

VILLAGE OF MAMARONECK COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
November 21, 2023 Meeting

Members Present: David Freeman (Chair), Lou Young (Trustee, on Zoom), Nora Lucas (Trustee), Dan Kushnick (on Zoom), Liam Robb O'Hagan, Jen LeClair, Lindsay Reitzes, Debbie Sullivan, Renee Crabtree, Katherine Dehais **Absent:** Christi Young, Dinah Koehler, Mandy Forlenza Sticos.

Guests: Carlo Reca and Tom, both members of the public; Katherine Parnell from the VOL Environmental Committee.

The meeting is called to order at 7:48 p.m. at the Village Hall at the Regatta, moved from the Courthouse due to issues with the Zoom.

Minutes of the October 17, 2023 Meeting, revised edition circulated by David earlier today, are unanimously approved.

David announces that this is his last meeting as Chair as his term on the CFTE is ending.

Year-End Reports

- Taylors Lane. David reports he has not had adequate response from the DEC. He advises that the next chair contact elected officials for help on getting the DEC to move forward on allowing the community to make use of this resource.
- Ecologically Sound Open Spaces. Kate presents 7 areas/points that are part of the overall Greenway plan:
 - Rockland Pocket Preserve work is completed; Kate needs to prepare a maintenance plan.
 - Rockland/Sheldrake Birdwalk area needs planning.
 - Greenway River Walks: Kate will be presenting to the BOT and meet with the VOM grant writer to make application for the LIS Study Grant.
 - Ward Avenue, north side of bridge: we will want to work with the ACOE on the plans for this area.
 - Jefferson Avenue Parking Area: ACOE is open to incorporating our suggestions of the open culvert and lowering of the floodplain into the plan for this area, and the SLR report was supportive of the plan as well.
 - Nostrand and Howard: we will be asking for park status of this area.

- There are a number of private sites that we would like to incorporate into the plan for the Greenway; we will be speaking to the BOT.

Kate reports having had 2 meetings with the Thruway Authority regarding I-95 flood water coming into the VOM. They want our report validated before addressing any of the issues. CFTE passed a resolution at the Oct meeting asking the BOT to ask SLR to validate the findings of her report. Kate asks for the CFTE's support at Monday, November 27's BOT Work Session at 5:15 for her presentation of the Mamaroneck Greenway.

- Composting/Healthy Yards. Jen reports that she is still waiting for the updates she has already made to be added to the VOM Website. Jerry was to have followed up. Lou says he will add it to the agenda if Jerry has not done so. Jen is to send an email to Lou and the BOT regarding this.
- Comprehensive Plan. David reports that the plan has been completed, BOT enacted it and now it needs to be implemented.
- Public Education. Liam reports that he emailed everyone on the CFTE a document compiled by Ellen Silver, chair of the CSC Task Force, that summarizes the public education efforts we have made over the past year.
- Climate Smart Communities. Liam reports that the CSC Task Force is ready to submit for Bronze Status in January.

David will be presenting our accomplishments and plans at the December 11 BOT meeting and to the public. Lou reports that they have talked about having the Greenway be a separate effort. David states that Steve Otis is excited about the Greenway project, and hopes we can get more funding for it from the State and from the ACOE.

Report on Recent Events

- Fall Community Cleanup event—November 4. Liam reports that there were 65 attendees; most of the participants were from the schools despite his efforts to reach out further into the community. The compost giveaway in the spring and the shredder, which we did not have this fall, attract more people. More advance notice of the event is needed.
- Larchmont "Rooting for Trees" Event—November 5. David reports that the event was well attended and very informative. Lou mentions the TOM new tree law which drew a lot of opposition from the environmental community.

Updates

- Leaf Blower Law. There will be public discussion at the BOT 12/11 meeting. Nora states that a law banning gas blowers was adopted, but the BOT decided to reexamine other

regulations about leaf blowers including enforcement and municipal exception. Lou reports there is a lot of pushback from the public regarding a municipal exception, but the cost of eliminating gas blowers for the Village needs to be weighed. Katherine Parnell reports that Larchmont does not have a municipal exception. Liam raises the issue of the cost of an electric ride on mower needs to be looked into; the upfront cost may be outweighed by the decreased cost of operating and maintaining. Nora suggests that David ask the VOL administrator about the finances of an electric ride-on mower. David will follow up with Village staff on a cost analysis; he will also follow up with the TOR who Nora reports are also looking into the use of gas powered lawn care machinery. Carlo brought up that it seems discriminatory to allow schools and municipalities to operate gas machinery while banning it for everyone else.

