

NY/NJ HEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
January 31, 2006
DRAFT

Attendees: Bob Alpern, Sarona Bailey-McLain (West Harlem Art Fund), Joel Banslaben (Coastal Marine Resource Center), Tad Barnes (The River Project), Laura Bartovics (HEP Office; NY Sea Grant), David Burg (Wild Metro), Don Chesley, Carter Craft (MWA), Michelle Doran McBean (Future City Inc.), Porter-Ann Gaines (MWA), Yigal Gelb (NYC Audubon), Cindy Goulder (Brooklyn Landscapes), Jane Jackson (NYRP), Dan Mundy (Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers), Manuel Russ (CAC NYCDEP Pollution Prevention), Bill Shore (Nature Network), Cortney Worrall

1) Welcome and Introductions

CC: Opened the meeting and proposed that under #7 on the agenda (Other Business) that Dan Mundy provide an update to the group regarding the latest happening with the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan

2) By-law Vote

CC: In an effort to increase participation and inclusion in the CAC, we've been in the process of reviewing and revising the by-laws. The most dramatic change/improvement is expanding the voting realm to a wider group of people.

LB: The aim is to make for a much more open voting process. While it hasn't been clearly defined in the language in front of us, the idea is that voting members will be anyone who has attended 2 CAC meetings in the past year.

CC: in order to keep track of this, perhaps the CAC should consider scheduling a time for a smaller group of members to get together and discuss processes for tracking members attendance and voting records.

CG: Should be made clear if members can be both individuals or organizations

BA: Also need to ask the Management Committee for a reinstatement of the Local Government Committee

CC: So a summary of the changes to the by-laws that are being proposed and actions that should be taken from here on out: 1) on page 6, section 4 define attendance as one half or more CAC meetings in a year. 2) publish a list of active members and the end of each year 3) the executive subcommittee needs to assemble in the next few weeks and 4) change the definition of a quorum to mean 1/3 of the CAC members. And since we're dealing with by-laws, processes and elections at this meeting, now is a good time to announce that Debbie Mans, the current NJ Co-Chair and up for re-election, has recently accepted a position at Governor Corzine's office and will not be able to continue working as CAC Co-Chair. So we now need to fill the NJ Co-Chair position.

MDM: Suggested the CAC draft a letter, thanking Debbie for her service. Spoke with Debbie before the meeting and discussed the possibility of nominating Debbie's colleague at Baykeeper, Greg Remaud, for the co-chair position. Debbie is not sure he has the time to devote to this position and will get back to Michelle. Regardless, whomever fills the position needs to be someone with a bi-state focus.

CC: Not sure what the procedure should be here; Greg would be a great asset but does the CAC need to issue a new call for nominations?

LB: That's another thing that needs to be fixed in the by-laws. The CAC's Exec. Committee should come up with a process for filling vacancies and then amend the by-laws again.

CC: Ok, so let's open back up the nominations period for 30 days. How would people feel about reaching out to Hackensack Riverkeeper?

MDM: What about Mary Arnold from the Teaneck Creek Conservancy?

DM: Motion for a vote on the Co-Chair candidate presented, Carter Craft. Motion was seconded, election was passed unanimously with two abstentions.

4. Updates on HEP Committees and Implementation Review

YG and CG: Habitat Work Group Update: At the last meeting (Jan. 19, 2006) there was a presentation by Kelly Kunert about her thesis, which used GIS analysis to determine potential restoration sites in the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary. The group was happy to learn that her findings were similar and in keeping with the work group's own site restoration recommendations. There was also a Harbor Herons Conservation Plan update (by Yigal); an update on the fish ladder project on the Rahway River; a discussion of the CRIP, which is coming together in about one year. The HWG will have a role in contributing and reviewing the document; Cathy Yuhas presented the key species list, which is being developed by the group (with input from others) to define keystone species in the region (no plants, though); and someone from the American Littoral Society briefly explained the survey they are getting ready to do of restoration sites along the NJ coast.

