

**Kent Conservation Advisory Committee, Town of Kent,
Meeting Minutes, January 15, 2014**

Attendees

Committee members: Anne Balant-Campbell, Marty Collins, Dave Ehnebuske, Beth Herr, Phil Tolmach, Bill Volckmann. Town Board Liaison: Mike Tierney. Visitors: George Baum, Jean Ehnebuske, Tom Hard, Michael Tierney.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

1. Chairperson's report

Welcome to new liaison

Chairperson Beth Herr introduced and welcomed Kent Town Board Councilman Mike Tierney. He will serve as a liaison between the Kent Town Board and the CAC. CAC members introduced themselves.

Letter to new Town Supervisor

Beth stated that she had written to Maureen Fleming, the new Town Supervisor, to welcome her and request a meeting. She also included a copy of the CAC's Annual Report (attached). The Chair had not yet received a response. Councilman Tierney remarked that he had not seen that correspondence, and advised that the usual protocol is to submit correspondence to Town Clerk Lana Cappelli who makes copies for all Town Board members. Beth said she would resubmit her correspondence as he advised.

Terms expiring

Beth announced that the terms of CAC members Anne Balant-Campbell, Bill Buck and Dave Ehnebuske would be expiring this year—a few of them very soon. Councilman Tierney advised Beth to send a letter with this information to the Town Supervisor and Town Board. They will take care of extending the terms.

CAC Annual Report to the Town of Kent

The Chair highlighted some of the activities of the CAC in the past calendar year, and passed around the report for all to see. She said she was pleased that the CAC had offered “such a nice roster of events for the public,” and commented that she is looking forward to the CAC continuing to provide a variety of events for the local community.

Two other reports

Beth stated that she finished an annual report for the New York State Department of Conservation that she will submit at the end of the month. She said she would be receptive to any additional comments, and passed around the report for CAC members to review.

The Chair stated that she also completed another annual report, this one for the New York State Department of Environmental Protection. She remarked that the CAC has just renewed their five-year agreement with the DEP. She plans to submit the report at the end of the month. She passed it around, saying she would welcome any comments.

2. Kentcac.info

Dave provided a brief overview of the content that can be found on the CAC's [website](#). He reported that there had been 73 unique visitors to the website this month. In pleasant weather, when the CAC is hosting hikes and events, the typical number of visitors per month averages 180.

3. Kent Nature Almanac

Beth remarked that the Kent Nature Almanac was launched just a year ago. She has been happy that there have been a number of new contributors over the course of the year, and encouraged CAC members to submit observations as well.

4. Natural Resource Inventory

The Chair reiterated the tentative plans for CAC helping Clearpool Model Forest conduct a natural resource inventory. Dr. Robert Naczi of the New York Botanical Garden would oversee the project. The first step is to find an intern willing to take an unpaid position to work for six weeks on compiling the inventory. The inventory would be conducted according to the protocol of the Botanical Garden, and Bill Buck and Beth Herr would provide guidance. Phil Tolmach offered his help as well.

Marty Collins volunteered to send out press releases to local and regional newspapers regarding the internship position. She asked Beth to please send her detailed information.

5. Hikes and trails

Upcoming hike

Beth announced a "Hike for Nature Lovers" that she scheduled for the day following Valentine's Day. The hike will begin at 1 PM on Saturday, February 15, at the Fred Dill Wildlife Sanctuary. She told CAC members that she had to call off the New Year's Day hike that she planned to lead there because she suffered injuries on another hike a few days before. Bill Volckmann suggested it might be worthwhile for the CAC to consider compiling a list of people willing to be "backup" hike leaders.

Future hikes

Beth stated she would come up with a tentative list of future hikes and dates for 2014 so plans could be settled at the February meeting. There was a brief discussion about past hikes, and when and where they have been held. The Chair remarked that she would like to add a butterfly hike to this year's list, and perhaps a moss hike as well. She would like to have input from CAC members.

6. Mount Nimham Fire Tower Committee

Anti-graffiti plexiglass

Beth has prepared two trial sheets of plexiglass to test in the cabin of the fire tower. They have been coated with car wax since George Baum's experiment showed that to be the most effective anti-graffiti coating. Holes have been drilled in each sheet, and they are ready to be installed. The Chair plans to place old topographic maps under each one temporarily.

Fire Tower Restoration Plan Sketch

The Chair explained that Dave's sketch defines the scope of work that needs to be accomplished to restore the fire tower. She said that as a group, the CAC needs to adopt a plan and then—since the Town of Kent and the CAC are prohibited by law from carrying out the plan—a non-profit organization needs to manage it.

The choice is whether to try to revitalize PLAN Kent so it can play the same role it played in the last fire tower restoration effort or to encourage local interested people to create a new non-profit organization.

