

**TOWN OF CHATHAM  
TOWN BOARD WORKSHOP MEETING  
July 7, 2011**

On July 7, 2011 a Town of Chatham, Town Board Workshop meeting was held.

PRESENT: Supervisor Jesse DeGroot, Councilman Maria Lull, and Councilman Henry Swartz, Jr., Town Clerk Beth Anne Rippel and members of the public

ABSENT: Councilman Tom Meyn and Councilman Jean Rohde

Supervisor DeGroot opened the meeting at 7:00PM. The pledge to the flag was led by Councilman Swartz.

**TOPIC** – Conservation Advisory Council presentation by Gretchen Stevens of Hudsonia Ltd..

- Stevens explained what a CAC is and how it would benefit the community.
- The town board can appoint 3 to 9 members to a CAC and they will act in an advisory capacity only. The Board will give them directives and advise them of their role.
- Careful selection of council members will help mitigate the possibility of forming a group with their own agenda.
- It is helpful if members have some background in the sciences but it's not necessary.
- A CAC could do "homework" for the Planning Board, such as gathering information on natural resources, land use research, the impact a project might have on the environment, establish inventories of all types of different organisms in a certain ecological community, among other things.
- The information they gather would be available to the town's boards and committees as well as to the general public.
- A CAC might also be helpful in investigating grant opportunities.
- The costs associated with a CAC are negligible.
- In 1991 the Town Board passed enabling legislation to establish a CAC. The next step would be to appoint the council if the Board so chooses.

**TOPIC** – Suzette Booy, Columbia County Real Property Tax Department Director presented information on moving from a board of elected assessors to a sole appointed assessor.

- Length of term would be 6 years. The advantages of the longer term would be more time to become familiar with Real Property Tax Law, time to become acquainted with real estate within the town, more proficient in appraising all forms of real estate, more time to complete the basic training courses and more time for continuing education courses, reduced turnover.
- The Board will consider a public hearing on the subject followed by a local law.

Supervisor DeGroot closed the meeting at 8:10 PM

Respectfully submitted by,

Beth Anne Rippel  
Town Clerk

**CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCILS  
IN NEW YORK STATE**

***What is a Conservation Advisory Council (CAC)?***

A CAC is an advisory body that serves to gather and disseminate information, conduct research, and advise other town agencies in the development, management, and protection of natural resources.

***How is it established?***

The CAC is established by the Town Board under the statutory authority of Section 239-x of Article 12-F of the NYS General Municipal Law. The CAC may be established by ordinance or by local law. CAC members are appointed by the Town Board.

***Who are its members?***

The CAC is composed of 3-9 town residents with a strong interest in the mission of the council, the time and willingness to work on CAC tasks, and willingness and ability to work cooperatively with other town agencies. There are no minimum professional qualifications. It is often helpful--but not necessary--to have some CAC members with knowledge and experience in the environmental sciences, planning, engineering, and law.

***What does the CAC do?***

The CAC's main responsibility is to advise in the development, management and protection of natural resources. The CAC provides information, tools, and advice to other town agencies, conducts a townwide natural resource inventory and open space inventory, conducts land use research, assists with reviews of development proposals, gathers and distributes information, and conducts other tasks as requested by town agencies.

***What are the benefits to the town?***

Because the CAC can do some of the "legwork" associated with planning and environmental reviews, it can extend the work of the time-strapped Planning Board. The CAC can gather information on natural resources and conduct detailed analysis of planning issues and environmental impacts, and thus provide a more comprehensive base of information for the policy-making and land use decision-making carried out by the Planning Board and by other town agencies.

Summary by Gretchen Stevens, Chair, Natural Resources Subcommittee, Hilldale Camp/Johnson Park Review Committee.  
Primary reference:  
Westchester County Environmental Management Council, 1997. Conservation Advisory Councils and Boards: A guide to the organization and operation of local environmental advisory councils. Westchester County Department of Planning, White Plains, NY, 41 p.