



Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board

~AGENDA~

Thursday, February, 28, 2019

1:00 PM

Board Advisory Co-Chairs:
MaryJane Shimsky and David Tubiolo

Committee Room, 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601

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CALL TO ORDER

Guests: Ann-Marie Mitroff, River Program Director, GroundworksUSA/Groundwork Hudson Valley;

Ryan Palmer, Director, Center for the Urban River at Beczak, Sarah Lawrence College

Jenn Epstein, Water Quality Program Scientist, Riverkeeper (partner with CURB and GWHV on water quality monitoring);

David Kvinge, Westchester County Planning

MINUTES APPROVAL

2. Thursday, October 25, 2018

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The importance of municipal participation in the Watershed Management Plan

- Meetings & Survey
2. Watershed Management Plan for the Saw Mill River
 - What municipalities gain from the plan and why it's so important
 - What will be required of municipalities
 - Related elements of the State of the Watershed Report
 - The timetable to have a joint application to the state for funding

Presented by Ann-Marie Mitroff, Ryan Palmer and David Kvinge

3. Water Quality of the Saw Mill River and upcoming river cleanups (Hudson & Saw Mill Rivers)

- Coincides with Riverkeeper's and Groundwork's river cleanup coming in the Spring.

Presented by Jenn Epstein

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT



Bronx River Advisory Board

~MINUTES~

Thursday, October, 25, 2018

1:00 PM

Board Advisory Chair: MaryJane Shimsky

Committee Room, 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601

www.westchesterlegislators.com

CALL TO ORDER

Joint meeting of the Bronx River Watershed Advisory Board (BRAB) and the Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board (SWAB)

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
MaryJane Shimsky	D12 Legislator (Majority Whip)	Present	
David J. Tubiolo	D14 Legislator	Present	

Guests: Alfreda Williams, Nancy Barr, Ann Marie Mitroff, Ryan Palmer, Peter McCartt, David Kvinge, Rob Doscher, Christopher Crane, Terry Lacadano, Brigitte Griswold, Kathy Graves, Jan Blaire, Lorraine Kuhn, Lena Crandall, Suzanne Nolan, Steve Wagner, Jason Klein, Taro Vetaka, Stephen Terracciano, Sophie Niesciur, Joseph Orlando, Emiljana Ulaj, Lena Crandall, George Scott, Paul Summerfield, Karen CoCa, Maggie Greenfield

MINUTES APPROVAL

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Legislator MaryJane Shimsky invited Ann-Marie Mitroff and Ryan Palmer to discuss a model action plan for the Saw Mill River Watershed. Inasmuch as there have been few responses thus far, they have kept the study open in hopes that more people will respond. The report will focus on localized issues and the influences of habitat and urban invasion. It seeks to give a broader view, linking neighboring communities and impacts from one to the other municipality. The goal is to both be instructional, as studies dating back many years will be assessed in conjunction with the report. It will also provide a basis for future grant opportunities. The Draft Report will summarize information about the Saw Mill River from many sources and will cover water quality, restoration opportunities, biodiversity, urbanization, and storm water, among other topics. It will provide updates on habitat and on the state of the watershed; and identify grants that would be best to apply for. Ms. Mitroff passed out copies of the preliminary Action Plans for 2019 through 2023, for both watersheds. Copies are accessible in the attachments found in the full minutes.

Mr. Palmer suggested that information on water quality should include experts to explain water quality metrics. Legislator Shimsky added that a meeting should be planned in advance and that it should include a representative from the Department of Environmental Facilities. She also suggested that it was important that representatives of the affected municipalities be encouraged to participate in the BRAB/SWAB meetings. Perhaps a

municipalities-only conference call is called for in order to help collect information for the Saw Mill River survey as a starting point. Part of the problem is that many municipalities don't have the staff.

David Kvinge and Rob Doscher spoke about the County's work on the Bronx River and plans for a similar study to the one being conducted on the Saw Mill River, which should be completed by the County Department of Planning, hopefully by the Spring of 2019.

Mr. Kvinge gave an overview of work completed so far. He noted that two efforts were recently completed: The first at the intersection of the Bronx River Parkway and Harney Road and the

second at the confluence of the Bronx and Saw Mill Rivers. There is a geomorphological assessment in process now and he expects a draft to be complete within the next few months. Work at Fulton Brook, adjacent to the County Center, is in design and is approximately 60% complete. The issue is similar to Harney Road - sediment due to erosion. Planning has removed sediment from the Bronx and Saw Mill Rivers, stabilized the streambanks, and added plantings. They will check in the spring to see if the riverbanks have been stabilized.

In response to Lena Crandall's concern about the pathway between Scarsdale and Hartsdale, Jason Klein advised that the bids based on the original design were too high and the project is now in redesign.

Ms. Mitroff responded to a query about the use of porous pavement in pathways and roadways. In reference to Trustee Crandall's concern, she noted that porous pavement gets water off the roadway, which prevents accidents - especially those that involve large vehicles. She suggested that the cost of damage and disruption caused by accidents offsets the higher cost of pervious pavement. She stated that in the case of the Scarsdale to Hartsdale pathway, one of the first things to be cut to reduce cost might be porous pavement, had that been included in the original plans, and if so, that should be reconsidered.

