

**Kent Conservation Advisory Committee, Town of Kent,
Meeting Notes*, April 17, 2013**

Attendees

Committee members: Anne Balant-Campbell, Dave Ehnebuske, Beth Herr. Visitors: George Baum, Jean Ehnebuske, Bill Volckmann.

*The meeting began at 7:10 PM. There was not a quorum, but those present informally discussed topics on the agenda.

1. Chairperson's Report

Status of CAC vacancy

Bill Volckmann told Chair Beth Herr that he intends to submit his application to be a CAC member to the Town of Kent.

1980's video

The Chair reported that George Baum gave Dave Ehnebuske the DVD requested by Ray Singer's grandson, David Hirsch, so Dave can make copies. The DVD includes a discussion/debate between Martin Brech and Jim Baker that took place at the Mead Farm many years ago. Dave hopes that someone can provide a date for the video so he can place it on the title page. He would also like to know who produced the original version and who edited it so he can note credits, too. George said that he would research those questions and get back to Dave.

Kent CAC display

Quick Reader/QR codes

The Chair brought in a panel of the display to show CAC members the Quick Reader/QR code Dave added to it. He placed QR codes at other places on the display as well. The Chair thanked Dave for his work in offering access to additional information about the CAC and its activities to anyone with a smartphone.

Updating the display

The Chair announced that she thought the CAC might want to replace the largest photo on the display with one that viewers would immediately recognize as a scene in Kent. She suggested an aerial shot from the top of the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower. George said he has a great photo of Cub Scouts on the table rock at Hawk Rock that might work well.

Next exhibit opportunity

The Chair suggested that the CAC may want to reserve a table at the Putnam County 4-H Fair so that the CAC could display the exhibit, answer questions from those who stop by, promote our activities, build awareness of the website, and invite volunteers to join our efforts. She said it is critical that all CAC members know what our mission and message is.

Earth Day and other news from Clearpool Model Forest

The Chair announced that she will be leading a hike at Clearpool Model Forest on Saturday, April 20, in celebration of Earth Day. Her husband, Ralph Szur, will be leading a program about bees. Activities will run from 11 AM to 3 PM.

The Chair said she was delighted to explore the kettle bog at Clearpool, and excited to discover sphagnum moss there. She showed CAC members a few photos of what she found.

2. Kentcac.info website

Dave reported that there were 144 visits to the website in the last month, with 114 unique visitors. There are currently 138 subscribers to the "Hikes" list, and 103 individuals received the Kent Nature Almanac. Dave intends to convert the website to one based on wordpress—the one used for the Kent Nature Almanac—at some point.

3. Kent Nature Almanac

Nothing to report.

4. Hikes and trails

March 24, Amphibian Hunt

The Chair reported that the program she led at Clearpool Model Forest was well attended and very successful, in spite of cool weather.

April 14, Woodcock Walk

The Chair stated that those who attended the program were treated to the sounds of the woodcock mating ritual, and that some in the group even spotted the ascent and descent of a woodcock. She remarked that there were several new people who attended the program, not only FRoGS members.

April 28, Hike to Hawk Rock

The Chair asked who would be leading the hike. She said that she cannot offer to lead it because she made a commitment some time ago to present a program in Westchester County. Dave volunteered to help lead it, and George offered to be the sweep. The Chair asked if there was anyone else who could help. She said she would ask Lou Tartaro. She also remarked that since Highlands Preservation, Inc. conducted a hike to Hawk Rock last Sunday (April 14), that organization must no longer be planning their hikes for first Sundays.

May 14, 7 PM, Carol Gracie at Arts on the Lake

The Chair reported that Carol Gracie—internationally-known wildflower photographer, artist, and author—will be presenting a program at Arts on the Lake. She will focus on spring wildflowers, including many that are found in our area. Eight of her photographs will be displayed at the Kent Public Library during the month of May.

5. Mt. Nimham Fire Tower Committee

Murals

The four mural panels

The Chair projected photos on a pull-down screen of the mural panels that members of the Go Green Club at George Fischer Middle School (GFMS) have created. Each panel depicts one of the four seasons.

Providing plexiglass

To preserve the artwork, art teacher/club sponsor Amanda O'Shaughnessy has requested that, if possible, each panel be covered with plexiglass. The Chair will explore where to buy the plexiglass locally. Dave suggested trying Brewster Glass and Home Depot, indicating that maybe the CAC could get the plexiglass donated or at least get it at cost from one of these businesses. Bill said he would try to get the Chair a name for someone she could talk to at Brewster Glass.

Displaying the panels prior to celebration

Bill reported that when the panels are ready, Amanda is hoping to display them in the foyer of the middle school. This will not only give other students the chance to view them, but will also provide a place to keep them for a few weeks. Discussion ensued about also displaying them in the foyer of the Kent Town Hall. The Chair said she would look into it.

Plans for mural celebration

Date and time

The Chair reported that the date for the mural celebration that has been suggested by Amanda is Wednesday, June 12. Amanda is arranging for students to be released for the field trip at 9:30 AM and to be returned to campus for classes by 12 PM.