Although PLAN Kent is basically a defunct organization now, and is behind with IRS filings, Sal Tripi has confirmed that PLAN Kent is funding the \$2,000 cabin floor replacement.

The Chair reminded CAC members that there is a local pro bono attorney, Stephen Repsher, who has offered to advise the CAC as it considers its options. She suggested arranging a meeting with Mr. Repsher to seek his advice, and invited CAC members to join her. Bill V. and Phil volunteered. Depending on the outcome of that meeting, the next step may well be to ask (a) representative(s) of PLAN Kent to attend a subsequent meeting with Mr. Repsher, herself, Bill V. and Phil to discuss options.

Kiosks from DEC and signage

Beth stated that the DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson contacted Bill V. to offer the CAC one of two types of excess kiosks. Bill reported that one kiosk is a low one that sits on a small pedestal on the ground and the other is a big post-mounted one. Bill stated that the post-mounted type would best serve our purpose. It could be placed by the fire tower. Barbara told Bill that she plans to place information about

the fire tower inside the existing kiosk at the parking lot at the end of Mt. Nimham Court. Bill also stated that he plans to place the “maximum capacity” sign for the fire tower on the tower itself. He will probably use plumbers' tape. The sign is currently some distance away on one of the legs of the repeater tower where the DEC placed it.

Bill reminded CAC members that the sign stating the CAC's responsibility for the fire tower was defaced with brown paint this past fall and that it needs to be replaced with a new sign.

Status of permit to replace the floor

The Chair reported that all paperwork for the DEC has been completed and the permits secured.

Status of braces

Dave reported that Greg at Brewster Iron Works told him the braces are done except for the primer. He will check with Greg again this week to see how things are progressing.

Visit from Mount Beacon Fire Tower representative

Beth asked Bill if he could invite David Rocco to attend the CAC's February meeting. Bill will do so.

7. Educational Leaders Learning Alliance (ELLA)

Phil reported that there has been no news recently.

8. Clearpool Model Forest and program planning

Beth pointed out the many activities that Clearpool offers to both adults and children. Since there are several programs Beth would like the CAC to host—perhaps at one of Clearpool's meeting rooms—she plans to talk with people at Clearpool regarding calendar planning.

One program the Chair said she thinks the CAC should host is a session to educate the public about the emerald ash borer. Another is a program about the value of backyard habitats.

9. Other

News from the Planning Board

Phil reported only a few developments that might be of interest to the CAC. One is that there is a stone chamber on property in Sedgewood Club where someone proposes to build a home. Phil stated that Planning Board member Janis Bolbrock is checking into it.

Site visits with Planning Board

The Chair asked Councilman Tierney if CAC members would be permitted to accompany Planning Board members on site visits. Beth commented that CAC members are a well-educated group who could perhaps offer some advice, especially regarding environmental issues, and George Baum pointed out that the CAC's charter would allow such visits.

Councilman Tierney advised that the CAC ask to have this item placed on a Town Board workshop agenda for discussion among all Town Board members. Planning Board member Phil Tolmach said he would talk to other members of that board and ask them to write a letter to the Town Board recommending this.

Facebook page for Mount Nimham Fire Tower

Bill V. asked if there was an official CAC Facebook page for the fire tower, or any plans to create one. He added that there are already two Facebook pages about the fire tower, but that both are very negative. Beth said there is not a page at present. Anne suggested that as fundraising for the fire tower restoration begins, creating and administering a Facebook page might be a good idea.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

The next meeting of the Kent CAC will be at 7 PM on Wednesday, February 19, 2014, at the Kent Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Ehnebuske,
ex-officio recording secretary

Attachments: Town of Kent CAC 2013 Annual Report

2013 Annual Report

Kent CAC

We are pleased to submit the following report on the activities of the Kent CAC.

The Committee is composed of seven volunteers appointed by the Town Board to provide advice on conservation issues and to conduct such programs as described by Kent Code Article VII. Our meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month (no meetings are held in July, August, and December). They are open to the public and publicized in advance in the local newspaper, on the Town's web site, and by email to anyone who expresses an interest. Reports of our monthly meetings are filed with the Town Clerk and are available on the Committee's page on the Town web site.

The primary focus of the Committee has been to encourage the enjoyment, appreciation and preservation of the natural areas, to maintain the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower, to inventory the natural resources, and to provide an almanac of natural happening in the town of Kent. The Committee encourages the town to ask advice of its knowledgeable members, especially during site visits with the planning board.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Beth Herr and David Ehnebuske are co-chairs. Members include: Bill Buck, Anne Balant-Campbell, Marty Collins, and Phil Tolmach, and Bill Volkmann. The Town Board liaison was Lou Tartaro. We thank Jean Ehnebuske who graciously volunteers as recording secretary.