Steve Wagner inquired about reuse of dredged soil from Crestwood Lake. Rob Doscher responded that as long as the soil stays on site, it can be reused. However, Suzanne Nolan cautioned that the process to de-water, move the soil on site in very limited space and the damage that these processes can do to the existing site, along with the cost of doing same, may not be worth the effort.

Joseph Orlando, District Office Director for Assemblyman David Buchwald advised the group that there is state money and if municipalities don't participate, it is more difficult to obtain funding. Smaller municipalities don't have the personnel to dedicate which makes it difficult. Because of the shortage of staffing, the small municipalities aren't prepared to participate in the County's 50% match programs for flood remediation. Peter McCartt suggested that the municipalities and perhaps volunteers who are vested in the flooding issues, be identified. Anne Jaffe Holmes of Federated Conservationists and Margaret Uhle of Eastchester were recommended as resources. Mr. Orlando suggested that Village Managers who have responsibility for seeking grants (ie: Downtown revitalization grants) should be looped in as it is their responsibility to file for them, however, as Mr. McCartt pointed out, many don't appear to be engaged in this issue. County Legislators might be able to help identify people.

Jan Blaire suggested that each Village Manager be asked to appoint someone. Legislator Shimsky suggested that we approach each municipality as they were more engaged in 2011. Perhaps a conference call might be more successful.

Legislator Nancy Barr suggested mandating impervious pavement along the rivers. Suzanne Nolan stated that since the water tables along the rivers is so high, that there would be no benefit. She suggested rather, that further out in the watershed where rain first falls would be more useful. We thus need incentives in these areas. Ms. Crandall also noted the need for trees that absorb large quantities of water. Kathy Graves stated that there have been federal monies going to Bronxville (for instance) for construction in the flood plain near Scout Field without any restrictions on measures that exacerbate flooding like removing trees and using non-porous pavement, and that there should be conditions instituted that wouldn't allow this to happen.

Jason Klein stated that the proposal for the development of the Bronx River Corridor Management

Plan starts to address these concerns. The limitation is that not all property is administered by the County. Once a plan is established, it will be up to the municipalities where they are proposed, to participate in mitigation. There is just so much that the County can do to enforce. Standard language has to be agreed upon across the board by municipalities and work must be done as a coordinated effort. Trustee Crandell noted that model legislation would be helpful.

Trustee Crandall also advised that when issues arise, even within a municipality, an example of which is that of a homeowner concerned about a new sub-division being built in Scarsdale, adjacent to her property, who brought her concerns before the Board of Trustees. Yet, because the project is being considered by the Planning Board, The Trustees cannot "tamper" with the project, even though they may find the concern very credible.

Legislator Shimsky informed the Board members that the County hosts training for municipal planning boards and those officials responsible for land use. Rob Doscher responded that Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosted a meeting and there were approximately 250 attendees at the workshop. He stated that the next meeting will be on December 12th at 9:00 AM at the Westchester County Center.

Lorraine Kuhn suggested that outreach be expanded to include commercial developers to educate them about flooding so that they can be sensitive to environmental practices, such as the use of porous pavement, that may initially cost more but will save money in the long run. Enforcement on the part of municipalities is always difficult. However, Trustee Crandall noted that the Town of Greenburgh has code enforcement officers and that the monies brought in due to penalties is significant and it serves as a model for other municipalities to follow.

Paul Summerfield noted that compliance with DEC regulations does exert control on developers for stormwater management, as they have gotten more stringent. Municipalities have gotten savvier as well. Sometimes there is conflict with property owners however.

Jan Blaire also noted that roundtables in the Rivertowns have been successful. Trustees from neighboring communities have attended several in Irvington and have found the collaboration mutually beneficial. She suggested that more workshops would be a good idea.

Legislator Shimsky turned the conversation to flooding subsequent to the most recent storm at the end of September. Mr. Summerfield said that the amount of floodwater that came up very quickly was reminiscent of Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. Harrison Avenue homes adjacent to Tibbets Brook experienced flooding. He did note that those properties do exist in the flood plain so it should be expected, though the City has introduced

measures such as berms to deter flooding, but that solution doesn't always work. Abner Place - intersection of Kimball and Yonkers Avenue is in a low area. There has been a lot of drainage work in that area and they hadn't flooded in (8) years. However, the intensity of the rainfall was too much for the drains to handle in the recent storm.

Lorraine Kuhn noted that the work done by the County at Macy Park has functioned well.

Stephen Terracciano (US Geological Survey) stated that the Federal Government pays for continuous monitoring of river flow along the Bronx River in cooperation with municipal governments and other agencies. They haven't re-established any of the gauges along the river due to lack of funding. He offered to be available to members of the Board to advise. The gauge on the Bronx River doesn't reflect the flow info on other rivers which is important to help assess the effects of weather conditions on the flow of the waters. Water management or changes in the landscape with road improvements or construction has impact on the flow. Legislator Shimsky recalled that there was a State grant awarded to the County to reactivate 11 gauges in the County.

