

GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING

**March 19, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
At Skidmore College – Gannett Auditorium**

PRESENT: Chairman Veitch; Supervisor Alan Grattidge; David Delozier, Saratoga Springs; Kate Maynard, Wilton Planner; Supervisor Joanne Yepsen, Saratoga Springs; Amy Stock, Sustainable Saratoga; Scott Rakowski, Alteris Renewables; Chad Currin, Capital BioFuel; Brian Jacock, Graystone Strategies; Toni Pitrolo, Green Home Inspections; Erica Fuller, Skidmore College

Chairman Veitch called the meeting to order.

Chairman Veitch said the State is getting ready to start some green energy efficient-type initiatives for buildings, vehicles, etc. and will start making standards for local governments like Saratoga County. Senator McDonald contacted Art Johnson, Chairman of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors and Supervisor of the Town of Wilton, to request the formation of a Green Committee in the County, and Supervisor Johnson appointed me as Chairman of this Committee and the other members.

Chairman Veitch introduced the members present: Supervisor Alan Grattidge, Town of Charlton; Dave Delozier, publicist of the Eco Local Guide; Kate Maynard, Town Planner for the Town of Wilton. He said the Green Committee is strictly a research committee. We are only in business for one year, and we may be reappointed. At the end of the year, we will be presenting a report to the County and offer suggestions to the County to be more energy efficient to save money in its operations, he said. The idea here is to listen to experts, residents, green businesses and others as to what they have done or what they can offer the County in terms of making the County more environmentally friendly, he said.

Chairman Veitch said for the rules of the meeting, each presenter will have 15 minutes. The Committee and attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions of the presenter.

Ms. Yepsen said when she started as a Supervisor, she got a lot of calls, e-mails and suggestions from constituents regarding goals and objectives for the community. She said her and Supervisor Veitch are working with many groups working towards many of the same goals. She said Amy Stock and she have been talking about forming a group called Sustainable Saratoga, and we have gotten over 100 people to attend our meetings, sign up on our website, and expressing interest in chairing our committees. She said they are very enthusiastic in creating short-term goals and long-term vision for not only environmental purposes, but for economical purposes. Part of the reason this group was started was to look at the economy and economic development and try to figure out how we can weave in the ability with everything we are doing in the City regardless of projects. We need to think more clearly about the ability when we are thinking about infrastructure, she said. She stated they put together a mission statement that talks about this grass roots group, and Amy Stock was appointed as the task force chair. This group

was formed to establish and implement short and long-term goals to enhance the economical and environmental sustainability of the City. They are getting called almost every week from profit and non-profit organizations that are interested in partnering and getting more involved in some of their efforts, she stated. It's exciting to partner with the Green Committee at the County level so that we have a County foundation as well as a City focus, she added. She said it's been interesting to see a lot of younger people coming to their meetings who have been living in other areas of the country. There are a lot of other accomplishments and achievements that we can mirror and learn from, so we are reaching out to other cities and national organizations to correspond to us about what they are doing – i.e., bike paths, 100 mile guide, ways to encourage more purchases and use of local products and food, using our local talent in our workers, being able to recycle and looking at more energy efficient buildings and ways we can preserve our open space are just a few of the aspects we are dealing with, she stated. Our goal is to branch out to get some of the short-term goals accomplished as well as looking at a 10-year vision within policy and governmental issues, she said.

Amy Stock said they want to develop a 10-year vision plan of what it would look like for Saratoga Springs to become truly environmentally and economically sustainable. They have broken up into six subcommittees – Energy Efficiency & Resources; Farming, Open Space, Natural Resources and Local Products; Organizational Structure; Outreach & Education; Travel & Transportation; and Recycling, Waste & Composting. She said they meet the last week of every month, and they always have at least 50 people. They usually meet from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., and they have a speaker for the first hour speaking on a topic of interest, and the subcommittee chairs present what they have been working on.

Scott Rakowski from Alteris Renewables said he had some information on incentives that New York State currently offers for both commercial and residential regarding renewable energy. We are committed to renewable energy and new technology. We try to buy our products from manufacturers that are located within the United States. You may have seen the Solar Rights cars around town the last few years, and we joined together, and now we are under the name of Alteris Renewables. We've drawn together talent from other companies that are specialized in solar terminals as well as wind technology and thermal technology. We have an opportunity for a \$5,000 tax credit for solar, and there is a 30% federal tax credit. He displayed some visuals of the various technologies and projects they have done. He said all of the towns have their nose to the grindstone in regards to what's available with the stimulus package, and we are seeing RFP's coming out for the schools, town buildings and all sorts of facilities, and the challenge is all of these products have to be installed by the end of the year. It will be a challenge for us to get it all in this year, he said. He mentioned a town in Connecticut could not have their Christmas lights on due to a power failure, so a bunch of them pulled together to provide a solar panel, and they were able to have the Christmas lights lit via solar power, he said. He explained how a domestic solar hot water system works, and he showed displays of their various projects. He said they recently concluded a large project with Timex.

