

Village of Mamaroneck – Committee for the Environment Meeting Minutes – FINAL
11/17/14

Attending: Catherine Hiller, Phil Horner, Marc Karell, Monica Barach, Sarah Roberts, Joan Heilman, Kathryn McManus, Village planner Greg Cutler, visitor: Martin Hain, Absent: Jillian Ammerman, Shonna Keogan, Ilissa Miller, Jean Peron

October Minutes: Some revisions were still required. Sarah Richards will make those changes and circulate to the group for approval.

Administrative items: The appointments for some members of the CFTE will expire in January. As of right now, Phil Horner has agreed to serve another term. Jean Peron and Jillian Ammerman will not continue and Katie McManus is considering remaining.

In addition, Marc proposed a shift in focus for 2015 with the formation of 5 subcommittees that would be able to more thoroughly tackle specific environmental issues. It is hoped that by forming the subcommittees the CFTE could have a more proactive agenda. Subcommittees would plan on meeting or informally communicating between regular meetings. The first task of the subcommittees for 2015 would be to generate a wish list of goals for the coming year.

Proposed subcommittees are:

Water Quality: (This committee was already in existence.) Phil Horner has in the past worked with Jean Peron. It would be helpful if he could continue to also work with previous members of the CFTE including Jean, Kathy Desmond and Sarah Evans if they are willing and the village trustees approve.

Energy/sustainability – Marc Karell, Laura Holbrook

Recycling: Joan Heilman, Monica Barach

Quality of life (noise, cleanliness, open space, parks, community garden) Catherine Hiller, Sarah Roberts

Outreach – Shonna Keogan

Since there will be some new members of the CFTE, it is expected that some committee membership will shift, for example Laura Holbrook may shift to Outreach if a new member is a better fit for energy/sustainability.

Agenda items:

Website: Joan reported that she and Jean Peon had removed redundant information on the website. If new information needs to be added, Shonna will make the change.

Leaf mulching: The Village has sent out a flyer. Monica asked that CFTE members talk to their neighbors about leaf mulching. Sarah contacted the Landscapers association about disseminating information regarding mulching and sent them a link about the leaf blowing ban. The association did seem receptive to posting the information. There was a discussion about seminars for landscapers conducted by other towns.

A discussion regarding promoting 'green' gardening in general followed. Our guest, Martin Hain (who has agreed to serve on the CFTE if appointed) suggested listing 'green' gardeners on the website. Seminars about mulching, composting and a broad spectrum of environmentally friendly practices were discussed. Joan suggested that a campaign against certain kinds of pesticides and fertilizers could positively impact water quality as well. Sarah mentioned a program of applying corn gluten to suppress weeds at same time flyer to ban leaf blowers, the corn gluten is also a natural fertilizer. There was also discussion of recycling compliance at VOM apartment buildings and a possibly opportunity to encourage composting in apartment building.

Deer problem: the program in Hastings is demonstration program utilizing sterilization to control the deer population (the area has 60 to 100 deer). According to the DEC, there are not yet any findings on the effectiveness. The CFTE requested through Greg that the Village meet with Jay Heritage Center, which is conducting a study of the deer problem.

West Basin – The overgrowth of plants has been addressed. Cathy reported on the tree pruning demonstration with tree committee. There was some discussion of the responsibilities of the Harbor Island Conservancy, where those responsibilities began and ended. Joan offered to invite Fred Longacre to a committee meeting to discuss their mission.

Tennis court issue of runoff into the sound: the VOM has submitted to the DEC their proposal for a short and long term solution. In the short term – bio-retention ditches should be installed by March 15 unless the water table is too high in which case the Village will seek further guidance from the DEC. Laura asked if the DEC could compel the VOM to resolve the issue of a move of the tennis courts to speed the long term resolution of the problem. The answer to that question was not known.

FASNY development in White Plains: Laura investigated this project further and through the information she found, reported to the committee that the concerns regarding downstream runoff are likely justified. She moved that the CFTE recommend the VOM further investigate the drainage issues and their possible effect on VOM flooding. Sarah Roberts seconded the motion and the CFTE unanimously approved the recommendation. For more information regarding potential runoff issues see this link: <http://scarsdale.patch.com/groups/opinion/p/fasny-environmental-catastrophe>

Recycling center: Greg reported that public works felt the recycling area is too tight to rearrange. There does seem to be an opportunity to install a fabric recycling bin in the Tompkins parking lot, located at the bottom of Prospect across from House of Honda.

Plastic Bag Ban: Monica and Joan attended the Westchester County Legislator Catherine Parker's press event announcing her proposed ban of plastic bags in Westchester County. Officials from every environmental group in Westchester attended. She noted that Hastings is being sued for its plastic bag ban and explained that VOM should amend its ban to include a charge for paper bags. Greg will notify legal counsel; Monica will furnish the contact information for the lawyer who made that suggestion.

Laura made a motion that the CFTE support the ban on plastic bags county wide. Cathy seconded the motion, the CFTE voted unanimously in favor.

I-95 construction runoff: the DEC was notified of potential runoff issues where construction is taking place at the I-95 ramp on Mamaroneck Avenue. CFTE was told that the DEC notified DOT that they need to improve runoff capture. CFTE asked that the Village management physically check to see if proper runoff control has been taken.

TOD – Village planning prepared a response to the HCZM, which declined to approve the plan. BFG Planning was asked to prepare an additional Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), which is available on line. The Board of Trustees (BOT) has included this in their agenda for the next meeting. One concern in this flood prone area was a possible increase in impervious surfaces. However, Greg showed the CFTE that anything that is redeveloped would have to have more open space, and therefore would result in an increase in pervious spaces. The intention of the rezoning is to encourage mixed use (residential and retail) while also support community walkability. Encouraging this type of development is a response to demographic trends which show a demand for apartment housing in areas with mass transit options, which also offers a more sustainable footprint. It is hoped that the BOT would actually reduce traffic in village by encouraging amenities in walking distance for the area's residents. One aspect of this includes limitations on parking spaces. Any redevelopment would need to meet FEMA regulations and there is considerable concern because the area under consideration has been subject to flooding in the past. As noted by one of our citizen activists, there is an aquifer under the entire area. In response to these concerns, the VOM has hired a hydro-geologist to investigate the distance between the aquifer and ground level to assess whether the proposed storm drainage systems are indeed viable. Ultimately the CFTE felt we should not rush the rezoning, although deadlines for applying for grant money is approaching.

Water: A presentation of the findings from this summer's water testing and remedial water pollution efforts is planned for December 3rd. The meeting will be broadcast by LMC-TV also. Presentations will be made by Tracy Brown from Save the Sound and Rich Slingerland. Marc suggested the water subcommittee prepare an annual write up about water quality progress and include guidance for future actions. Greg reported that a matching grant from the DEC had been received to replace catch basin hoods. Catch basin cleaning has also been increased, the VOM has cleared roughly 2/3 of the catch basins in the area. The VOM has also acquired a new street sweeper, which sweeps closer to curb therefore reducing the amount of refuse washed into the catch basins. The VOM has also lined another mile of sanitary tunnel with plastic lining. Using plastic lining is a cost effective measure to decrease leaks for aging infrastructure.

Addendum to minutes – information circulated after the meeting to all members:

Sustainable Westchester: Earlier this year SWEAC and NWEAC formally united to form Sustainable Westchester, a consortium of municipalities to share information and resources to become more sustainable. The Village formally joined the organization a month ago.

Sustainable Westchester's first program is to adopt a program that has taken place recently in other communities across the country, here being called "Solarize Westchester". Sustainable Westchester received NY State money and asked for applications to join this program for 4 communities, and the unincorporated Town of Mamaroneck and Village of Larchmont together was one of the winners. The way Solarize works is that an established solar vendor or two is given exclusivity to an area and is even promoted by its municipality on the promise that it will lower its prices in return. In addition, the municipality promises "expedited permitting", permits or at least a decision made within 2 weeks of submittal and a major reduction in fees (which reduces the vendor's overhead more to give the discounts). One can never say never, but solar prices will never be this low again (or not for awhile), under this program. The program is only in place for 5 months. ToM/VoL is working out the exact details (who the vendor is, coordinate marketing, etc.) now. The likely start date is Feb. or March 1. Anyway, the ToM/VoL would like to include us, VoM (remember, it is the unincorporated Town that is now in the program), but only if we can promise to incorporate expedited permitting and reduce fees just for the 5 month period. I mentioned this in discussions with Rich Slingerland and Leon Potok. Both said it could happen, but would need to think about it or plan it. Somebody at ToM is (or perhaps already has) approaching the Mayor, Rich, and/or the Board about this.

I think this is a very good thing to encourage (lower the price and the permitting) for solar.