

Dutchess County Environmental Management Council (DC EMC)  
Meeting Minutes May 22, 2024

This meeting was held by Zoom

Attendance:

<b>At-Large Members</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Pete Berasi	X	
James Fredrickson		X
Vicky Kelly		X
Constance Kustas	X	
Dave Mergendahl	X	
John Paraskeva	X	
Nancy Severns	X	
Lora Schilling	X	
Keri Ann Wright		X
<b>Ex Officio, CAC Members &amp; Others</b>		
Devin Rigolino, Dutchess County Dept. Planning & Development	X	
Kelsey West, CCEDC	X	
Lisa Kaul, County Legislator	X	
Johanna Fallert, Mothers OutFront	X	

Welcome/Intro/Chairman's comments: Nancy Severns welcomed all to the meeting at 7:06 p.m. Introductions were made.

Meeting Minutes: A motion to accept the minutes of the April 2024 meeting was made by Pete Berasi with a second by John Paraskeva, all were in favor.

Correspondence: none

Website update: none

Funds Update: No change.

EMC Members: Lisa Kaul believes that one more person has expressed interest in joining the EMC to the Dutchess County Legislature. She will followup.

Reports: Climate Smart Communities Update: The silver certification application will be submitted in July.

Fishkill Creek Watershed Alliance: Pete Berasi reported that officers have been elected, Pete did not attend last Watershed meeting so unable to report. They are looking to attain tax exempt status and designation as an official designated waterway.

Solid Waste Management: Vicky set up a field trip to the Columbia County waste facility to tour the aerobic digester system and speak with the Director of the Department of Solid Waste, Wendy Madsen on May 14, 2024, 2PM. In attendance were Vicky Kelly, Nancy Severns, Peter Berasi & John Paraskeva from the EMC, Devin Rigolino from Dutchess County Planning & Development and legislators Lisa Kaul, Chris Drago and secretary to the legislative chair, Ben Traudt.

Columbia County has gone from processing 200 lbs of material per week in 2023 to 1000 lbs per week in 2024. Wendy said to triple what you thought you'd need. They have a 1000 lb. capacity digester, an ERC-1000 from ECO Rich. Original purchase price was \$77k.

There was some concern regarding the safety of operating it although we think it was designed to not require a person on top of it while it's running. Person on top was looking for bags (even compostable) and ham bones. He also appeared to help get some material out of the 35 gal. bin.

Vicky did a bit of research about the chemistry of composting. Because the digester only processes kitchen scraps and not brown material, the product is "hot". That means it's very rich in nitrogen that isn't balanced by carbohydrates. Using the final product would be like putting fresh manure on your garden. It would be too much fertilizer and would burn plants. Wendy was careful about calling it a soil amendment, not compost. Proper composting consists of equal parts "greens" and "browns". The greens are vegetable scraps and the browns are paper, leaves, clippings and other dry material like that. They provide the microbes that are in the greens with food to eat. They also keep the pile from compacting and becoming anaerobic,

which results in methane production and makes the pile stink. Backyard composters usually don't put meat scraps and bones in their piles because they attract animals. The aerobic digester processes material so fast that it can take meat scraps.

A discussion about composting and diverting the food portion of municipal waste into a separate stream followed:

Johanna Fallert mentioned that there are several current studies about managing multiple waste streams and waste incineration. The number of remaining waste incinerators in the country is down significantly over the last 20 years. A digester is needed in Dutchess County and would be beneficial. She felt that the diversion of food waste should be mandated by the county in order to expedite implementation.

Lisa Kaul responded that there are some restrictions on mandates from the county to the municipalities and cities within Dutchess County. It is not a delegated authority and needs to be managed in a different way. Minimally that government role aspect would require further study.

Devin attended the trip to the Columbia County transfer station and recognizes that it would need some coordination here to implement. He questioned if municipalities have the staff and resources to learn the proper operation of the digester. He also agreed to check to see if there are any applicants for the county grant money. If there are no applicants, could the money be used to fund a study or used for a similar purpose? He expressed concern that no applications might be interpreted as no interest but it could be the lack of supporting infrastructure or need for a matching grant. The grant opportunity was offered through multiple communication vehicles.

Lisa planned to offer another trip to the Columbia County transfer station for interested towns and village reps. She will also draft up a budget proposal to address a pilot program at the county level for brine and expanding the hazardous waste collection sites. Additional data will be collected to support the submission.

Johanna Fallert stated that the largest waste incinerator in the country is Covanta Delaware Valley in PA (Chester, PA) and that there is a report associated with it. She will send Nancy a copy for consideration by the group to do an investigation for Dutchess County. Unless it were funded and work done by a consulting firm, the group generally considered it not feasible for us to do a large independent study of our solid waste. However, we did agree to review the report for the possible intent of advising the legislature on issues to consider, possible solutions, newer technologies, etc. The county contract on the incinerator expires in 2027 so efforts should begin soon.

Natural Resource Inventory: A how-to video was developed and issued. An e-newsletter describing the NRI was generated. NRI can now be dropped from the standing agenda. Devin can address on an adhoc basis if questions come up.

State of the Environment: The group discussed writing a state of the environment report in April. It is part of the charge in the enabling legislation for the EMC. We failed to discuss this in the meeting and it should be included in the June agenda.

Road Salt: John Paraskeva stated that Bob Wyant (Red Hook) has been using brine for 3 years now. East Fishkill is looking into purchase of equipment for brine. There is a need for more municipalities to pursue. Meeting in Red Hook went well.

Peach Hill Green Infrastructure Project: Lora reported that they retained all of their students and the rain garden is now complete. The students each submitted their designs and then all voted to come to a winning design. The construction segment of the project is now complete. Native plants were planted according to the winning design. There will be an event in recognition of the project completion on June 15th at Peach Hill. Lora will send us all the details on the event.

Lora will follow up on the request from the Wappingers school district learning opportunity for 5th graders.

Other Business: Dave Mergendahl asked about pursuing details on the food scrap program at Red Hook school district. He believes there are some current measures to separate and compost food waste. Devin commented that, in general, and this case in specific, we should be asking what the challenges are and what they would like to be able to do. Also determine particulars about collection efforts, compliance, and process flow of waste to compost as we learn of this and other instances.

Some commercial enterprises are offering composting on site and the bins are taken to Ulster County according to Johanna Fallert. She stated that \_\_\_\_\_LaGarre (sp?) would also be a good contact on this subject. Rhinebeck tried a composting program but it was not deemed successful. The neighbors of the transfer station complained about the potential odors so that it was not brought to completion. Instead, a farmer volunteered to accept it.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dave Mergendahl. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the EMC is June 26, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. Nancy will send out draft minutes for review.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy Severns