



Saw Mill River Watershed Advisory Board

~MINUTES~

Thursday, February, 28, 2019

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

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

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

Others In Attendance: CEO:David Kvinge, Department of Planning; Jason Klein, Department of Parks, Planning & Conservation; ; GUESTS: Ann Marie Mitroff, Ryan Palmer, Oded Holzinger, Jan Blaire, Jennifer Epstein, Terry Rowe, Kelle Cantrell, Haven Colgate, Sharon Hernstadt, Lorraine Kuhn, Lawrence Lee, Tara Seeley, Paul Summerfield

MINUTES APPROVAL

2. Thursday, October 25, 2018

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Legislator Shimsky opened the meeting and asked Ann Marie Mitroff, Groundworks; Ryan Palmer, CURB; and David Kvinge, Westchester County Department of Planning, to proceed with their presentation. Ms. Mitroff started the presentation regarding Watershed Planing and the State of the Saw Mill River. She noted that much has been done and we have to deal with the results. She referenced *The Westchester Historian's* Fall 2012 issue which presents an environmental history of the Saw Mill River as a comprehensive look at what everyone up and down the river has tried to do - 60-65% urban with lots of pavement which creates flooding issues everywhere. The joint survey prepared by the group had 11 responses up to the point of the meeting: Five (5) prioritized flooding and floodplain management; Four (4) prioritized stormwater management; Four (4) emphasized water quality and the main focus of one (1) respondent was debris removal, trash and land use, restoration and erosion. Ms. Mitroff proceeded to her PowerPoint demonstration (see attached) which included photos of several problem areas up and down the Saw Mill River. She spotlighted a photo of Yonkers looking toward Executive Boulevard, Babbitt Court in

Elmsford; and Macy Park in Ardsley. She pointed out that alterations of natural river systems often lead to unintended consequences - as an example she suggested the Chappaqua flood control project which created flooding in Pleasantville. She also used the debris clearance up river from Hastings and Yonkers which caused water to run faster which was problematic for the two municipalities.

She emphasized education and suggested that comprehensive planning would ensure mitigation of these unintended consequences and bemoaned the fact that it wasn't done in the planning of the Rivertowns Square Project in Dobbs Ferry because the municipalities weren't aware of the problems that could arise.

David Kvinge proceeded to speak of why we need watershed planning. The County Planning Department staffs the Water Conservation District and has engaged in watershed planning for over 20 years. An important and successful function has been to obtain grants for plans and implementation. He noted that the best way to obtain monies, is to have a list of specific recommendations for specific projects, a strategy that has been successful. Inter-municipal cooperation and building consensus is key to a successful project. The County role is to coordinate the projects with them. The County will leverage funds that are available to supplement and grant monies. There are a lot of tools now available such as a robust GIS more detailed information from State and Federal agencies, so the onus of data collection isn't so great. Not-for-profits and local volunteer boards are linked in as well as resources for local information. The County was successful in obtaining a lot of funding for various projects on the Bronx River is a good example of this collaboration. Less complicated because the County owns much of the flood plain which isn't the case with the Saw Mill River.

The first step is to identify stakeholders - past funding has mostly been directed to water quality however, with the impacts of all the storms and increase in flooding, monies are being given for flood mitigation. Hopefully more assistance from FEMA. General scope of work will be compiled for applications for various programs. This was successful for the Bronx River and the County is forging a partnership with Groundworks, CURB and other not-for-profits to do the same for the Saw Mill River. Ann Marie mentioned that there are 113 wetlands - 40% of designated wetlands are flooded so not even acting as wetlands anymore. Wetlands help moderate floods because they soak up so much water and let it out over time in different areas. She mentioned that in 2002-3, Groundworks got a grant to do a 3-4 year fecal study and that sediment is another big problem. She talked about the Groundworks vine cutting project on Farragut Avenue restoration and what a difference it makes. She advocated for municipalities to work closely with Groundworks to establish the plan and noted that the State is ready and willing to work with them once there is a plan. Mr. Holzinger noted that the amount that Groundworks would like to apply for is \$1.4 million

Reviewing the State of Watershed components of the study, she noted that testing must get done before the grant application in order to hone in on gaps and to tailor the plan to that missing data. The components require delineation, creation of a plan and proposed solutions. Army Corps of Engineers look for community participation and won't consider projects otherwise. David Kvinge reinforced Ms. Mitroff's assertions. He stated that that what to do, how to get it done and potential funding sources identified and potential collaborations are important components He suggested that even some part of the design is helpful, as was done with the Bronx River which had drawings 10% completed. He also noted that Letters of Support from LWRP grants. Projects Grant applications are due at the end of July each year through the consolidated funding application process. Applications should be drafted up a few weeks before so that any missing information can be identified. Grants are awarded at the end of the year. However, award letter to execute the grant can take from 6 months to a year. For instance, the flood gauge study was awarded in 2018 and there is still no draft contract. Ryan Palmer added that another consideration is to figure out what consultants to hire and what specialty to focus on as Groundworks and CURB will give

project management support only.

There are challenges: Most municipalities don't have a designated person to represent them on stormwater and flooding issues and regulations vary from municipality to municipality and would have to be standardized uniformly. He indicated that LISWIC, a Sound Shore consortium was a good example to model a Saw Mill River consortium on.

This is a fund matching grant. It was noted that the match is 50%/50%. Legislator Shimsky asked of the monies designated for stormwater issues at the County level could be used as matching funds and Mr. Kvinge said no - those allocations had to be put towards capital projects. Ms. Mitroff stated that labor can translate to dollars and qualify as matching funds.

Groundworks grant in 2008 roundtable looked at language for stormwater regulations and land use planning for Villages and Towns throughout watershed and standard practices for people doing construction can be part of the grant and must be thought about.

Jennifer Epstein, Water Quality Scientist for Riverkeeper, took over the presentation. She first handed out sheets with some highlights on how watershed plans help municipalities (attached). She referenced a 2008-2012 study of the Saw Mill River and the Hudson River watersheds as a basis for a study looking at water quality and some of the problems encountered in water testing - looking for indicators of "people contamination" for swimmers, boaters etc., such as fecal contamination - Enterococcus is the indicator, Sources can come from sewer overflows, street runoff, illicit connections, agricultural runoff, septic system failures and contaminated sediment. It makes it difficult to pinpoint sources. It is also difficult to determine values which indicate that the water is unsafe. She also discussed the wastewater infrastructure in Westchester. The system feeds into the Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Plant which serves 1/2 million people, representing 878 million gallons of water treated per day. She then made recommendations on how to improve water quality.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

Legislator Shimsky adjourned the meeting at 2:52 PM.