

**Minutes of the February 3, 2020 Meeting of the
Putnam Valley Commission for the Conservation of the Environment**

Present:

CCE Members: Eileen Reilly (chair), Mia Azcue, Pat Grove, Julie Ruben, Glenn Sapir

CCE Student Liaison: Ben Lowder

CCE Liaison from the Town Board: Wendy Whetsel

Absent:

CCE Member: Mike Usai

Chair Eileen Reilly called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

- I. Eileen asked the CCE members and the CCE Liaison from the Town Board to introduce themselves to the CCE Student Liaison, Ben Lowder. He, in turn, introduced himself to the other members of the group.
- II. Action Items from CCE Meeting 1/21/20
 - A. Eileen read a prepared report (see attached) on the meeting that she and Wendy Whetsel had had with Town Officials on January 29, 2020 to discuss the role of the CCE in the review of drafts presented to the Planning Board. In attendance were: Eileen Reilly, Chairperson of the CCE, and Wendy Whetsel, CCE Liaison, Sam Oliverio, Town Supervisor, Robert Lusardi, Planning and Town Board Attorney, Todd Atkinson, Town Engineer, Tom Carano, Vice Chair Planning Board, Tom Patterson, Planning Board Chair, Rich Quaglietta, Code Enforcement Officer, Bruce Barber, Town Planner and Wetlands Inspector, and Michelle Babnik, Planning Board Clerk. Eileen stressed that the meeting had been positive, and that both the Planning Board and the CCE seek to work together to maintain a positive, respectful working relationship.
 1. A brief review of the role that the CCE had played historically in the review process, and of the recent meetings that the CCE has had with Planning Board representatives was given for the benefit of our new CCE member.
 2. Eileen reported that:
 - a. The chair of the Planning Board, Tom Patterson, had agreed to amend the group's agenda to show the times of the "pre-meetings" at which the Board reviews submittal packages prior to the televised meetings.
 - b. An authorized representative of the CCE will be permitted to audit the bi-monthly pre-meetings. The CCE representative will bring her/his notes and comments to the CCE for discussion.
 - c. The authorized CCE spokesperson, Eileen, will reach out to Bruce Barber for clarification as needed, and Eileen will transmit CCE comments to the Planning Board.

- d. An authorized CCE representative will be permitted to review drawings, make copies, or take photographs, but cannot remove plans from Town Hall.
 - e. CCE members interested in participating in project reviews should receive appropriate training.
 - f. While a CCE member may represent her/himself as being a commissioner, that member may not speak for the CCE unless so authorized by the group.
3. Eileen will give a report of the CCE's activities at the Town Board meetings.

III. Areas of Importance – Committee Chair Updates

A. Open Space Inventory (OSI)

1. Julie Ruben reported that she had been in contact with Michelle Smith and others from the Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT). She had a phone meeting with Nate Nardi-Cyrus (NYS DEC) about the process of preparing an OSI. (Julie will write a report on her meeting for later submission; she presented this summary orally.)
 - a. HHLT may not be able to assist us to the same extent as they had during our NRI preparation.
 - b. The OSI funding process is through a NYS DEC grant. Notice of the grant will likely be posted April for a presumed June deadline.
 - c. The OSI process is less difficult than that of the NRI in certain aspects, but it takes more time and requires more community input.
 - d. Grant funding would allow the CCE to hire consultants to assist with the OSI process.
 - e. Nate asked that it be reported to the CCE that he is using Putnam Valley's NRI as a model for other communities which are starting the preparation of their own NRIs and it garners much admiration.
2. A group discussion ensued concerning open space prioritization, conservancy, and conservation easements.

B. Educational

1. Glenn Sapir and Mia Azcue spoke about Eco-tips that each planned to write.

C. Climate Smart

1. Pat Grove had contacted Town Board member Ralph Smith about working with him on the Climate Smart initiative for Putnam Valley.
2. A member noted that becoming a Climate Smart Community would be an asset in the OSI process.

IV. Other Matters

- A. Facebook -- Some members continue to have difficulty posting to the CCE Facebook page, speculated that the page being a “business” page caused the difficulties, and questioned why the CCE page looked different than a member’s own page.

