

Report for Federation Meeting 2016

On March 4, 2016, FCWC held it's annual Federation Meeting for our member organizations to come together, build networks and share; but this year we decided to make the meeting a little more interesting.

In addition to allowing for our traditional programming, we invited elected officials from the County and State level to discuss environmental legislation on the horizon, and then offered the attending organizations an opportunity to share about their work and issues of interest.

The meeting welcomed 9 elected officials including: State Assembly members, Thomas Abinanti, David Buchwald, Sandra Galef, a representative from Shelley Mayer's office, Steve Otis, Amy Paulin, State Senator George Latimer, a representative from Andrea Stewart-Cousins' office, and Westchester Legislator Francis Corcoran. Legislator Shimsky was unable to attend, but sent comments to be shared with the attendees.

Assemblyman Buchwald discussed: his work to fight against legislation that would keep the electric vehicle company Tesla from selling in NY; a bill that designated 4 waterways as inland waterways which raises ability to direct state funds to these waterways for cleanup; co-sponsored a bill to prevent fracking wastewater in NY or to be used as salt for roadways throughout the state; along with Assemblywomen Galef, held a press conference about Indian Point and the Algonquin pipeline .

Assemblyman Otis highlighted a legislative commission on solid waste management, survey of "hard to recycle items" and electronic waste; a successful bill that will provide \$200 million in much-needed grant funding over the next three state fiscal years to fund municipal wastewater and drinking water projects, which will help to cleanup local and regional waterways.

Assemblyman Abinanti spoke about anti-idling legislation that was first made law in Westchester and his hopes to expand it statewide; the need to close Indian Point; and legislation he introduced that prohibit New York restaurants from using polystyrene containers to package leftover food.

A representative from **State Senator Stewart -Cousins'** office relayed information that she has been writing letters to FERC regarding the Algonquin pipeline.

Assemblywoman Galef mentioned a bill she sponsored that would provide tax credits on green roofs; legislation that would make it easier to install solar on condos and townhouses, and her outspoken opposition to the Algonquin pipeline.

Assemblywoman Paulin, focusing on her position as the chair of the Committee on Energy, talked about K- Solar, a NYSERDA program to put solar on schools throughout the state; recycling and looking at what we do with plastics and encourage consumers to buy recycled plastic goods; CCA trial in Westchester; Community solar arrays; and issues related to

transportation (more stations, EVs, hydrocars, time-use applications to encourage people to plug in at night, etc.).

State Senator Latimer emphasized the need to convince people beyond our circles that the environment is an important issue, it needs to be made a priority and that we must have a bipartisan commitment; he also commented that two issues impacting Westchester County that he personally thinks are mistakes are the tunnel under Long Island airport and any changes that may happen at the airport.

Legislator Corcoran, as Chair of the Committee on Environment and Health, introduced information on the Westchester Growers Alliance which would provide more land and housing for farmers in Northern Westchester; work to increase the number of EV charging stations throughout the County; legislation that would make it easier for municipalities to adopt solar, and a ban on #4 and #6 heating oil.

Legislator Shimsky as Chair of the Committee on Infrastructure, relayed some issues that have which have potentially serious environmental implications. They include : a fact-finding process that is being designed to determine the major sources of the problems of sewer inflow and infiltration along the Sound; the BOL has commenced review of a new Terminal Use Agreement that can greatly increase air and ground traffic around the airport; trying to initiate plans to get some electric vehicle charging stations in County parking and garage facilities, and appreciation that the Governor has called for a halt to continued construction of the Algonquin Pipeline so that proper risk and safety analyses can be carried out.

Additionally, we were very pleased to have representatives from 29 environmental organizations from around the county who came to discuss their work, their concerns, and what help they could use from the policy-makers. This meeting was simply invaluable because it was a dialog between the environmental community and their elected officials. Representatives from each organization were allowed time to stand up and deliver on their main projects and issues, the elected officials were able to react to some of the prompted concerns.

Below is a summary of the work, interests, concerns, etc. highlighted by the environmental community at the Federation Meeting. Following the summary is a more detailed list of what each representative discussed at the meeting.

- ✓ **Food Waste** – Many groups shared that they have successfully implemented programs at the school or municipal level to curb food waste, now it is a matter of finding a place for this to go. The consensus being that we no longer want to truck out of state.
- ✓ **LED street lighting**– A number of the municipal groups present discussed the achievements they have had with LED lighting projects on town-owned properties, and that they would like to see this expanded.
- ✓ **Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (AIM)** – Repeated by many organizations – ranging from groups concerned about water quality to education organizations – there was a chorus calling for a halt to the pipeline expansion.

- ✓ **Water issues** – A topic that goes hand-in-hand with climate change is water. Many groups cited the need to address storm water infrastructure, rising waters, flooding, and watershed planning.
- ✓ **Complete Streets Program** – Some groups (such as Tarrytown Environmental Advisory Council and Sustainable Westchester) have begun pursuing more pedestrian-friendly and cyclist-friendly changes to comply with the Complete Streets Program.
- ✓ **Nature Access Fund** – It was noted that the environmental community should be expanding its reach to communities that don't traditionally have access to open space. One organization (Rye Nature Center) shared its work with the Nature Access Fund to bring these experiences to senior and disability communities.
- ✓ **Environmental education in schools** – A number of groups, some being those with nature centers and others that are more education-focused, noted the need to address environmental education in schools. The idea being: we need to help the next generation care deeply about these environmental issues.
- ✓ **Long Island Sound water quality** – The condition of the Long Island Sound is important to both ecosystem health and human health. Two areas of concern are: the amount of nitrogen entering the waterways, and the amount of bacteria entering the Sound. A reasonable start to a solution to this problem is to ban or limit fertilizers in county and state parks.