Logistics concerning the celebration

Discussion arose concerning the vehicle that would bring the students to the upper parking lot and pick them up again, i.e., would a small school bus have enough space to maneuver in that area.

Attendees

The CAC expects that all the students who helped create the panels would want to attend, and that their parents and family members would want to come as well. Discussion ensued about who the CAC would like to invite to the event. The following suggestions were made:

- Any other sponsor/s of the Go Green Club (the Chair will check—maybe it's Jayne Chiappone?)
- Any other middle-school art teachers who were involved with the project (the Chair will check)
- The principals of the GFMS, Mr. Ed LoPresti (grades 5-6), and Mr. William Manfredonia (grades 7-8)
- Maybe the Carmel Schools Superintendent, Dr. James M. Ryan
- Maybe the Carmel Schools Board of Education President, Richard Kreps
- The DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson and Jeff Wiegert
- Town of Kent Supervisor Kathy Doherty and all the Kent Town Board members
- Town of Kent Police Chief, Alexander W. DiVernieri, Jr.
- Adam B. Stiebling, Putnam County Commissioner of the Bureau of Emergency Services
- Putnam County Executive, MaryEllen Odell
- The two Putnam County Legislators who represent Kent, Legislator Richard T. Othmer, Jr. (who is also the current chair of the Legislature), and Legislator Carl L. Albano

Invitations

The Chair said she would create a draft of the invitation to share with CAC members at the May meeting. She intends to make the DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson aware of the mural celebration plans far in advance of sending her an invitation.

Press release

The Chair plans to write a draft of a press release that she will share with CAC members. She will ask Marty Collins for her contact list for various local and regional news publications.

Activities to complete prior to mural celebration

Securing signage

The Chair reported that the DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson has not delivered the signs the CAC has been promised. One sign is to acknowledge the CAC's stewardship agreement with the DEC, and the other is to state the maximum occupancy for the cabin of the fire tower. CAC members agreed that it is crucial to post the sign regarding the maximum occupancy as soon as possible. The Chair stated she would follow up with Barbara on this.

Replacing flooring in the cabin

There was agreement among CAC members that the current original flooring in the cabin—pine with plywood overlaying it—needs to be replaced between now and the mural celebration. That will mean dismantling the current flooring and installing new flooring that is the same thickness as what is there now. The Chair said she would talk to a flooring contractor she is working with on her home, and George said he would talk to his neighbor who is a flooring contractor. Both the Chair and George will try to get estimates regarding the cost of materials and labor from these individuals as soon as possible.

Installation of the mural panels

Bill stated that he thinks the CAC should allow two days for installing the panels, Monday, June 10 and Tuesday, June 11, prior to the celebration. He estimates five volunteers would be needed: two in the cabin on top; one half-way up the tower; one at the bottom to clip each panel to the hoisting rope; one to keep any hikers at arms length. Hardhats would be required for each volunteer.

Braces

Bill will check with Greg at Brewster Iron Works about the braces. Bill has heard nothing from him.

Report on garbage pick-up

Dave stated that because Bill has learned that members of the mountain bicycle club would like to help

with garbage pick-up, he and Bill decided there is no need to look for volunteers from the Kentcac.info website lists at the moment.

Report on fire tower restoration plan

Sketch of plan developed

Dave reported that he had sketched out a plan proposing how the CAC might want to proceed in getting organized to reach the goal of restoring the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower. He stated that it is important to determine the scope of the work in advance. He pointed out that since the restoration is such a big undertaking—probably requiring funds of \$30,000 – \$40,000—getting to that goal has to happen one step at a time. He said that since the CAC is prohibited from raising and collecting funds, it needs to rely on some other official organization that is authorized and willing to take on those tasks.

Remarks about/artifacts from the past restoration project

George shared some background and history from the previous Fire Tower restoration project that took place five years ago (2000—2005). He noted that it was members of “Friends of Mount Nimham”—a dba and offshoot of PLAN Kent (a 501(c)(3) organization)—who raised the funds. The CAC was the working committee, and there was a Board of Advisors as well. Board members included Bob Bondi, Bob McDonald, Jane Alexander, officials from some local banks, and others. George said it was felt at the time that having a Board of Advisors comprised of high-profile individuals with local name recognition would lend credibility to the endeavor.

Discussion arose concerning the current viability of “Friends of Mount Nimham” and PLAN Kent. It was determined that Sal Tripi would have that information.

The Chair showed CAC members a few items from the past restoration project—a t-shirt featuring an image of Mt. Nimham, a plexiglass receptacle for receiving donations, and a brochure. She talked briefly about the idea of designing and selling t-shirts as a way to raise funds. She also stated that she likes the idea Bill introduced of selling chocolate bars with an image of Mt. Nimham on them.

CAC member input on proposed plan

Dave invited the input of CAC members on the three-page plan he has sketched out. He created the plan as a google doc to make it easy for CAC members to edit it. He will be in touch with members via e-mail.

6. ELLA (Hudson Hills and Highlands Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance)

No report.

7. Other

No topics were introduced.

The meeting was over at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting of the Kent CAC will be at 7 PM on Wednesday, May 15, at the Kent Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Ehnebuske,
ex-officio recording secretary