

TO: Town of Lewisboro Town Board
Town of Lewisboro Planning Board

FROM: Lewisboro Conservation Advisory Council

SUBJECT: CAC Annual Report for 2008

DATE: December 5, 2008

The Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) is pleased to present its annual report for 2008 to the Town of Lewisboro.

Committee Participation.

During 2008, two new members joined our council, bringing us to a total of nine members and one advisory member. One advisory member position remains vacant.

Individual attendance at the monthly CAC meetings has ranged from 100% to 17% . These meetings have been documented and the minutes are available through the Town Clerk. CAC had a representative at five of the seven site walks held to date by the planning board. The CAC Chair has been appointed to the Stormwater Committee and has been an active participant in that role.

Advisory Role

During 2008 through November, the CAC issued 31 letters to the planning board on projects in front of that board. A CAC member has been present at 16 of the 20 (80%) planning board meetings through November to present our views and to stay informed on the activities in front of that board.

While the number of letters is indicative of activity, we believe that the CAC has made strides in being seen as a valuable source of conservation and environmental inputs to the Planning Board. We are gratified that the members of the planning board appear to be thoughtfully considering our comments.

In addition, during 2008 the CAC issued reports to the town board or the planning board on the following topics:

- Request for an aquifer study
- Dirt Road Report
- Drinking Water Supplier Research - Daily Usage Reports
- Outdoor Wood Boilers

Grants

The CAC also was instrumental in preparing a grant request for significant bike and walking path system to help transform the Cross River Hamlet into a more easily traversed area. The CAC also supported the resubmission of a grant request for a bridge in Old Field Preserve, and that submission for a Greenway Grant was approved.

Preserves

The CAC also was active in the preserves in the Town. We worked with one scout and with Westchester Land Trust (WLT) to lay out a new connecting trail in the Leon Levy Preserve. In addition, the CAC coordinated the preparation of the Leon Levy Preserve Management Plan for the Town with the assistance of WLT and significant stakeholders. We held eight meetings over eight months and we believe the result is a very rich and usable document. Although this is still in draft form, we hope that it will be approved by the Town in a timely manner.

Old Business.

We negotiated a viable plan to resolve the Metz case (issue from 2004), and turned over the final negotiations to the Town Attorney and Town Board in mid-summer.

Concerns

There are, as always, some disappointments for this year. The first is that the level of attendance at the council meetings is low, putting more of a burden on those that participate. Also, CAC members have not generally attended Planning Board meetings to better understand the audience for our memos. The second concern is that we have not received direction from the Town on the role of the CAC. We would like our advisory role to the Planning Board and Town Board to be documented. We feel strongly that responsibility for the valuable town preserves has to be assigned to a capable group staffed for this purpose. Third, we do not believe that the Metz case has been resolved. Finally, we were unable to initiate a grass roots sustainability group for the town.

Improvements for 2009

Obviously, our improvement goals revolve around our concerns. We need to ensure that we have CAC members who intend to participate and are able to contribute to the council. We may need to remind the CAC of the Town's participation guidelines for all of its councils. Also, we would like to set a goal for each of the CAC members to attend at least one Planning Board meeting during the year.

We have proposed CAC mission statements to the Town Board. We believe it is important for the Town Board to validate our role as conservation / environmental advisors and advocates to the Planning and Town Boards. If we are to have the lead Preserve role or Sustainability role, or if we are to oversee subcommittees with those tasks, we ask for that role to be stated in our mission. Moreover, we need to recruit additional members with appropriate interests and capabilities, and we can only do that once our mission and roles have been documented.

Also, if in agreement with the CAC mission statement, we may want to make a more disciplined outreach to other Town Committees which have an environmental role, to help further the environmental interests of the town. This may mean that in addition to participating in the Stormwater Committee and attending Planning Board meetings, we may want to have regular liaisons at committee meetings such as Lakes, OSAC, PRAC, ZBA, or others.