Chairman Veitch mentioned that the County Building at 50 West High Street has had solar panels since about the 1980's, but it has had a lot of problems. He asked if Alteris or anyone else would work on refurbishing this or check to see if it would still be viable. Mr. Rakowski said a lot of stuff going on in the 1980's was solar thermal, and some of those have been neglected. We could bring it together and do a facelift, he stated. He said Germany is the world's leader in solar technology, and New York State is a very large proponent in the U.S., and ranks no. 4 for the most systems installed.

A question was asked of Mr. Rakowski whether there could be some type of solar powered outdoor lighting that could be used on paths or trails. Mr. Rakowski said Greenwich has a solar lighting project which are streetlights running off of solar panels. The gentleman said he was talking more of a parking lot illuminator. Mr. Rakowski said it certainly could be done. He said it was his feeling that money could be spent more efficiently utilizing technologies that are out there. He said he has been in contact with continuing education with some of the high schools, and he would like to share his knowledge and educate people as to what is available.

Chad Currin, of Capital BioFuel, said he was thrilled when he read in the Times Union that the County was forming this Committee. It is exceptionally important that more counties start to think this way. Our entire process is about helping counties turn their own waste into their own fuel. We have done so in a way that provides all waste in and no waste out. Think of it as converting landfill garbage in to fuel for county vehicles, he said. We started more than a year ago when diesel prices were absolutely skyrocketing. Waste disposal is getting more expensive and more difficult, he stated. He said Capital BioFuel has a prototype model. What we can do for the County is build a facility that converts their own waste into their own fuel. He stated their motto is "Local Waste For Local Fuel For Local Use." They are based on a 20-mile fuel guide. We want to be able to collect all the way within the County to convert to fuel. He said their system will help the County accomplish many of its goals. If you produce your own fuel, you are not paying market prices, you are paying what it costs to produce it, he said. By using our proprietary system, counties can control the amount that they spend every year to fuel their buses, snowplows, diesel vehicles, etc, he stated. The amount of diesel fuel consumed by a county is a staggering quantity. In New York State alone, just for transportation, we use over a billion gallons of diesel. He said when you fill up with diesel fuel, they call it clean diesel, but that's a lie. It's cleaner, but it's still very dirty fuel, he said. Our plan help counties create and maintain jobs, he stated. If a county collects their own waste and converts their own fuel, we can help a county either create jobs or at least reduce layoffs. No body wants to replace a million dollar engine in a five million dollar fire truck. Mixing 20% biodiesel with an 80% petroleum diesel gives you a very good blend of fuel and it will extend engine life and reduce engine wear, he stated. Saratoga County would not have to invest a ton of money to change their whole vehicle fleet to just change their fuel, he said. He said federal standards by 2012 are going to require counties to run 5% - 10% of their fuel as renewable fuel or biofuel.

Mr. Currin said their proprietary system accepts vegetable oil, trap grease, chicken fat and what is ever left over in a cafeteria to convert to fuel. It also accepts butcher scraps,

expired meats and expired cheese. Last year there was a recall on beef. It couldn't be eaten but it could be converted into fuel, he stated. There was also a recall in peanut butter. There is a lot of fat in peanut butter, he said. Any organic substance that can make fat or oil using our system can be converted in biodiesel, he added. He mentioned the first step would be to separate the water. Our fuel is also a replacement for No. 2 heating oil, he said. He said with their third process, they convert whatever is left over, and they make some of the best fertilizer that would sell for about \$1,200/ton. Normal fertilizer sells for \$200/ton. There is something special about what we are doing that makes this a more valuable solution, he said. We work very hard to make sure all the waste we take in has zero waste back, he said. The only thing we are returning to the environment is water vapor, he stated. Everything in our process becomes usable or salable, he said. He stated the county would own and operate the plant. He said everyone wants to know what the return on the investment is. The plant costs about \$10 million to build, and that is the turnkey plant, he said. There could be additional expenses depending how the county wanted to operate it, but not more than \$1 million in additional equipment needs, he said. He stated it takes three years to return your investment. He said they are the only company he knows of helping counties convert their own waste to their own fuel. We need to figure out how to convert what is left over as garbage and use it in another way, he said.

A question was asked regarding health and safety issues dealing with the bacteria components. Mr. Currin said they designed this with a special in-take system. They have a special unit so that when the waste is delivered to the facility, it is instantly converted (slurried) and brought inside in an air free container so that there is no more bacteria or bacteria breakdown, he said. He said they are looking to site their pilot plant, and they would like very much for it to be in Saratoga County. He said the first generation biodiesel uses virgin oil, either corn or soy, and they are all in the throws of bankruptcy because it costs them about \$6 to produce a gallon of diesel when you can buy it for \$2.75 on the open market. We work very hard to make sure it is exceptionally inexpensive, he said.

A question was asked of Mr. Currin if they use toxic or medical waste in their process. Mr. Currin said no, all they use right now is organic waste. There is a way that soon, they will be able to accept all types of waste in and convert the non-organic into methanol which is similar to ethanol. A question was asked, are there biofuel facilities around in general? Mr. Currin said there are biodiesel facilities around that right now produce from virgin oil, and they are struggling to stay open. He said they are proud of what they do. He said part of what they do has been around for over 100 years, and pieces of what they do is very unique, he stated. Our creativity is putting together the whole package, he added.

