

**Conservation Advisory Council
Town of Amenia
September 23, 2015**

Attendees:

Dave Reagon (Chairman)
Vicki Doyle (Town Board liaison)
Arlene Iuliano
Michael Peek

Agenda:

1. Harlem Valley Sand and Gravel Proposal
2. Composting Proposal
3. Metro North Cell Tower
4. Silo Ridge Status?
5. Natural Resource Inventory
6. Minutes

Harlem Valley Sand and Gravel Proposal

Ian Holback has proposed a reclamation plan for two areas within a parcel owned by Northwest Farms Inc. The property is located just South of South Amenia Road and West of Kent Road. The proposal may require changes to the Soil Mining Overlay, which Mr. Holback is currently seeking. Dave Reagon had an opportunity to tour the property and discuss the project with Mr. Holback. The plan would cut into the steep banks that were left behind by the previous owner to create gentler contours and a more natural landscape. Mr. Holback has a good track record with reclamation of mining areas, and he has made a number of environmental improvements to his properties. For example, he has modified his processing plant to include a closed loop system for washing his materials -- so he no longer discharges wastewater into the Webutuck. There has been some opposition to this proposal in the community. It's not clear to us on what grounds this proposal would be objectionable.

Composting Proposal

Commercial composting is not currently allowed in the Town of Amenia. However, the Town is currently considering a zoning change to allow commercial composting in the OC district -- subject to conditions set by the town and requiring a special use permit. This process was initiated in response to a proposal put forth by Mr. Angelo Bulfamante for a commercial composting operation on his property. The property is located on the West side of Route 22, just North of Tinkertown Road. While we are generally in favor of composting as a general practice, we do have some concerns with regard to a commercial-scale operation. Our concerns include proximity and potential impacts to

Primary Valley Bottom Aquifer (PVBA), handling of leachate, proximity and impacts to residents -- as well as regulations, oversight and enforcement. It's important that the Town consider all of these factors in evaluating both this project and the proposed zoning change. Specifically, with regard to Mr. Bulfamante's proposal, the Town's aquifer map shows that the PVBA does appear to run through the Eastern portion of the property, where the composting operation would be located. There is also a residential area (Glen Ave.) that is in close proximity to the site. Potential impacts including dust, noise, odors and traffic will need to be evaluated. We also question whether the Town has the necessary resources for proper regulation, oversight and enforcement. How will we know what materials are on site on a daily basis? And how can we be sure that our local environment, natural resources and drinking water are properly protected?

Metro North Cell Tower

The FCC has issued a stop work order on the tower, based on the town's objections. Based on a rough visual analysis that Dave prepared, we don't feel that the visual impacts will be significant -- particularly when compared to current impacts from the train station. There is a considerable amount of noise and light pollution throughout the valley on a continual basis. Lighting seems excessive, and trains can be heard idling at all hours of the night. Is there anything that can be done to reduce these impacts? If the project should move forward, all available measures should be taken to make sure that local habitats, natural resources and watersheds are not negatively impacted.

Silo Ridge Status

An Article 78 law suit has been filed by the Amenia Fish and Game Club. The Town Board is waiting to see how this will be resolved before adopting the findings statement and/or doing further work on Silo Ridge matters.

Other Items

There is a Trail Conference on Saturday Oct. 10 from 9:30am to 4:00pm at the Marist College Boathouse. Dave will represent Amenia's trails: Harlem Valley Rail Trail, Wassaic Trail to the Train, etc.

There will be a Community Planting Day at the Amenia Town Hall Playground this Saturday (Sept. 26) from 10am to 3pm. We will be installing a rain garden required by DEC to protect the wetlands. Volunteers are needed!

Pesticides such as Round-Up have adverse impacts on earthworm activity, which in turn has a negative effect on soil quality.