BA: HEP has always focused on the Port area of the estuary, and not the Bight region. Historically, there were three estuary committees: LI Sound, Bight and the Hudson. At some point, the Bight and Hudson committees were combined but the Bight has been categorically neglected.

LB: Well, this is partly due to the fact that the CCMP defines a HEP core area, which has resulted in the programs focus on the "port" area and potential confusion

BA: The USACE CRIP remains ambiguous as well; need to determine if we can give the necessary attention to the Bight, and – if not – create a body which can.

CC: The idea of the Bight can be difficult for people to perceive, errant of the NY and NJ disconnect. Perhaps we should look at the ALS Sandy Hook – Cape May survey and see if we can conduct one along the South Shore of Long Island, as well as look at former Governor Codey's oceans document from last year, as well as Pataki's involvement and look for overlap among all; now is the time to draw in the new governor's staff. Perhaps BA could look into what information and studies are available?

BA: Sure, would be happy to participate in a sub-committee but it must include a NJ component as well.

CC: Perhaps BA could put together a one-pager to solicit/entice potential members to the sub-committee?

CC: Public Access Sub-committee update: last meeting was held 2 weeks ago.

According to the HEP targets and goals, the region needs 40 – 50 new public access points to be created by 2009 (this would totally a 10% increase in 2003 levels.) The group would like to see these points focus on direct access to the water (not just visual) and to target low- or no-cost users. The group does not feel private marinas are really a public amenity. To quantify the goal better, the group decided upon 2 new access points in each county until the year 2009. It's now soliciting suggestions for potential locations.

SMB: Would like to recommend a site in West Harlem (north of Riverbank State Park) running from 145th – 155th Streets, in conjunction with the “Take me to the River” study that was recently conducted. They are already working with the NYCSWCD and NYC Audubon to create a youth stewardship program. They would like to establish an oyster gardening program as well. Assemblyman Farrell secured \$10 million for the project to construct 2 new footbridges over the Henry Hudson Parkway. They are planning a “Cultural Loop” tour of the area in July.

JB: The Hudson River Foundation’s study on habitat restoration includes and/or acknowledges public boating sites as habitat sites as well

LB: Management Committee Update: Latest meeting’s focus was on the Implementation Review that happens every three years, when the EPA sends a team to the NY/NJ HEP region to evaluate the program. EPA was in the region in June/July and challenged the HEP with a few items (included in the letter attached to the agenda.) Bob Nyman is drafting a response and starting to look around for consultants to help HEP conduct a sort of strategic plan

CC: So if anyone has suggestions for consultants, they should send them to CC or LB. What’s the timeline on this process?

LB: Much of this will be discussed at tomorrow’s Policy Committee meeting.

DB: the McKinsey group is a good one for these types of studies/processes

CC: MWA recently finished a similar study with the Harvard Business School Alumni Club

JB: What is the CAC’s role in this process? There is the potential for huge change at the HEP through this process, as well as the potential for the CAC to play a large role; shouldn’t be missed.

5. Review of HEP budget process

LB: See page 9 of the agenda handout. HEP is on a tight budget schedule, with work groups needing to submit budget requests by the end of February. The various committees and work groups can submit budget requests; the CAC can and should do so as well.

CC: Think it would be a good idea to go over members thoughts about what the CAC should ask for in their budget.

DM: The CAC should ask for funds to create a “virtual tour of the Harbor” that would be available on CD for teachers, students and anyone else interested in seeing all that the estuary has to offer. Would also like to see the derelict boat removal program for Jamaica Bay receive funding, so they can get the last of the boats removed.

CG: at some point, there was a hearing in transferring small pieces of wetlands over to the NYC Parks Dept. Bill Tai of the NRG said that many of these sites were too small for Parks to make them a priority. Could the CAC focus the importance of these sites?

CC: CAC should assemble a list of recommendations for the HEP strategic plan/consultant process.

CC: Follow up: 2 meetings need to occur in the near future: 1) Membership meeting 2) Budget meeting (after Feb. 16)