Brian Jacock, of Graystone Strategies, said he had expressed an interest in participating on this Committee. He said he has been in the environment consulting business for over 30 years, and his background is in geotechnical engineering, and he has spent most of his background in investigation and remediation of hazardous waste sites. They are involved in strategic advisory services to clients regarding environmental issues. Much of what he

does involves renewable energy. His company is part of a team working for the Department of Energy to clean up environmental contamination to decommission all nuclear research facilities. He said he has done a lot of brownfields work, and he assumes Saratoga County is familiar with the brownfields development program and the potential that program provides in terms of capital and financial resources for properties that are owned by municipalities and targeted for redevelopment. There is a lot of interest relative to clean drinking water issues due to the dredging of the Hudson River and the process that General Electric will be undertaking, he said. There is a concern regarding transportation levels and the upset the whole activity may have on the communities. If there are questions on potential impacts, he said he has spent a good part of his career studying, investigating, and remediating PCB contaminated sites, and he would be happy to help out this Committee in that regard. He is about to launch a traditional environmental services company that will be involved in traditional environmental and regulatory compliance as well as investigation and site remediation and restoration. That company will be headquartered in Syracuse, NY, he said. He also will be launching an industrial hygiene and safety company focused on risk management and industrial hygiene and work exposure issues as well as safety issues. He said if there is anything he can do for the Committee, he would be more than happy to help out. He said he would leave brochures if anyone is interested.

Toni Pitroro, Green Home Inspections, said in a few short weeks, she will be launching a home inspection business that focuses on awareness and green issues. It has become common practice to hire home inspector for realty transactions because of a professional objective third party opinion, she said. A home inspection is an obligation of all major components and a recording of conditions, safety concerns and defects, she stated. She said she believes home inspection services are underutilized. She said the report that she will provide will remain online as documentation of the initial condition and will be updated annually with descriptions and pictures of updates and improvements. The average price of a home in New York is about \$205,000 that appreciates in value. The services I provide insures that all major components are safe, in appropriate condition, and will help homeowners plan and protect their investment, she said. Energy efficiency recommendations and replacements will be prioritized and customized according to financial ability. Homeowners will receive reminders of regular maintenance tasks like changing the batteries in carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and replacing units every five years. The goal is finding green options the owner can commit to and download the process in an online home history report. The report is most valuable when it comes time to sell a home, she said. Very much like a car facts history report, the history of a house documented by a New York State licensed home inspector provides that piece of mind, she stated. She mentioned programmable thermostats are one of easiest and most effective things that can be done to reduce energy costs. It is important to consider proper zoning and location of thermostats. For the homeowner concerned about indoor air quality health risks, she can provide information on hazardous materials – carpeting, paint, vinyl, mattresses, granite, etc. Proper ventilation is recommended in every home to avoid the build up of toxic gases, she said. She mentioned a major awareness in the green community regarding vinyl shower curtains and the toxins that are released when you take a hot shower. This is the kind of awareness she want to provide to her clients.

She said she belongs to the National Association of Certified Home Inspectors, and starting in the fall, she will be training other home inspectors on the duties online for annual updated green inspections. My goal is to raise awareness and help homeowners make informed decisions about what they choose to support with their money and to have a conscious plan for the waste stream.

Ms. Pitroro was asked if she will be recommending any contractors specifically, or will that be left up to the homeowner. Ms. Pitroro said it is her belief that the home inspector is one person you can rely on that is not trying to sell you something. She said she will not be recommending specific contractors, but she will be recommending tips on hiring contractors and in giving education on what you are looking for in the job to be done. She said she has a research team for when issues arise that can give her the right answers.

Erica Fuller, Skidmore College, said she does talks in classes and in different groups about what Skidmore is doing in terms of green initiatives and what people can do within the Skidmore community and outside of the community. She said she is strategically placed within Facility Services. She looks for ways in which they can conserve energy. She said they have a really active student group. She said there is a sustainable Skidmore program she runs that works on all sorts of various campaigns, activities and events. She said the website can be found within the Skidmore website. She discussed the commitments they made with geothermal on campus. Right now they are in the process of doing a greenhouse gas inventory. For education, there are several student positions that she works with, and she discussed the many activities that are being done. She said at the end of the semester, they collect material that students leave behind, and they donate it. She said there is an astronomical amount of stuff left behind. Ms. Fuller was asked how many cars were registered to students. Ms. Fuller said they have 2400 students, and if she were to guess, she would say about 60% of the students have cars. She was asked if they measure the trash thrown away and do they try to scale that number down. She said yes to a certain extent. They have a trash hauler that comes at a various schedule depending on the dumpster. Most of the trash is weighed through the trash hauler, but some of the dumpsters do not get weighed. We know how often it is picked up and the volume of the dumpsters, she said.

Chairman Veitch stated the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 29th at 7:00 p.m., and we are trying to get the Stillwater Community Center.

On a motion by Mr. Grattidge, seconded by Mr. Delozier, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann

