

The Legislature of Rockland County



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

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, March 25, 2015
6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

HARRIET D. CORNELL, CHAIR
NANCY LOW-HOGAN, VICE CHAIR
ALDEN H. WOLFE
JAY HOOD, JR.
TONEY L. EARL
CHRISTOPHER J. CAREY
LON M. HOFSTEIN

OTHERS PRESENT

HON. A. PAUL
HON. D. JOBSON
HON. P. PIPERATO
S. LEVINE
S. POWERS
MEDIA
HON. M. GRANT
HON. A. WIEDER
A. BEERS
J. BIRNBAUM
A. JONES
J. MCDOWELL

CHAIR CORNELL CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:50 PM

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2/24/15 MEETING

MOTION TO ADOPT:
CORNELL/EARL

UNAN

1. REF. #9137 - URGING THE UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY TO FACILITATE A COMPREHENSIVE AND IMMEDIATE CLEANUP OF HUDSON RIVER PCBs
(HONS. ALDEN WOLFE, HARRIET D. CORNELL, NANCY LOW-HOGAN, LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: HONS. EARL, HOFSTEIN, JOBSON

MOTION TO APPROVE
WOLFE/HOOD, JR.

UNAN

Leg. Jobson asked if this was different than the dredging and the General Electric (GE) plant in the Albany area? A. Jones, Attorney for Riverkeeper, stated that GE successfully dredged millions of cubic yards without contaminating PCB's downriver. Chair Cornell stated that GE was required years ago to clean up PCB's. A. Jones stated that GE has been cleaning contamination for six years and ahead of schedule. The resolution addresses additional acreages that have been identified as a Superfund Liability. Polluters need to supply funds toward the cleanup. 136 acres are to be dredged by GE and will create a cleaner river. The proposed resolution allows for immediate cleanup while GE has trained personnel, rather than taking years. It will also reduce GE's liability if they do it now. GE can get it done by the end of the year, but it will take years if the state takes over and increase taxes.

2. REF. #9301 - DISCUSSION ITEM: CREATION OF SUBURBAN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS
(HON. ALDEN WOLFE, CHAIRMAN, LEGISLATURE)

DISCUSSED

Legislature Chairman Wolfe stated that he wanted to outline the change in the law and the process. John McDowell, President, Rockland Farm Alliance stated that almost every county in the state has an Agricultural District. Rockland County could have had one in the 1980's and 1990's, but didn't. An Agricultural District gives farming more protections than it normally has. Farming can still exist in Rockland County, which has a strong heritage. An Agricultural District would help mediate farm and neighbor issues and disputes. Assemblywoman Jaffee had reduced the amount of acres from 500 to 250. A. Beers, Coordinator, Division of Environmental Resources, stated that an Agricultural District was looked at in 2010. Most properties looked at were heavily wooded. Rockland County doesn't have defined large agricultural areas and farms are scattered. He said he didn't believe Rockland County would get 250 acres. He thought Davies Farm would be interested, but they weren't, because once you're in an Agricultural District, you're locked in for eight years. They would have to see how many areas are available and if the property owners are interested. The towns should be spoken to about the process because of neighboring properties. J. McDowell said that agricultural assessment and districts get confused and that one is to get tax reductions. A. Beers said that the Department of Agriculture and Markets should be asked about distinctions. J. McDowell said that farms keep property values up and encourage tourism.

MOTION TO ADJOURN 7:15 PM
LOW-HOGAN/EARL

UNAN

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