

MINUTES OF THE 438th MEETING
OTSEGO COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Meadows Office Building
Cooperstown, NY

September 4, 2008
6:00 P.M.

1. A regular meeting of the Otsego County Planning Board was called to order by Chairman Ron Streek at 6:00pm in Conference Room B of The Meadows Office Building, near Cooperstown.

2. The roll was called and the following members were recorded as present: Mark Babilonia, Tom Clarke, Phil Durkin, Scott Fickbohm, Ron Streek, Betty Anne Schwerd and Jeff House. Also present was Terry Bliss, staff.

Flo Loomis was excused from the meeting.

3a. Upon a motion by Jeff House, seconded by Phil Durkin and unanimously approved (8-0 vote), the minutes of the August 7th meeting were accepted as presented.

4. Terry Bliss reported on a letter addressed to the County Planning Department from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) dated 9/4/08 regarding the Cooperstown Dreams Park water withdrawal and usage. The letter provided answers to questions raised by the board in March. Mr. Bliss read each question and answer. The board requested that the department ask the SRBC about run-off from irrigation activities on the site into the Susquehanna River. Scott Fickbohm said that OCCA (Otsego County Conservation Association) and the SUNY-Biological Field Station do some monitoring, and the SWCD (Soil & Water Conservation District) looks at sub-basins. The board wondered who had oversight with septic system operations and the application of pesticides.

5. There were no committee reports.

6a. Mark Babilonia opened discussion on sustainability and climate protection. It has long been his interest to address these concerns at the local level. He referred to his handout from a board meeting held earlier this year. His concern has always been alternative energy of various types (non-fossil fuels). He continues to propose that the board review and tailor his draft Otsego County Climate Protection Plan. He sees local food production to be a separate issue.

Phil Durkin remarked that the topic of gas drilling has gotten big so quickly. Ron Streek said that the board should work on one issue at a time.

Jeff House stated that the board has talked about reduced use of energy as well as alternative energy. He suggested that the board focus on one topic at a time. He said that food issues can be better addressed by other local groups. He felt that the county doesn't have a good policy on dealing with alternative energy.

Betty Anne Schwerd said that a goal should be to educate the public on natural gas and leases. There was discussion about the potential sale of water by the village of Cooperstown for gas well hydro-fracking and the possible liabilities.

Jeff House said that the board needs to assess what the county wants to look like in the future. Mark Babilonia said that the board needs to get a draft resolution to the County Board of Representatives through its legislative liaison. Members said that the digester proposal for The Meadows may be considered for reactivation. The SWCD may be involved. Scott Fickbohm added that a solar panel installation could be a demonstration project involving NYSERDA. Mr. Fickbohm spoke about the disconnect between public perception and the reality of limited drilling activity. Ms. Schwerd stated her support for additional funding for the SWCD. Mr. Fickbohm

said that the SWCD will go with DEC on gas well inspections.

Board members thought that the Chenango Bounty food program is a concept that can be brought to the county board.

The board agreed to resume these discussions at the next meeting as it looks for a focus.

6b. Scott Fickbohm said that Tony Capraro of the NRCS (Natural Resources and Conservation Service) office would be interested in serving on the board. Terry Bliss updated the board by saying that Sal Furnari is still an interested candidate, but that Richard Christman is no longer available as a candidate to fill the one remaining board vacancy. The board agreed to invite Mr. Capraro to the next meeting.

6c. There was no other old business brought by members.

7a. Terry Bliss said that a combined site visit to the proposed Madison Square Garden music festival property and a gas well location were still pending word from individuals who would provide these tours.

7b. There was no other new business brought by members.

8. There were no referrals requiring board review.

9. Mr. Bliss suggested that board members consider designating a different monthly meeting night so that it could have more certain use of the large meeting rooms at The Meadows. Members were in full agreement that Monday evenings would be workable. The first Monday night of each month will be the tentative new meeting night beginning as soon as possible.

Mr. Bliss announced the upcoming annual Household Hazardous Waste collection event being held by the county.

Ron Streek said that he wanted to know what action the board would pursue. Mark Babilonia stated that he would like to see all county departments, at the direction of the county's Solid Waste & Environmental Concerns Committee, do individual department energy audits. All agreed that this would be the starting point for the next meeting. Jeff House will speak with NYSERDA representatives about audits for Otsego County government.

10. The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Bliss,
Planning Director