[Note added after the meeting: Pages (like that of the CCE) are for businesses, brands, organizations and public figures to share their stories and connect with people. Source: Facebook’s help site]

- B. Peekskill Hollow Road – Wendy reported on her conversation with Putnam County Legislator Nancy Montgomery. A county meeting on the proposed Oregon Corners renovation is going to be scheduled soon.
- C. New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC) – A member spoke about the benefits to the CCE of joining this group, and a motion carried unanimously to allocate \$75 from the CCE budget to do so.
- D. Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance (ELLA) – This organization’s benefits to the CCE are unclear given that the current membership groups are all based in Westchester County. Several members have attended workshops sponsored by ELLA in the past, and spoke about ELLA’s training and networking opportunities. Julie will seek more information about ELLA, and specifically whether declining to pay the new group membership fee of \$100 will prevent CCE commissioners from participating in ELLA-sponsored events in the future.
- E. NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program’s Amphibian and Road Crossing Project – Several CCE members indicated that they planned to participate in the upcoming training course. Other members indicated an interest in participating in the project itself and collaborating with Nicole Wooten (HHLT) during “Big Nights” this spring.
- F. The CCE decided on a regular meeting time of the first Monday of each month at 6 pm in Town Hall.

V. Open Discussion

- A. A member shared concerns about water quality in Lake Peekskill and it was suggested that the member bring those concerns to the Putnam Valley Lakes Commission.
- B. Mining in Putnam Valley – A member referenced a recent article in the *Putnam Examiner* that discussed a proposed mining moratorium in Kent. The member queried whether Putnam Valley had any regulations built into the Town Code regarding mining activities. Wendy said that she would look into the matter.
- C. The Putnam Valley Free Library would like to sponsor a Repair Café in April and asked for CCE’s assistance. It was suggested that local communities that have sponsored Repair Cafés be contacted to see if their repair volunteers might be open to participating in our town’s effort. Another member suggested that the types of items to be accepted for repair be specified so that repairpersons could be recruited accordingly.

- D. Sustainable Putnam is meeting on Feb. 8th at 12:30 pm in the Mahopac Library. That is also the date of the annual EagleFest, and it was suggested that Boscobel is an excellent local viewing spot. Members of the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society staff that site.
- E. The map holder in Putnam Valley's Town Hall is ready to receive NRI maps.
- F. A member noted that April 2020 is the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

The next CCE meeting will be held at 6 pm on March 2 in Town Hall.
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Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Grove, Ph.D.
Secretary, CCE

Attachment to CCE Minutes

On January 29th, at 10 AM, at the PV Town Hall Conference Room, Eileen Reilly, Chairperson of the CCE, and Wendy Whetsel, CCE Liaison, met with Sam Oliverio, Town Supervisor and members involved with the Putnam Valley Planning Board project review process. In attendance were Robert Lusardi, Planning Board and Town Attorney, Todd Atkinson, Town Engineer, Tom Carano, Vice Chair Planning Board, Tom Patterson, Planning Board Chair, Rich Quaglietta, Code Enforcement Officer, Bruce Barber, Town Planner and Wetlands Inspector, and Michelle Babnik, Planning Board Clerk.

Wendy opened the meeting explaining that it was our intention to establish a positive dialogue between the CCE, Planning Board and town members, in order that we, the CCE in our advisory capacity, may work with PV town boards during ongoing construction project reviews with Type 1 environmental impact that come before the Board.

The Planning Board Chair, Tom Patterson, as well as those involved with project submittals, explained the review process. It was further explained that the on the second and fourth Monday evenings, after the required application submittal packages have been received, the Planning Board members meet to start the initial review process aspects of the projects. The engineer representing the applicants is required to fill out Planning Board forms for sketch approval. Through the SEQR process the Board determines whether the project is a Type 1 or Type 2 action. Type 1 being there is an environmental Impact and a Lead Agency will have to be designated. Type 2 is determined if there is no environmental impact. The Planning Board, Town Engineer, Wetlands Inspector, and Lawyer are part of the review process. (Note: Some projects may not make it through the process as the individual property or homeowners may feel it is too expensive or complicated to pursue.)

It was agreed that the authorized CCE representative who may attend the Planning Board bi-monthly meetings, is required to observe, listen, and take notes for further discussion among CCE members. It was further requested that only the CCE Chairperson be the authorized spokesperson to reach out to Bruce Barber for clarification and/or comments, and the CCE comments will be passed on to the Planning Board. All town members present at the meeting emphasized the importance of communicating in a professional and respectful manner. It was also suggested that those on our committee interested in project reviews should receive training. The selected member of our board can go into the Planning Department, review the submitted drawings, make copies there or photos if need be, but plans are not permitted to leave Town Hall.

The meeting was successful in that the CCE and all members present are in agreement to share a respectful and professional working relationship, in order to meet the needs of our town, the CCE, and the PV Planning Board.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Whetsel, Town Liaison and Eileen Reilly, CCE Chair