion on the matters mentioned.

Watershed Protection District [Hutchison]

Chair Hutchison gave a brief summary on the process that was started 18 months ago by a number of the city and town officials to create a watershed protection overlay district. He said Town Code Enforcement Officer Paul Neske wrote a set of codes for the district 8-9 months ago for comments and that had not been changed since then. He said finally there was success and he would be attending a town meeting to decide on the final language of that document before sending it to the county and then there would be a public hearing. He said he hoped that it would be finalized by December.

Sustainability Working Group

Chair Hutchison spoke briefly on the history of that group. He asked Commissioner Allen to again become liaison to the board.

Commissioner Allen responded he would.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Chair Hutchison indicated there were no special committee reports.

UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS

- Discussion with churches about energy audits and energy efficient programs

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(Unfinished/old business - Discussion with churches about energy audits and energy efficient programs) continued

Chair Hutchison stated this was something the board has been discussing monthly since New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) has been offering to residential and other energy audits. He said other groups were involved such as Sustainable Otsego in Cooperstown and they were trying to get people interested in doing home energy audits. He said the board should be concerned and encourage the same. He said he would speak to the Clerk about ordering more audit packets from NYSERDA for distribution. He said the audits were free and if some improvements were necessary there may be some financial assistance available.

The board held a brief discussion on the matter.

Chair Hutchison stated in regard to bicycle routes he informed the board that Al Sosa, Mark Davies and he had made a proposal and presented recommendations to the Mayor for the enhancement of bicycle trails within the city and at entrances to the city. He said they had also selected sites thought to be good for road signs for bike routes and had been working with Engineering Technician Hawver. He said the Mayor has indicated that the city would allocate the money for this.

NEW BUSINESS

Emerald Ash Borer - Ash Tree Community Inventory Report by The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (CRISP) – as presented at the 10/2 Common Council

The board held a brief discussion on the Ash Tree Community Inventory Report.

Commissioner Denicore stated the lists from the study Cornell did and the list by CRISP reflected different information on the ash trees.

The board felt the study was well-intentioned and performed as an internship.

Chair Hutchison stated he would respond to the Common Council saying that the board did not recommend anything based on this inventory and that the board would contact Cornell about their study.

Commissioner Denicore offered to contact Cornell.

Commissioner Wiggin suggested asking Cornell putting something in the newspaper advising people about how to trim trees that were growing and cutting one bottom limb off a year until the limbs get up as high as wanted. She said some people have trees 3 or 4' from the sidewalk and were just like bushes because the bottom limbs were not being cut.

Chair Hutchison stated on city property the city should do that. He said he has done that to city trees planted in the program where he sees that was needed.

Chair Hutchison stated another item of new business was that there was an organization the board should be aware of called Catskill Headwaters Research Institute, which was headed by persons at SUCO.

Commissioner Allen stated he was in that group.

Chair Hutchison stated the group was in the process of water sampling of many streams, wells, and other water bodies and has done a lot of good work and provides a large database.

The board held a brief discussion on the matter.

Chair Hutchison stated that Commissioner Fox had questioned if trees could be planted where the

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(New Business) continued

city was doing a lot of new sidewalks and sidewalk repairs on West Street up between the entrances of Hartwick College and SUCO. He said the Mayor had said that unless plants were needed on West Street to stabilize the bank he would not spend money there. He said Commissioner Fox had also suggested bushes in the median on Lettis Highway. He said the Mayor had said that everyone wants to do something on Lettis Highway and he asked Engineering Technician Hawver to please have a preliminary conversation with the Department of Transportation and if the DOT would let the city deal with it as done in nearby Curtis Park then it could design something that really makes sense.

Chair Hutchison stated in that conversation he suggested that if the city had a dedicated fund as he assumed the DOT would require the city to maintain plantings if it were allowed to plant there. He said there was the Applebaugh Fund for city parks and since this area was entranceway to the city he asked the board for comments.

Commissioner Burrington stated he thought there was a good bit of greenery growing along Lettis Highway, on the west side from Main Street to the I-88 exit. He said on the other side of the highway were a number of sumacs and other greenery. He said back in the days when the Greenway trail plans was starting the DOT was approached again and again about doing something about reconfiguring Lettis Highway and Foster Highway in the town and they were reluctant to do anything. He said whenever the roundabout in the Southside Corridor project is done in the future the lanes will be reconfigured all the way along that highway and the DOT would not allow anybody to do anything until that was settled.

Chair Hutchison stated that roundabout by the state was off the books.

Commissioner Palladino stated if the board wanted to make the city's entrance beautiful it should devise a plan and figure out how to fund it to the satisfaction of the state and city people. He said if there was a landscape architecture program at one of the colleges maybe a student could design as a project what it might look like.

Commissioner Wiggin suggested Delhi College since the local colleges did not have that program.

Mr. Gell, Oneonta, stated there was talent within 100 miles of Oneonta. He said he had communications from Delhi, Broome County Community College, Middletown, Cobleskill and they had students and professors who could supervise them and could for example do Main Street and they were available for exactly this kind of project. He said he has been saying for years that the city needed to engage these young people some of whom could conceivably come to live here.

Chair Hutchison stated that those interested in this meet with him to discuss this.

City Manager Long stated he thought the city needed a plan for downtown and the entrances. He said the students may be a good idea to start with but the city may want to have a professional with a plan that could be presented to people. He said from the city's perspective he would be cautious about maintenance and who would take care of it afterwards.

The board held a brief discussion on the matter.

Chair Hutchison briefly addressed enduring issues changed and/or added some items to the list as follows:

ENDURING ISSUES OF THE RECENT PAST:
• Southside Corridor <i>and Lettis Highway shrubs</i>
• Industrial Noise
• Delaware Recycling Program – <i>Field trip</i>
• Rose Avenue area Brownfield Study

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(Enduring Issues) continued

• Gas Drilling in City
• <i>Manufactured</i> Gas Plant Remediation
• Treelawns and curbs
• Inquiries about disposal of green waste and kitchen waste into mulch compost from SUCO, Hartwick, Fox, etc
• Contract for solar electric leases

City Manager Long stated that he did a little bit of landfill work while he was working in Auburn and proposed some legislation to the state to change their regulations on methane collection. He said at one point the methane was there and they basically had to flare it and he suggested to capture it and use it as a fuel source. He said the state let them change the regulations and he got a \$1 million grant to do Auburn's methane recovery system in their landfill and piped it to their wastewater treatment plant and used it to supplemental their natural gas.

The board held a brief discussion on some of the issues.

Commissioner Palladino stated he had raised an issue about the 2 silos proposed to be added at the Corning site. He said it was determined that polystyrene would be placed in the silos. He said he reported to the Code Enforcement Officer the current industrial standards for the storage and transport of polystyrene. He said the Code Enforcement Officer was now armed with the correct permitting and Corning will now have the silos properly grounded.

Mr. Gell, Oneonta, suggested that the board think about the promoting and encouraging the visits of high school children and adults to the single stream recycling sorting enterprise in Herkimer where household waste was being handled because it would up the rate of recycling rate from homeowners. He said he knew this was an advisory board and he was suggesting that it take that idea and broaden its activities beyond advising. He said secondly, it seemed to him that when the Environmental Board gets involved in something it should dig in. He said what set him off about that was the Dietz Street Parking Lot because he overheard that whole conversation about plantings and instead of the board waving off the prospect of shade trees it was realized there were many steps in the bidding process and the board was letting go of the role.

Chair Hutchison stated that bidding process went with professionals and the Engineering Department.

Mr. Gell stated thirdly, he would like to suggest to the board that it appraise the county for its continuing increase in the tonnage of household hazardous waste from year but that it not rest on its laurels but a single Saturday in the year for disposal for Otsego County and mainly Oneonta was not good enough. He said last year the SUCO Environmental Club stepped in and provided a depot in SUCO for people who could or would not go to Cooperstown the following Saturday.

Chair Hutchison stated he went to the disposal site the last time it was held and the way it was organized and set up it was a lot of work.

The board held a brief discussion on the matter.

Chair Hutchison stated that the next regular meeting would be Wednesday, November 14th at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the board, Chair Hutchison adjourned the regular meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m.

JAMES R. KOURY, City Clerk

JRK/pab