

**Town of New Paltz**  
**Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission (CWOSP)**  
**Approved Minutes, Meeting of April 11, 2018, at the Community Center**

**Members Present:** Brad Barclay, Lynn Bowdery, Richard Fiesel, John Gotto, Michael Knutson, Cara Lee, and Tom Weiner

**Guests:** New Paltz High School Participation in Government students:

Sean Boyle, Michael Holohan, Max Lunati, Madelynn Maynes and Parker McWilliams

**Town Officials:** None

**Public present:** None

**Minutes taken by:** Lynn Bowdery, CWOSP Commission member and Secretary

**1. Meeting called to order at:** 7:13 PM by Co-chairman John Gotto

**2. Public comments:** None. The students were welcomed and the CWOSP Comm. members introduced themselves.

**3. Review, amend and approve minutes of previous meeting:** No changes to the draft minutes for the February 13, 2018 and March 21, 2018 meetings were suggested. Michael Knutson moved that both those minutes be approved as submitted. Richard Fiesel seconded the motion. All present voted in favor.

**4. Discussion of CWOSP input to Town solar facility law:** Co-chair John Gotto explained CWOSP's role to the students and members. He said he thinks the joint meeting with the EnCB was a useful exercise but he would rather start from what we think rather than looking at an existing law. We should start with the Open Space Plan- it provides the best guidance, but we should present something to the town. John presented a potential problem: if a farmer has a 20 acre cornfield, should he be able to stop farming and cover it with solar panels?

Cara Lee said that NYSERDA has a new model law which has the useful feature of tiers by scale- small scale for onsite use - and it also addresses farmers' solar for their own use. Then tier 3 for commercial scale, between 2MW and 25MW, requiring special permits and site plan review. NYSERDA encourages communities to look at their zoning and hosting potentials as they make solar facility laws.

Lynn Bowdery wondered what would keep the utilities from extending their three-phase lines?

The discussion moved to where the Town should definitely not permit solar facilities. Michael Knutson said not in the floodplain, not in the Gateway Area, and not in wetlands. John asked why not in the floodplain? The discussion touched upon problems of building anything in the floodway, and the fact that much of the floodplain is in agriculture here. Viable farming and farmland should be supported. Important to make sure solar farming does not replace agriculture, but rather supplement it.

Richard Fiesel wondered what impact solar development had on property taxes? Brad Barclay said that the state exempts solar installations from local property taxes for a set period and that NYSERDA recommends that municipalities negotiate Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) programs with commercial scale solar projects. Cara added that both the Scenic Hudson and NYSERDA guidelines recommend avoiding prime and statewide significance soils. John repeated his problem that you are either going to farm or do solar. Brad said that solar installations are not permanent- the land is still there for farming if the solar should be removed. Cara mentioned that the depictions of solar-compatible farming are overly optimistic. Richard brought up actual changes in soil composition from being shaded by panels and Cara noted that some soil compaction occurs due to installation activities and service routes. John said that he does not want farms to be entirely covered by solar panels, but a percentage could be OK, but what percentage? Michael said that farmers need to have diverse income streams to be viable. Brad added that conservation easements on farms bought by Dutchess County always have farmstead areas (where solar could be installed without harming the conservation value of the farm). Richard objected that solar panels deflected rain like an impervious surface. Lynn mentioned that currently farms are allowed to cover huge

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areas with hoop houses, all permitted by the state Ag. and Markets law. Effect in rainwater infiltration might be more significant than that from panels, and yet not significant as runoff problem.

The discussion shifted to the importance of preserving scenic viewsheds and continued beyond: The Open Space Plan is clear on the importance of scenic viewsheds to the people of New Paltz. Screening can mitigate solar installations. Is there an impact on migrating birds, insects? This is not in CWOSP's purview. What about wetland impacts? Damage to habitats, soil compaction, hydrological changes. The EnCB is thinking of having an overlay zone that would avoid the sensitive habitat areas. What about glare as an issue for landing airplanes? A large solar farm could preclude an airport. Solar panels are designed to absorb light, not reflect it. Glass can be non-reflective. What about clearing forests? Open Space Plan considers forests important to protect, forests important for more than just carbon sequestration. Town has a clearing and grading law in place, would that prevent clearing for solar farms?

Michael reflected that we need to make sure that the town can permit renewable energy sources, either by using existing zoning or an overlay zone. John urged us to go back to the Open Space Plan and our land ranking system to determine what needs to be protected.

A date is still needed to have another joint meeting with the EnCB, and Cara is still involved in getting a NYSERDA expert to come.

Assignment: Review the NYSERDA model law  
Review CWOSP ranking system elements  
Come up with thoughts and questions

**5. Follow up on Stony Kill corridor:** Michael Knutson researched parcels in New Paltz over 10 acres in Ulster County AG District 2 and made a list that could be a springboard for outreach. We can see what there is in areas that haven't had much land preservation work. Cara suggested also checking the New Paltz Build-out Analysis, for those areas vulnerable to development. Lynn asked if we are only focusing on farmland. Answer: we have to focus on one thing at a time and doing this will inform our understanding of agriculture. Michael will refine his analysis. Cara mentioned that in 2006, Neil Larson was hired to produce a survey of historical properties of New Paltz, as an attempt to do historic preservation on a landscape scale. There is a copy at the Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection at the Elting Library.

**6. Summarize review of CWOSP past contributions:** We want to have something ready for when there is a press event about the Taliaferro Farm easement, to show off CWOSP's accomplishments. Cara will write up a one-pager on what CWOSP is and what we have done. Tom Weiner suggested adding what CWOSP looks to in the future. Cara and Tom will work together on this.

**7. New Business:** None, but Tom asked when the next regular meeting would be? After trying to find a date other than the second Wednesday of the Month, nothing was found that worked, so we will be keeping the meetings on the second Wednesday of the month even though it means that our Town Board Liaison will miss every other meeting due to the Joint Town/Village Board Meeting at the Village on the 2nd Wednesday every other month. Richard asked the student guests if they had any questions. None were asked.

**8. Adjournment:** Michael Knutson moved that the meeting be adjourned. Brad Barclay seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at about 8:45PM.

Our next meeting will be May 9, 2018.