HIKES

- Our annual New Year's Day Hike was around White Pond was a great way to start the year. Other hikes and programs included:
- An Amphibian Hunt at Clearpool was attended by over 100 people who learned about the value of vernal pools and other wetlands.
- Woodcock Walk
- Fall foliage hike to Mount Nimham Fire Tower
- Hike to kettlehole bog at Clearpool Model Forest
- Mountain Laurel hike at Wonder Lake State Park
- Annual Hike to Hawk Rock
- Earth Programs at Clearpool
- Beekeeping Program at Clearpool
- New display panel about the Kent CAC was used at the Kent Open House
- Kent CAC also co-sponsored a book signing/talk event with Friends of the Great Swamp, Arts on the Lake, and Friends of Kent Library. Carol Gracie, internationally-known wildflower photographer, artist, and author, spoke about wildflowers featured in her most recent book, *Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast: A Natural History*. It was well attended.

NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Plant lists, by Dr. Patrick Cooney, were compiled for NYS properties in Kent: White Pond, Wonder Lake, Canopus Lake, and Mt. Nimham

Maps – Specific data request forms were submitted to Putnam County GIS for a map of Kent with an overlay of all open/green space; no response was received.

The Kent CAC, a member of the steering committee for the Model Forest at Clearpool, attended all meetings. The CAC co-sponsored hikes and educational events. The collaboration will continue with the natural resource inventory: Baseline data is essential monitoring the 300-acre parcel; Kent CAC is partnering with Clearpool/Green Chimneys in an ongoing Biological Survey. Voucher specimens will be collected, processed, and preserved at the New York Botanical Garden. We are currently looking for interns to help with the inventory. (SUNY Environmental School of Forestry interns surveyed the trees; the New York City Department of Environmental Protection surveyed 16 wetlands.)

MT NIMHAM FIRE TOWER

See attached annual report for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The new state volunteer stewardship program application has been approved and replaces the Adopt-a-Natural-Resource program; our responsibility for maintenance of the tower continues.

The NYSDEC installed an information kiosk in the parking area, and added signs acknowledging the stewardship of the Kent CAC.

In an effort to reduce vandalism and graffiti at the tower, the Go Green Club at George Fisher Middle School were engaged to create four murals for the inside of the tower's cabin. Many people attended the opening ceremony at the tower including NYSDEC officials, Putnam County Legislator, Carl Albano, and a representative from Assemblywoman Sandy Galef's office who read a citation congratulating the students on their achievement. The students were formally recognized at a Kent Town Board meeting.

Currently, the floor is being repaired. The murals will be installed and covered in plexiglass in 2014.

The mural event led to a wider conversation about safety at the tower. The KENT CAC co-chairs asked for to a meeting with all the user groups. Adam Stiebling, Commissioner of the Putnam County Office of Emergency Services hosted: attendees included CAC members; NYDEC; representative(s) from the Town of Kent Police Department; Putnam County Sheriff's Department; Fire Departments for the Town of Kent and Lake Carmel; Putnam Emergency and Amateur Repeater League; Putnam County Parks and Recreation; and Deputy Commissioner of the Putnam County Department of Highways and Facilities. As a result, new gates will be installed, more surveillance scheduled, and the option of security cameras explored.

All trash barrels at the tower and next to the DEC kiosk were emptied regularly and the trash taken to the Kent Recycling Center.

HORSEPOUND UNIT

The NYDEP Revocable Permit for the property off Whangtown Road has been renewed for another five years. Our prime activity has been an annual hike to Hawk Rock and the Mead farm site.

WEBSITE

Our webmaster, David Ehnebuske, has worked with the Town's webmaster to maintain the CAC page on the www.townofkentny.gov web site. He also maintains a linked site, www.kentcac.info, and manages the CAC's email subscription system. There is still a "disclaimer" that appears on the Town's website. This "warning" appears when someone prepares to leave the Town's website to visit the committee's site. Since the warning does not show up in any other spaces when individuals wish to visit a non-town website, it appears that the KentCAC is singled out. This has the potential to limit website visitation and should be corrected.

An average of 150 visit the website each month, over 80 subscribe to the Kent Nature Almanac and receive notices about hikes and minutes from meetings.

THE KENT NATURE ALMANAC

The Kent Nature Almanac is published monthly to subscribers via email; it is compiled and edited by the co-chairs from observations made by interested community members. Copies of each month's report are available on the website.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Future Projects/Ideas:

- Repaint the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower
- Create a photographic exhibit for the town hall
- Resurrect Kent's "Paper Roads" hiking trail

Sincerely,

Beth Herr and Dave Ehnebuske
Co-Chairs