

**Kent Conservation Advisory Committee, Town of Kent,
Meeting Minutes, October 16, 2013**

Attendees

Committee members: Bill Buck, Dave Ehnebuske, Beth Herr, Bill Volckmann. Visitor: Jean Ehnebuske.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.

1. Chair's report

Town of Kent "Open House"

Chairperson Beth Herr reported that she represented the Kent CAC at the Town's first "Open House" on Saturday, September 28, from 11 AM – 4 PM. She stated that although it was not very well attended, people did stop by to view the CAC display. When they did, she said she asked them to place stickers on the Town of Kent map that was part of the display to indicate where they live. That generated some interesting conversations. She passed around an article with some photos of the event that appeared in the October 9 issue of the *Putnam County Times/Press*.

The Chair suggested that next year the CAC might consider setting up an exhibit at Kent Community Day at Edward Ryan Memorial Park. It is usually scheduled for the first Saturday in September.

NYDEP Revocable Permit

The Chair reported that the NYDEP Revocable Permit for the property off Whangtown Road has been renewed for another five years.

Renewal of New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC) annual dues

Following a brief discussion, Dave Ehnebuske moved to renew the Kent CAC membership in NYSACC and to ask the Town of Kent to pay the \$75 fee. Bill Volckmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence

The Chair announced that The Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College in Valhalla will be offering several interesting classes this fall/winter. For more information, click [here](#).

2. Kentcac.info

Dave reported that the website is still attracting visitors on an ongoing basis. Interest is always particularly high when the CAC sponsors a hike or other event. Since last month, there have been 250 visits to the website and 125 unique visits. He also stated that he occasionally receives "fan mail" from people who subscribe to the Kent Nature Almanac.

3. Hikes and trails

FrOGS Full Moon Hike

The Chair stated that she will be leading this hike for FrOGS at 6:30 PM on Saturday, October 19, and reiterated her invitation to CAC members to participate.

Fall Foliage Hike to Mount Nimham

This annual CAC-sponsored event will begin at 1 PM on Sunday, October 20. Hikers will meet at the DEC parking area on Mount Nimham Court to begin the hike to the top.

Hike to a kettlehole bog at Clearpool Model Forest

Hikers will meet at Clearpool at 11 AM on Sunday, November 3 to hike to a kettlehole bog. Hikers should bring a lunch and water. The hike will end around 1 PM.

4. Fire Tower Committee

Successful work day

Bill V. reported on the work that several volunteers completed on Friday, September 27. Together, they logged a total of 20.25 people hours of work that day. They removed the paint-splattered sign the vandals had defaced; repainted the tower legs and braces the vandals had marred with brown paint to the highest point they could reach with ladders; and repainted the tower cabin inside and out. George Baum has offered to replace the defaced sign, and CAC members agreed that was a good idea. It was mentioned that the original sign had been created by Sundog Signs on Peekskill Hollow Road.

Status of PLAN Kent

Bill V. stated that he has been unable to reach Sal Tripi to discuss the current situation and way forward, but that he will keep trying. He is hopeful that Sal might share some advice from an accountant's perspective. The Chair said she might try to contact Bob Bradley for advice. He was originally involved in PLAN Kent.

The Chair said she hoped that CAC members could all give themselves “a shot in the arm” and get excited about the prospect of restoring the Mount Nimham Fire Tower. She suggested inviting David Rocca, who led the recent successful restoration of the Mount Beacon Fire Tower, to a future CAC meeting. Bill V. said he would invite David to come to the November meeting to speak and show photos about the project.

Status of permit to replace the floor

Bill V. said he learned from Sal Tripi that PLAN Kent has approved releasing the funds to replace the flooring in the cabin tower. He would like to talk to Sal further to determine the details.

When the Chair and Bill V. were at the user group meeting convened by Adam Stiebling (see notes below), they gave the DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson the form required for the next steps for moving ahead with the floor replacement so she could complete it. They also signed a revised version of the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement Barbara had brought with her. The revision is more specific about what activities are permitted without an additional Temporary Revocable Permit (TRP) and which require a TRP. For example, activities that require bringing in power equipment such as a chainsaw require a TRP. We are now awaiting the return of the Agreement signed by DEC management.

The braces for the first flight of the tower stairs are now ready for installation. Dave asked Bill V. if it was necessary to request a TRP in order to begin that work. Bill replied that he wasn't sure, but that he'd check on it.

Meeting of Mount Nimham user groups

Attendees

The Chair reported that Adam Stiebling, the Putnam County Commissioner of the Bureau of Emergency Services, invited representatives of various user groups to a meeting on October 10. The Chair and Bill V. attended as well as Barbara Lucas-Wilson from the DEC. Also attending were (a) representative(s) from the Town of Kent Police Department; the Putnam County Sheriff's Department; the Fire Departments for the Town of Kent and Lake Carmel; the Putnam Emergency and Amateur Repeater League; the Putnam County Parks and Recreation; and John Tully, Deputy Commissioner of the Putnam County Department of Highways and Facilities. All of these individuals or departments have (a) key(s) to the gate located at the entrance to the gravel road on Mount Nimham Court.

Meeting topics

The Chair reported that much of the meeting involved discussion about securing that gate including talk about how the lock gets destroyed and how to resolve that problem. Currently, Putnam County replaces the locks at a cost of approximately \$2500 per year. There was agreement that that expense could be avoided if the gate was replaced with one built to be locked. Putnam County stated that it could fabricate and install such a gate “in house” to keep the cost to a minimum if the DEC agreed. The DEC agreed verbally and will follow up in writing.

Security cameras

The Chair said she pushed for the installation of security cameras. The estimated cost per camera would be \$2,000 and the county does not have any money for them. The Chair asked if Putnam County would be able to monitor cameras if the money could be raised. She was told that was possible.

Road issues

The Chair reported there was discussion about issues resulting from having a gravel road leading up to the tower, rather than a paved one. Of particular concern for the DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson is the run-off of sediment down the road during storms. She would like to see the road paved, but the official policy of the DEC is "no paving in wooded areas." It is Putnam County that maintains the road because of the mountain-top facility they have there.

The Chair also stated that the DEC has no money to spend on the Mount Nimham property. Bill V. added that in fact the DEC is going to downsize the number of forest rangers and police officers in our region. Many are being relocated to the Adirondacks where there is greater activity.

Bill V. also remarked that the DEC has installed a new gate with a lock at the junction of the old Coles Mill Road (a Town of Kent road) and Mount Nimham Court.

5-year plan

Dave plans to revise the 5-year plan based on the information that PLAN Kent is not going to continue.

5. Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance (ELLA)

Nothing was reported.

6. Other

Town of Kent 2014 budget for CAC

Because the CAC has not been using its funding, the Town cut the CAC's budget from \$700 to \$350 for 2014. The Chair suggested that maybe the 2014 funding could be used to host a conference with invited speakers/experts. At a future meeting, the CAC could discuss which topics would be of most interest to the Kent community.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

The next meeting of the Kent CAC will be at 7 PM on Wednesday, November 20, at the Kent Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Ehnebuske,
ex-officio recording secretary