Scarsdale Sustainability Committee- interested in diverting food waste and asked elected officials to think about what can happen at the state level: funding for facilities in New York, putting a mandate “if you are within a certain distance to a facility and produce a certain amount of food waste you must source separate” . They are also working on implementing LED street lighting in their municipality.

Tarrytown Environmental Advisory Coalition – they were a Round 2 Solarize community (campaign ends in 2 weeks w/ 26 signed contracts); working on Complete Streets, they received a grant from WCF) for next 2 years to make streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists, etc. with interventions for traffic calming measures; anti-idling law, concerned that it is almost impossible to enforce and has exception for emergency vehicles so police vehicles are idling all the time (especially during school crossings).

Sunblue Energy – solar policy going well but working with building departments seems to be a challenge to secure permits in a timely manor, more advocacy would be helpful– solar-friendly permitting process (Number 1 action: approve permits more quickly)

FCWC – there is some concern regarding Governor Cuomo’s announcement of the new tunnel under Long Island Sound and changes to the terminal use agreement at the Westchester County Airport.

Representative from Governor Cuomo's office – he is wanting full public participation in the new tunnel process.

Grassroots Environmental Education – pipeline infrastructure; fighting against fracking waste being used for snow; protecting LI Sound from sewage; banning fertilizers with a N2 content higher than 19% (aim to 10% or less); Smart Meter opt-outs b/c people w medical implants are effecting; Child-Safe School (prohibiting idling); synthetic Turf.

Representative from the Village of Irvington – stormwater issues among the villages and what homeowners can do in their backyard- what can be planted to reduce the amount of erosion; school waste and food waste; Microgrid feasibility study.

Hudson River Watershed Alliance – rising waters, flooding, risk, resiliency, and mitigation.

Watershed Agricultural Council: East of Hudson Office – farms manages for potential pollutants, pesticides, and fertilizers; looking at maintain funding streams for source water protection.

Sustainable Westchester – microgrid grant studies, CCA (community choice aggregation program) big electrical co-op; Complete Streets: transportation and land use sector.

Bronx River Watershed Alliance –building bridges between Bronx and Westchester to look at the whole watershed (starting with Bronxville and Yonkers)

Pocantico Watershed Alliance – March 11th Pace held an event that featured current research on the Pocantico Watershed – need for more funding that goes to watershed planning to provide a governmental structure.

Friends of Read Sanctuary- concerned once again about funding for the nature centers, but grateful for the reinstatement of the curator positions in the 2016 County budget, need to preserve and enhance the Westchester conservation movement

Rye Conservation Commission – sustainability plan for the city of Rye (LED lights installed around city hall and should be installed city-wide before too long); meeting on healthy lawns and ditching pesticides or herbicides on lawns.

Town of Cortland Conservation Advisory Council – algonquin pipeline, rewriting tree ordinance (affects homeowners over development projects); issue of plastic bags in Town of Cortland and how to address this issue with a town with a lot of big box stores; Earth Day festival education event

COMA – discussed upcoming events

Rye Nature Center - Nature Access Fund, trying to reach communities that don't have access to open space, senior communities, disability communities; trying to educate rye citizens to pledge against chemical fertilizers

Cranberry Lake - thank you to County Legislators for reinstating the curator position

GNC – composting; Westchester Smart Power (moving away from fossil fuels); teaching solar & alternative energy to students in schools

Westmoreland Sanctuary – budget cuts in schools is an issue, educating in prisons, highly focused curriculum on testing and need to focus on experiential learning in nature to understand sustainability

Green Ossining – working on Energize and Solarize within their community, working with farmers market on plastic bag ban, (but would prefer a County-wide one), focused on water & Indian point, celebrating the largest community-based earth day festival and this year's focus is on water (April 16th)

Save the Sound – reduce nitrogen entering the sound (ecosystem health; reducing bacteria entering the sound (human health); ask to have fertilizer be limited or banned in county or state parks/facilities County has a weak planning department)

Bronx-River Sound Shore Audubon – working on creating future legislators, trying to get children to love birds, youth bird walk, Mt. Vernon and do 5-sessions to get kids excited about birds; eastern blue bird project;

Take Away Messages for FCWC-

At these meetings, FCWC always likes to solicit information on what would be beneficial to our member organizations and to the environmental community at large.

We heard that FCWC could:

- help communities shape legislation on issues such as food waste, plastic bags and solar energy installations.
- act as a facilitator on conversations that many organizations are concerned about
- help groups leverage expertise in various fields
- host a meeting that would bring the business community into the conversation with the federation members
- host a meeting that would bring together CACs and other local community groups

Contact information of those who attended the 2016 Federation Meeting

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