As per Legislator Shimsky's request, Mr. Terracciano sent the following link and explanation:

...the EPA , USGS, and the National Water Quality Monitoring Council have developed the Water Quality Exchange (WQX), a successor to the online data repository STORET, along with the data-dissemination platform Water Quality Portal (WQP; <<https://www.waterqualitydata.us/>>). The WQX allows for Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments and other organizations to upload water-quality and [some] biological data to a database maintained by the EPA through the use of predefined or user-defined templates. Templates include past and current EPA analytical methods, many of the physical parameters and laboratory analytes, units of measure/quantification, etc. These data that are shared through WQX are then automatically published to the WQP. The WQP links to data shared through WQX, historical data previously shared through STORET, USGS National Water Information System (NWIS), USDA databases, and others. Since all data provided will be displayed publicly, organizations with sensitive information may choose to omit certain parameters and metadata prior to upload.

This platform will assist local data collectors in data storage and make their data readily available to the public. Once incorporated into WQX, the data can be linked to other online products, such as mappers and databases, and will be available for greater use by researchers and the public. Tools and resources developed by the EPA for downloading, interpreting, and manipulating the data directly from WQP are freely-available to the public and are written in open-source programming language (for example, R). Examples include programs to run trends/time-series and other statistical analyses.

Lena Crandall noted that Scarsdale had quite a bit of flooding - about 5" of rain fell causing a number of roads to close. Along border of Eastchester, there was backed up sewage reported by residents and a teacher's car was destroyed.

Suzanne Nolan stated that along Bronx River Parkway, a lot of silt was dumped in unexpected areas.

Legislator Shimsky asked for updates on the action list: First on the list was the status of the downed trees not far from the confluence of the Bronx and Saw Mill Rivers. Kathy Graves added that they are starting to build up debris. They are on State DOT property.

Joseph Orlando stated that the DOT is being reshuffled so that they aren't up to speed on responding since there is a new acting Regional Director and people are being transferred to different offices. Leg Shimsky suggested that we discuss with representatives of our

State Delegation so that things get done more quickly.

The Legislator suggested planning for more frequent debris removal along the Bronx River. Ms. Nolan stated that the Parks Department has been good about clearing, though maybe it should be done more frequently.

No updates on plastic and styrofoam. Westchester Parks Foundation, in conjunction with Lawrence Hospital is undertaking a "garbage characterization" project in November in support of the Bronx Alliance's garbage study. Legislator Shimsky asked that any more information gathered be reported at the next meeting.

Suzanne Nolan is working with Taro Vetka in dealing with changes to the Vegetation mapping study, because this year's weather has been unusual, things are sprouting in different seasons. Ms. Nolan noted that vinegar is being used elsewhere and might be a strategy to be considered for killing invasives.

Legislator Shimsky noted the need for alternative solutions to killing poison ivy and other invasives after the Roundup decision in which a man was awarded \$289 million in California, supporting his claim that he has terminal cancer resulting from his extended use of Monsanto's "Roundup" as a weed killer.

Legislator Shimsky referenced her pest management meeting, along with Chris Crane, Senior Legislative Counsel, in which they discussed different ideas to control invasives.

She would like to get a meeting together with relevant Board members representing BRAB, representatives from the Parks, Recreation and Conservation department and the Department of Planning to talk about what might be useful to control invasives. She suggested a field trip.

Jan Blaire noted that The Soil & Water Conservation District is working with a consultant on a plan to refurbish Croton Point Park. They will be using a lot of herbicide to kill invasives in the 125 acre park which will be coordinated with the Pest Management Committee.

Kathy Graves asked about the status of the New York Rising project for the Bronx and Saw Mill River. Paul Summerfield noted that they've gotten through the state process and the project is underway. They've had a kick off meeting and surveyors have begun. They've established priorities and are proceeding as planned. In addition, the Sprain Dam valve is being replaced and is expected in November.

Storm Surge Barriers deadline is November 5th and letters were sent from the Legislature and County Executive. The plan will not be sent to members of Congress until 2021 or 2022. Legislator Shimsky recommended that everyone send their comments in by the deadline.

The next meeting may be in early December, however, it will be determined based on availability due to County budget presentations and meetings.

OTHER BUSINESS

2. Bronx River Corridor Management Plan Proposal

COMMENTS - Current Meeting:

The Proposal to Develop Bronx River Corridor Management Plan in Westchester County, NY is available for review in the full minutes.

3. Saw Mill & Bronx River Action Plans 2019-2023**COMMENTS - Current Meeting:**

Ann-Marie Mitroff and Ryan Palmer provided interim study summaries, pending more responses to surveys for the Saw Mill River and the Bronx River

The Saw Mill River Action Plan 2019-2023 and the Bronx River Action Plan 2019-2023 formats are appended and can be accessed in the full meeting minutes online.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Legislator Tubiolo, seconded by Legislator Shimsky, the Committee adjourned at 2:30 AM.