

The Legislature of Rockland County



HARRIET D. CORNELL
Legislator – District 10
Chair, Environmental Committee

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, May 27, 2015
6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

HARRIET D. CORNELL, CHAIR
NANCY LOW-HOGAN, VICE CHAIR
ALDEN H. WOLFE (left 6:40 p.m.)
LON M. HOFSTEIN (arrived 6:43 p.m.)

MEMBERS ABSENT

JAY HOOD, JR.
TONEY L. EARL
CHRISTOPHER J. CAREY

OTHERS PRESENT

HON. R. DIAZ HON. D. JOBSON
A. BEERS J. BIRNBAUM
S. POWERS G. POTANOVIC
B. MADDEN N. LAIBLE
L. TITO A. CHRISTIAN-REUTER
M. JOHNSON A. BARRY
J. BARRY M. JOHNSON

CHAIR CORNELL CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:06 PM

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 25, 2015 MEETING

NO QUORUM

1. REF. #9431 - DISCUSSION ITEM: NEW YORK STATE NEW LEGISLATION CONCERNING INVASIVE SPECIES
(HON. ALDEN WOLFE, CHAIRMAN, LEGISLATURE)

DISCUSSED

Mary Johnson, Cornell Cooperative Extension, stated that there is a costly, stealthy new green evolution happening and she is astonished at how many invasive plants and vines cause hazards that cover utility poles, which causes problems for O&R. Less than 1% of non-native plants in the U.S. are considered invasive, but the aggressive ones that are cost \$140 billion per year, which includes pests. Those living near ports and major transportation systems are more at risk. The invasive plants are usually moved by humans to a place they shouldn't be and they take over. Population mobility and climate change are causing an increase. Kudzu are usually further north, but are now found in NYS. Deer and worms help spread the plants. Aquatic plants are the most invasive and block pipes. NYS is the only state that has a Great Lake coast and an ocean coast, which makes us more vulnerable. A study was done and NY Administrative Law was amended to halt the sale and transport of 69 plants, though those plants are already here. The law was passed on September 10, 2014 and it went into effect on March 10, 2015. Six additional plants are regulated. Japanese Stilt Grass is taking over Kakiat and Harriman Parks. The intent is not to penalize sellers and buyers with the law, but to educate, but there are penalties that could be enforced. Residents can be educated on how not to spread aquatics when boating. The counties west of the Hudson River are underrepresented in the Lower Hudson Prism of Invasive Species Management. The Cornell Cooperative Extension is the only one that is working on it locally. L. Tito, Cornell Cooperative Extension, stated that Japanese Knotwood causes erosion. Burning Bush is in many gardens and was brought from China in the 1800's. The seeds are transported by wind and birds and form dense thickets when they get out of gardens and spread into the woods. Native plants don't need pesticides or mowing and bees and butterflies are attracted to them. Non-natives shade out the native plants and some can harbor ticks, which carry Lyme Disease.

Some invasive plants choke the wetlands. There are real costs of doing nothing. Invasive plants affect the county and town highway crews. Health Departments see an increase in disease carrying ticks. Chairman Wolfe said that most people are probably unaware of invasive plants and many probably have some on their property. Leg. Low-Hogan asked if nurseries were aware of the list? M. Johnson said that the Department of Agriculture is informing nurseries through education. When they asked at Home Depot, though, no one knew about it. A. Christian-Reuter, Cornell Cooperative Extension, stated that some larger nurseries are getting the information from the Department of Agriculture and that the DEC has a list of species. A. Beers, Division of Environmental Resources, said that the list was very recent, so it is not on the county website yet, but would be added. He said that the county has 28 parks and invasive species are always a problem. In the 1980's, the DEC even recommended planting certain invasive species, which are now a problem. Now it is an effort to just maintain the parks because of reduced staff. N. Laible, Division of Environmental Resources, spoke about a pilot program to address invasive species, which will be held one day in the summer and one day in the fall for a few hours with volunteers to help remove certain species. Hopefully, they'll be able to expand the program beyond one-day events. The department has a brochure on how to remove invasive species. They will be removed before they fruit and bagged to contain further spread. College interns may be used to study what works. A. Beers said that he would like to work with the Cornell Cooperative Extension to help identify the species. J. Barry, resident, said that he lives near Kakiat park and it's invaded and concerned that A. Beer's department doesn't have enough staff to address it. He said he would like to see a lot of people removing the invasive species in community teams. L. Tito said that the third week in July is Invasive Species Awareness Week. Chair Cornell said that Keep Rockland Beautiful should be involved and she appreciated the Cornell Cooperative Extension calling this to our attention.

2. ZEROSCAPE PROJECT (ITEM NOT ON AGENDA)

DISCUSSED

B. Madden, United Water (UW), stated that UW pledged to donate a plan and design for a zeroscape project on county property. The parcel of land is by the new courthouse and there will be a resolution that needs to be approved by the Legislature. The project will demonstrate UW's commitment to water conservation in conjunction with their role on the Rockland County Task Force On Water Resources Management. Chair Cornell thanked B. Madden. She said that the whole idea is education and it sounds like it will serve its purpose.

3. INDIAN POINT OIL SPILL (ITEM NOT ON AGENDA)

DISCUSSED

G. Potanovic, SPACE - Stony Point Action Committee for the Environment, gave a presentation about the transformer that exploded on May 9, 2015 at Indian Point Nuclear Reactor, which created an oil spill of 9,000 gallons into the Hudson River. He asked who will clean up the North Rockland shoreline? Heat from Indian Point travels along the river, due to the shape of the river and waterflow. Everything that goes into the river winds up in Rockland County. Stony Point and Tompkins Cove shorelines had signs of oil and residents reported smells. There is oil along Haverstraw Bay Park. He wrote a letter to the County Executive and elected officials to make them aware. The County Executive sent a letter to Entergy to investigate and clean up. Assemblyman Skoufis also made cleanup requests. Due to phone calls and letters, the U.S. Coast Guard made sure that Entergy put in booms along the water to contain the oil spill. G. Potanovic said that he wasn't sure if the booms were meant to absorb the oil. He said that when there is an incident at Indian Point, Entergy should be responsible for the cleanup of our property and shoreline. It seems you have to report these things to get a response. Towns and County parks and private docks were affected. There is a lot of oil still out on the Hudson River. He asked what can we do in the County for a quicker response to the next environmental emergency? We could get stuck with cleanup costs if we don't get Entergy to do it now. There is oil in the soil now. The barges that go along the Hudson River carry a lot more oil than was in this spill. What will be our response? He suggest the committee invite the DEC and the Coast Guard to discuss what they've discovered. Chair Cornell said that A. Beers and Emergency Services and someone from Entergy should also be invited. A. Beers stated that, since Monday, the Coast Guard and Miller Environmental (hired by Entergy) had been there daily to absorb the oil in booms. There seems to be less daily. Mark Johnson, SPACE, said that there should be a response from the government.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: 7:06 PM LOW-HOGAN/CORNELL

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