- Unified Solar Permit is on the December 11 BOT agenda.
- Gas-Powered Equipment Buyback. Nora and Lou will follow up with Jerry regarding the status of the vouchers.
- Food Scrap Recycling—status of subscriptions and grant application. We need to get data from Jerry.
- Mamaroneck Greenway. Kate will be presenting this at the BOT Work Session on November 27 at 5:15. See attached Maps and photos.
 - The Salt Shed is VOM owned, too close to the River; Kate and CFTE have been complaining about the salt leaching into the river for a long time, but the VOM has not found another place to put it. Kate suggests putting in a berm and plants creating a vegetative bioswale.
 - Birdwalk. Kate wants to propose lowering the bank here to move water into the interior.
 - Plaza Street. This is private land, recently sold and at risk of development. Village needs to consider acquiring private land in the watershed.
 - Columbus Park going North. Lots of VOM owned land that needs to be cleaned up and upgraded.
 - Nostrand/Howard is being developed by the CFTE as a park.
 - Land behind Speedway and the privately owned parking lot on Lester could be areas to divert and hold water.
 - Kate contacted Taryn (VOM Grant writer) regarding the LIS Study grant money (Sarah Powell). The grant could be used to get an architect to develop an overall design for the Greenway.
- EV Charging Stations. No update.
- Energy Smart Homes. Debbie has been trying to get the Building Department to give her data on heat pump installations without any response. Lou will follow up.
- Strengthening Protection for Wetlands and Wetland Buffer Areas. Follow up next year.
- Energy Stretch Code. Will need to follow up with Carolina.
- CFTE Webpage Update/Refresh; Inauguration of CSC Webpage. Our webpage is seriously out of date. Lindsay suggests we each look at our piece and write material. Lou recommends that the BOT needs to be told about the need publicly and it needs to be put in the budget. Robert Ingenito is not budgeted to do this. Liam says he is able to do an analysis of the website.

New Business (9:15 – 9:30 p.m.)

- **Artificial Turf.** Katherine Parnell brings the dangers of artificial turf to our attention. She reports artificial turf is impermeable in that it kills organisms in the soil under it rendering it unable to soak up water. It gets even hotter than asphalt on hot days (on a 100 degree day, asphalt is 140 degrees with turf being 157 degrees). There is evidence that soccer goalies have increased cancer rates. In Larchmont they are looking into alternatives in Flint Park which drains into the Sound. Carlo agrees that natural grass is much safer for sports. Nora brings up that HCZM and LWRP should review. Currently turf is seen as a replacement for grass and does not require a review, but she questions whether it really should be seen as a replacement in kind for grass.
- **Invasive Vines.** Kate reports that the County put in native plants in Columbus Park 20-30 years ago, but has not maintained them. The rivers have been taken over with invasive vines which impede flow. Question raised as to how to clean up and then maintain the park. Kate asks if river maintenance is part of the Park's Department's duty or if a Conservancy is needed. Carlo brings up that they are understaffed to take this on. Nora reports there was an issue in the past with paying an outside contractor to do maintenance on behalf of the Conservancy in Harbor Island Park. We will need to have maintenance plans for the new parks we are building.
- **Funding of Community Gardens.** Rene reports that the current garden is in a flood plain, gets sun on only a couple of plots and is oversubscribed. She feels that the garden needs a new location in order to be a viable service for the community. Carlo suggests the Rushmore part of Harbor Island, which gets abundant sun. Several mentioned the lack of parking in that location. Nora suggests Rene speak with the HI Conservancy.
- **Affordable Housing.** Liam reports that there are 2 current proposals for affordable housing; both seem to be sustainable and green. He suggests that we keep an eye on the proposals to make sure they meet our environmental goals.

Public Comment:

Tom reports that he lives near the Mamaroneck Metro North station. Starting at 6:10 a.m. there are loud messages played about smoking that run "every 17 minutes for 17 hours/day on 28 speakers". He reports that this does not happen at Harrison, Rye or Larchmont. Although this does not seem to be a matter for this committee, Nora suggests he send a note to Jerry, who has a relationship with people at Metro North. Tom agrees that he will follow up with Jerry.

Carlo presents documents attesting to the safety of Taylors Lane for the use of playing fields and his frustration that the VOM has not moved forward on developing this site. He would like to see playing fields or even passive recreation at the site. He believes NIMBYISM is standing in the way of movement. His documents are from 2002 from Josua Lipsman, MD, MPH the commissioner of Health of Westchester County to George Latimer attesting to the safety of the site; 2004 letter to Carlo from Gianna Aiezza, P.E., Project Manager at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation stating that NYSDEC supports the conversion to playing fields and will work with the VOM on this, and a 2004 letter from Leonard Verrastro,

VOM Manager, to Ron Pergadia, an engineer at NYSDEC proposing the construction of 2 soccer fields at Taylors Lane. (Letters attached.)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Sullivan