

**Energy & Environment Committee
Meeting Minutes**

DATE & TIME: July 8, 2021; 6:15 PM or immediately following the Public Health & Social Services Committee
LOCATION: Legislative Chambers
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chairwoman Manna Jo Greene
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Fawn A. Tantillo, Laurie Lichtenstein
PRESENT: Legislators Albert Bruno, Laura Petit, Mary Wawro and Chairman David Donaldson
ABSENT: Legislator Peter Criswell
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Deputy Executive Evelyn Wright; David Haldean, Ulster County Environmental Management Council (EMC); Nick Hvozda, Department of Environment; Katherine Beinkafner and Charles Landi, Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA);

Chairwoman Greene called the meeting to order at approximately 6:15 PM and lead the Pledge of Allegiance

Motion No. 1: To approve the minutes of June 3, 2021

Motion Made By: Legislator Wawro
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Bruno

Discussion: None

Voting in Favor: Legislators Greene, Bruno, Petit, Wawro and Donaldson
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 5
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Minutes approved.

The Committee had no Resolutions this month.

UCRRA

Chairman Greene gave the floor to Legislative Chairman Donaldson who shared a June 25, 2021 letter from the UCRRA Executive Director Tim DeGraff regarding efforts to mitigate composting odor (attached) and an financial analysis of the UCRRA composting operation prepared by the legislature's Deputy Clerk/Financial Analyst (attached). Chairman Donaldson

noted the “first-come, first-served” policy for compost sales was problematic and was looking forward to a new UCRRA Board policy to address this. He also said that more needed to be done to mitigate odor from the composting operation.

Chairman Donaldson emphasized the urgency of addressing the future of solid waste issues and the importance of the County working collaboratively with the agency.

Ms. Beinkafner, Chair of the UCRRA Board and Charles Landi, UCRRA Board member described several current programs including composting efforts, additional Household Hazard Waste events and electronics drop offs accommodated on Saturdays.

The explained the loss of 2 major sources of food waste used for composting due to a new facility in Westchester County. They were disappointed that the Legislature recently postponed the implementation of the county’s food waste reduction law for producers of 1-ton of food waste per week.

Deputy Executive Wright explained the reasoning behind this change to the law.

The Committee discussed the composting law’s current requirements for producers of 2-tons or more per week; the inclusion of schools and hospitals in the county law, the hierarchy of food waste diversion and noted that there are other composting operations in Ulster County.

Legislator Petit agreed with the need to work collaborative but was disappointed by an email she shared from a UCRRA Staff member to a colleague of Petit. That email was critical of an educational video about recycling that Petit and her colleague made with former Legislator Joseph Maloney. Petit suggested it would have been more appropriate for the UCRRA staff person to contacted her directly with any concerns.

Chairwoman Greene mentioned the UCRRA Board receives monthly reports and materials ahead of their monthly meeting and requested those reports and materials along with the UCRRA Board agenda be sent to this committee at the same time. UCRRA Board Chair Beinkafner said she would have the materials sent to the clerk of this committee to distribute.

Environment Management Committee

Mr. Haldeman discussed a legal opinion the EMC requested from the County Attorney regarding hybrid meetings in which members could continue to attend electronically as they did during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. There was a brief discussion regarding the benefits of meeting via zoom. Chairwoman Greene asked that Mr. Haldeman forward that opinion.

Mr. Haldeman said the EMC was discussing the difference between various towns conservation advisory board, environmental counsels and conservation committees. They found the main difference is dependent upon the municipality having an up-to-date Open Space Plan. Such a plan would automatically require that advisory board or committee to render an opinion on any plans for the open space in that municipality.

Mr. Haldeman reported that he has been in contact with a firm that has been filtering water from the Delaware River for 15 years. He hopes they may have some insights on how to filter the DEP discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek.

Mr. Haldeman praised the Ulster County Department of the Environment for their help and accommodations. He requested the committee consider some modest budget needs of the EMC that included appropriate video camera and microphone equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings and a stipend to attract someone to serve as a secretary to the committee.

New Business

Chairwoman Greene reported on efforts by local Climate Smart Committees to “Green” the Ulster County Fair to bring together major stakeholder and provide information demonstration projects to the Ulster County Fair next month. They are seeking “Green” vendors to rent space and volunteers to staff the booth.

The Committee discussed the Department of the Environment’s Zero Waste Resolution Annual Report.

Old Business

Chairwoman Greene is pleased with the progress on the development of the Zero Waste Implementation Plan. She remarked it was a slow deliberate process and she was pleased with the cooperation of the UCRRA, Department of the Environment and others in developing this plan.

Chairwoman Green reported that the Clearwater is tracking the pros and cons of the Champlain Power Express and described the concerns of Ulster County communities that draw water from the Hudson River.

Legislator Bruno discussed the need for a study to detail just how much and how long the river sediments would be disturbed to facilitate this transmission line installation. Chairwoman Green said Clearwater is calling for a feasibility study on these impacts.

Dr. Wright described another transmission project proposal along the NYS Thruway right-of-way and the need for a discussion regarding what transmission project have the least environmental impacts and what criteria we use to evaluate them. She said a transmission line is desperately needed.

Chairwoman Greene agreed and spoke about the work of the 7-county Regional Renewable Energy Implementation Plan looking at the Hudson Valley energy grid originally designed to transmit energy one-way and the need for it to be updated to both send and receive energy.

Legislator Petit asked if Chairman Greene expected the Zero Waste Implementation Plan (ZWIP) to be finalized by the end of the year. Chairwoman Greene said the working group expected to have a document to share with the Recycling Oversight Committee, where ZWIP originated, and the UCRRA to be sure it aligns with their Solid Waste Management Plan Goals, before holding a series of stakeholder meetings. When ZWIP is refined, and has a high level of consensus, it will come to the legislature and have formal public hearings. Chairwoman Greene gave some details of how the plan is being researched and developed.

Chairwoman Greene asked if there was any other business, hearing none;

Motion to Adjourn

Motion Made By: Legislator Bruno
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Wawro
No. of Votes in Favor: 4
No. of Votes Against: 0
Time: 8:48 PM

Respectfully submitted by: Fawn Tantillo
Minutes Approved: August 2, 2021