



Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board

~MINUTES~

Thursday, May, 23, 2019

1:00 PM

Board Advisory Chair: MaryJane Shimsky

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

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CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
MaryJane Shimsky	D12 Legislator (Majority Whip)	Present	

Guests: Ann Marie Mitroff, Oded Holzinger, Ryan Palmer, David Kvinge, Jan Blaire, Beth Roessler, Ethan Pochna, Medadie Sy, Amado Sy, Tara Seeley, Brigitte Griswold, Jason, Klein, Rob Doscher, Victor Carosi, Karem Coca, Lorraine Kuhn, Haven Colgate, Richard Slingerland, Terry Rowe, Paul Summerfield, Pat Bressler

MINUTES APPROVAL

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Ann-Marie Mitroff & Oded Holzinger, Groundwork Hudson Valley; Ryan Palmer, Center for the Urban River at Bezcak (CURB) and David Kvinge, Westchester County Department of Planning made a presentation, starting with Oded Holzinger, who reviewed the state of the Saw Mill River Watershed. they are still collecting survey results and are working toward a CFA Grant proposal for a Watershed Management Plan for intermunicipal watershed projects. He reviewed the survey and input. The report must be submitted by the end of July. The intent is to include the data collected, letters of support from as many as he can muster. They will forward the draft for review in early July. If awarded, by 2021, The County Planning Board will write the request. The intent is to provide a selected conceptual waterfront design. By January 2022, they hope to seek additional monies for the anticipated projects. He introduced David Kvinge who reviewed the Stormwater Reconnaissance Report for the Saw Mill River Watershed which he indicated was limited due to the lack of grant funding. In 2015, the Saw Mill was designated as an inland waterway which entitled it to grant money. Starting with 2007, the Planning Department was able to compile information to begin the work on plans. He expects that there will be more data. The County was awarded a grant to create a flood warning system and the Saw Mill River may be the pilot for that effort when and if the grant is executed. The work is to create a series of stream gauges. It will help collect data that can be used by municipalities as a warning system and also for long term planning. The data will assist in better understanding the stream functions of the entire watershed. There is an economic component which is vital for commerce and recreation. The information can quantify damages that current development causes or has caused.

Mr. Holzinger showed a PowerPoint presentation (see attached) and described the survey and priorities that were derived from them. He noted that there was a location selected

from each municipality and asked that they be fleshed out by each of the representatives. He noted that the grant is highly competitive and that by working together, the municipalities would place the request in a stronger position for success. He noted that a workshop is planned which will help clearly define the parameters of the grant request and the amount of funding to be requested. He suggested that the work together might serve as an in-kind match - a 25% match is required. David Kvinge added that in-kind service is an important component of the plan and suggested that it be "front-loaded" so that reimbursement monies can pay for a consultant to advise. He cited several instances of work done in this manner. One of the more successful he mentioned, was the County's Stormwater Education Outreach plan which equated to a few thousand dollars worth of staff time performed by thirty-eight of Westchester's municipalities in the consortium. He warned that the paperwork is complicated but it must be done as there are specific definitions which must be met for in-kind services. He suggested that the matches underway by the Bronx River Watershed Plan might be useful to follow for ideas. The municipal commitment is defined by 1) participation, 2) meeting the "match", 3) Letters of support and 4) the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Ms. Mitroff handed out copies of "State of the Saw Mill River Watershe 2019" (see attachment) which gives an overview of the river and reviews water quality, wetlands, biodiversity, recreation, ecosystem restoration and the effects of urbanization on flooding. She encouraged attendees to contribute anything that they might consider worthwhile adding. She hopes to avoid making the same mistakes that were made in the past and feels that input from the members will be important in that effort. Her emphasis is to remind people about how rivers work. The chart on page 14 is based directly on the survey responses and in conjunction with the reconnaissance report. Collaboration and stewardship is important because the Saw Mill River doesn't have an "owner". There are many owners on adjacent property, but no direct ownership so it becomes all the more important that a MOU among the various communities happen. It will also strengthen the application for the grant.

Mr. Holzinger outlined the immediate next steps in municipal involvement. He requested a list of questions for the workshop and promised to send the summary after the workshop, and hopes to receive an assessment back. The goal is to have it complete by the end of June. He stated that they are looking for plans that give the maximum benefit for the least amount of money. For example: parking lot "greening" Ms. Mitroff added that the game plan is to assess which of the projects considered would be the most viable to include in the watershed plan - among those that have been evaluated from an engineering and at least a partial design process, and would then help to narrow down the projects to only a few, more realistic options for the watershed plan which can now be funded by the grant. Community engagement - such as cleaning up debris or getting and planting trees from the "Trees for Tribs" program, would be recognized as an "actionable" effort that municipalities can work towards together and would contribute to the local match for funding.

