

The Legislature of Rockland County



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

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, June 11, 2014
6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

LEG. H. CORNELL, CHAIR
LEG. CHAIR A. WOLFE
LEG. N. LOW-HOGAN, VICE-CHAIR
LEG. T. EARL
LEG. B. KANTROWITZ (left 6:47)
LEG. C. CAREY

MEMBERS ABSENT

LEG. F. SPARACO

OTHERS PRESENT

LEG. P. SOSKIN LEG. D. JOBSON
E. YEGER ESQ. M. GRANIER
S. POWERS A. PINZOW
B. ATKINS A. PUTKO
T. ARIN L. SEEMAN
G. POTANOVIC R. LOUIE
D. MADRONERO
S. LEVINE (Representing Hon. Nita Lowey)

CHAIR CORNELL CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:09 PM

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 5/29/14 MEETING

MOTION TO ADOPT:

CAREY/ KANTROWITZ

UNAN

1. REF. #4124 - SETTING A DATE FOR A PUBLIC HEARING: A LOCAL LAW ENACTING THE ROCKLAND COUNTY WATER CONSERVATION ACT.
(HON. ALDEN WOLFE, LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: LEGS. CORNELL, LOW-HOGAN, EARL, KANTROWITZ

MOTION TO APPROVE:

WOLFE/EARL, KANTROWITZ

UNAN

ACTION: Committee will send a copy of the proposal to United Water for their input.

Leg. Chair Wolfe stated that two and a half years ago, he had worked with Columbia University students on sustainability and they analyzed the opportunities in Rockland County for conservation. The report is on his county web-site page with their findings. They found opportunities to do things better here in non-emergency situations to improve water use, especially in the summer during peak demand. The Water Conservation Act would include alternate day watering requirements, with an effort to make it easy for people to comply. The goal is on education of common sense practices, such as not watering lawns in the daytime, which isn't even good for the property. There would be no penalties for a first offense. It is important to pass this, as it will send a strong message to the Governor, the PSC, and the NYSDEC that Rockland County is taking control of its own water supply and usage, rather than having rates increasing. Leg. Carey asked if there was an anticipation of working closely with United Water regarding sprinklers and how that impacts their system? Leg. Chair Wolfe said that a copy of the proposal could be sent to United Water for their input. Chair Cornell stated that the idea of the Water Conservation Act is to not wait until we

have a problem. Leg. Carey asked what was the intent of enforcement going forward? Leg. Chair Wolfe said that the intent was non-emergency usage enforcement. He recognized challenges, but there is a general desire by people to comply. Leg. Carey asked about section two on legislative intent and who the ultimate authority is on this? Leg. Chair Wolfe said that the statement is that there is no consensus. Leg. Carey thought that page two, item J needed the definition tweaked and Leg. Chair Wolfe said that it could be discussed with counsel. M. Granier said that if the worry was about sprinkler usage, why not encourage sprinklers not used at all? He said that the county needed to do more than educate, but provide incentives. A. Putko, Orangetown Environmental Committee, said that she has done a lot of work on leaf blowers and ecological landscaping and creating a healthier environment while decreasing water usage. She said telling people what to do doesn't usually work well, but rather educating on cost savings and ways to reduce usage. She spoke about a certification program for landscapers to increase the health of the environment and asked the Legislature to support it. She asked the Legislature to consider purchasing drought tolerant seed for grasses in bulk and residents could purchase it to help decrease water usage. L. Seeman, Rockland County Water Coalition, said that what the committee accomplished is monumental for the future and thanked the committee for bringing integrity to the county. D. Madronero spoke about New Mexico relating water usage to energy installation and water usage savings where solar is installed.

2. REF. #4124 - REPEALING RESOLUTION NO. 599 OF 1999, DISBANDING THE ROCKLAND COUNTY WATER BOARD AND CREATING A JOINT TASK FORCE ON WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
(HONS. HARRIET D. CORNELL, ALDEN WOLFE, LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: LEGS. LOW-HOGAN, EARL, KANTROWITZ, CAREY

ACTION: Counsel will amend wording on second page, #5 to "education, outreach, and incentive programs," adding the word "incentive."

Chair Cornell stated that they had worked a year and a half on the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2011 and the main recommendation was creating a Water Task Force, which was one of the things she put forth to the Public Service Commission (PSC). It is about Rockland County further developing its Water Policy, so that it is safe, long-term, and provides sustainability. There have been a number of studies on record with the NYSDEC, the Department of State, and the PSC, showing it would provide protection of flood plains, prevent flooding, and continue to protect the Hudson river, which is a critical regional resource. A focus would be on educational outreach programs and seeking all possible grant opportunities. Findings would be reported to both the legislative and executive branches of government, plus some recommendations may be for community action, not legislation. A nineteen member task force would be created, none with compensation. Sub-committees would be created, as needed, including members of the community, so that others can be engaged in the work of the committee. Leg. Carey asked if the person that would be from the Planning Department would be a permanent hire? Chair Cornell stated that they didn't have a resolution yet. She said the Coordinator was a suggestion and that the Planning Department was a good source for the position. Leg. Low-Hogan suggested the word incentives be added. D. Madronero asked for resident representation on the task force, rather than focusing on businesses. Chair Cornell stated that the representatives of the Rockland County Water Coalition were certainly cognizant of the residents' issues.

MOTION TO APPROVE:
WOLFE/LOW-HOGAN

UNAN

MOTION TO ADJOURN 6:55 PM
EARL/WOLFE

UNAN

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