

**Minutes of the Kirkland Clinton Climate Smart Committee Task Force  
July 13, 2021 - 6:30 pm - on Zoom**

Present: Carol Gable, Coordinator; Prof. Aaron Strong; Sally Carman, Secretary; Alan Cole, Webmaster; Alma Lowry; Prof. Steve Orvis; Steve Bellona; Joanne Gilles, Clinton Board Liaison; Kathy Collett; Liseli Haines; Shirley Knop; Mona Perrotti; and Guest Jim Frederick.

Jim Frederick, representing the Sherrill Brook Forest Preservation Coalition, made us aware of a vast forest tract of 900 acres, 450 acres of which is for sale. It consists of 60% forest and 40% agricultural land. 2/3 of the land lies within the Town of Kirkland and 1/3 lies in the Town of New Hartford. His group has formed a coalition to buy this land to use for recreational purposes,

The land includes: trails, a waterfall, a stone bridge and other natural features. The long-term goal would be to join with the Kirkland Trail system when it extends from McBride Ave to Limberlost Road. One trail is along the old Chenango Canal Bed and the B & O railroad trail. The land lies behind Sherrill Brook Park and includes land on Route 12B and Brimfield St.

The land is privately owned, but hiking has been allowed, even though posted land. The Tramp and Trail Club hosted their first hike on these trails in 1921. That Club is supportive of the project, as are the Kirkland Trails, the Adirondack Trail Alliance, GE Ski Club, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and Mohawk Valley Bike Club.

A parcel of this land (about 50 acres) behind Riverhawk Company has been sold to a solar farm developer, who will take down trees to put up solar panels. The Coalition made an offer on 200 acres, but it was rejected. The owner is asking \$1.6 million for the land.

Jim will be making a presentation to the Kirkland Town Board meeting on Wednesday, July 14, asking for the Town's support. One plan is to donate the land to the Town. The Towns are reluctant to take on maintenance responsibility.

Aaron suggested an assessment from the US Forestry Service. The Tug Hill Land Conservancy was able to negotiate with a land owner in the Tug Hill area. Shirley noted that US Forest Service grants of up to \$600,000 may be available. New York State funds up to \$300,000 may be available, with additional local fund raising. Carol suggested that local political involvement may be required to obtain a grant.

Members of our group will try to attend the Kirkland Town Board Meeting on July 14. At this point Jim left the meeting. (Carol, Aaron and Sally said they would attend. Carol will send an agenda of the meeting.) Aaron noted that forested land is important for quality of life and recreational uses.

**Food Compost Project**

Steve O noted that the Town and Gown Grant for our composting project was turned down.

However, an anonymous donation to fund six months of the project is available. Aaron said that the data demonstrating the amount saved from the landfill would be valuable. About 65 Clinton residents are willing to pay \$10 a month (about half the cost) to compost their food waste.

**Action item:** It was decided to proceed with the food waste pilot project. Sally will develop a database of the names of those willing to take part.

### **Community conversations**

Alma has met with Anne Debraggio, Director of the Kirkland Town Library, to begin planning for conversations about sustainability and environmental issues. These would be held in the back yards of volunteers. Facilitators and scribes are needed.

**Action item:** Alma will contact Anne again about this project.

### **Comprehensive Plan**

A new comprehensive plan for the Town is needed. Various existing groups in the Town could be contacted to suggest changes in the plan. Steve B. noted that Clinton has been interested in a master plan with the surrounding area. This may require an urban planner.

### **Flood issues**

As flooding was frequently mentioned at the public Hearing about the Kirkland Ave. proposed solar farm, the task force should consider making flooding more of a priority in its work. Asking Kirkland and Clinton to enroll in FEMA's Community Ranking System program for flooding has been discussed and should be revisited as will provide residents with discounted insurance premiums. The last major storm affected Norton Avenue (the bridge is a point where debris collects) and Kirkland Avenue. The DEC is in charge of the Oriskany Creek, so perhaps it would be possible to work with them regarding possible remediation. State Representatives Marianne Buttenschon and Rachel May are interested in this issue.

Steve B noted that increased development has also been a factor in increased flooding, and prevention of flooding is usually not considered in building. Jon Scott of the Kirkland DPW has noted that the St. Mary's corridor has also been a concern.

Storm water management is an important aspect. Increased rainfall has caused a shift in the flood zone. A meeting of Jon Scott and Garry Colarusso of the Town and Chad Davis, County Representative, could help determine what is already being done and what needs to be done. This data would enable application for grants.

Education is important. Now there is a lot of anger regarding flooding. Alma suggested that we need more avenues for people to be heard. Currently there is misunderstanding about the whole flooding issue.

**Action item:** Mona will invite Maggie Reilly to our August meeting. She is the lead engineer on the Sauquoit Creek Flood project. She is knowledgeable about DEC regulations and heads the Indivisible Mohawk Valley Climate Working Group.

**Action item:** Carol will reach out to Garry Colarusson about meeting with a sub group of the task force to discuss actions the town has taken on flooding and possible future actions. Other members interested in attending are Aaron, Steve O, Mona, and Steve B .

**Heat Smart:** Amy Wyatt has materials about grants available for geo-thermal installations. These could be displayed at our booth at the Farmer's Market.

### **Music and Art Festival**

We will have a booth at the Music and Art Festival to be held the Square in Clinton on August 28.

**Action item:** Sally will ask Jackie Walters, Director of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, if we can set up a booth. (Done)

### **Solar charging station**

The charging station has not yet been installed at the Clinton Arena. It has been funded by a NYSERDA grant earned by the Town.

### **Brochure**

Sally has printed a brochure for our group and it has been available at our table at the Farmer's Market. She will also put it in Lombard Hall and the Town Municipal Building.

The next meeting will be on August 10 at 6:30 pm.

Sally Carman  
Secretary