Mr. Holzinger noted that public access via recreation helps encourage community involvement. Victor Carosi noted that much of the property (and most specifically the roadways) in Greenburgh and elsewhere, is state owned and not therefore the river is not easily accessible which inhibits recreation. He suggested looking at the South County Trailway and adjacent roadways for opportunities, along with partnering with the NYS Department of Transportation and the various corporations which have properties that border the river. Some of the suggestions made were bikesharing, kayaking and kayak sharing, A number of other suggestions were made that could potentially be included in the program. Ryan Palmer noted that even having an idea if the types of projects to include would be helpful.

In response to a question regarding the possibility of removing the dam at Woodlands Lake in Ardsley and getting rid of the lake, Legislator Shimsky noted that the Parks department is still considering it and it is still in the design process, and we are awaiting a determination. She noted that David DeLucia of the Parks Department may be monitoring it. This led to discussion about the pros and cons of this action and what the long and short term effects might be, but until the design is complete, they will be unable to make any determination. Suggestions were made regarding other methods of controlling flooding. Mr. Holzinger suggested that the whole exploration of solutions process could be an excellent educational opportunity and learning experience. The members had a free ranging conversation and shared ideas. Some of the suggestions and ideas were as follows:

Mr. Summerfield also suggested that there are monies (perhaps \$1.9 million) in Yonkers that could be allocated to another daylighting project there. Haven Colgate pointed out that while the Hastings-on-Hudson DPW is strapped for money and is therefore unable to perform proactive measures to prevent flooding, they spend a great deal of time and money in clean-up after a climate event. Legislator Shimsky took it a step further and suggested the possibility of finding a way to save staff time on the consequences of flooding and use it for proactive measures, and thought that might count towards a match. Ms. Colgate thought that time spent cleaning culverts would be a good example.

Legislator Shimsky suggested that if there is a project that incorporates several municipalities that it might make sense for them to arrive at ways to jointly meet the match in shared projects. Mr. Holzinger pointed out that it is complicated as to how to assign responsibility depending on how much riverfront each municipality has; which suffers or causes the most damage etc. It will have to be sorted out once the grant has been awarded. However, Lorraine Kuhn suggested that communication be a priority. She suggested a webpage or facebook presence to communicate with communities in the watershed could be implemented right away so communities could share an emergency plan in response to flooding for instance. It can also function to document time, work product, photos etc., for little effort and little cost. Mr. Holzinger mentioned that there is already a volunteer to handle social media. The time spent could also serve as a match. Jan Blaire suggested it as a means to give examples of money saved if proactive measures are taken vs. clean up costs after a flooding event. Ms. Colgate suggested a uniform code be established as a basis for municipalities to adopt and modify to work specific to each. Mr. Holzinger suggested another idea to create incentives for muni's and private developers to implement measures that would reduce flooding and enhance the waterway. Rob Doscher suggested that a first step would be a data collection strategy. Stream flow is a crucial element and to understand pre-storm and post-storm effects, along with the effects of permeability. Ms. Mitroff suggested that seeing previous studies might be helpful. Mr. Holzinger also highlighted the lack of trash bins along the South County Trailway and asked Legislator Shimsky to include the County in a plan to supply more. He suggested that members of the coalition participate in clean up efforts which could also serve as a match. The Legislator also pointed out that vine cutting could act as a match. Jason Klein suggested that the stormwater systems contributes to the trash.

Ryan Palmer noted the sewage testing/tracking being done by Riverkeeper. He noted that it had been a long time since a comprehensive water quality study was done on the river and would like to expand and undertake an updated one. To measure nutrients, metals, caffeine etc. He suggested that if at all possible to complete ahead of time, it can inform the projects chosen. A goal would be to track progress as well. Legislator Shimsky pointed out that in the data being collected currently, there are some really bad results in areas such as Pleasantville and New Castle. This could also have an impact on tributaries. He suggested that the consortium consider projects such as fixing sewer pipes which contribute to the problem. He noted that there are multiple sources of funding at this time. Legislator

Shimsky recommended that DEF be brought in on this. She suggested that a lot of them are municipal sewer pipes. Further she suggested a conversation with the County Executive office, the Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) and the Department of Planning to map out a plan to deal with this issue.

Mr. Holzinger summarized by asking for emailed suggestions and ideas in time to prepare the grant request. Legislator Shimsky commended the attendees and asked each of the municipalites to think about what their respective matches would look like.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Legislator Shimsky, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 PM.