### Rye Sustainability Committee Minutes

February 3, 2021 / 9:30 AM / By Zoom

Attendees

PRESENT:

Patti Capparelli, Chair (PC)

Suzanne Clary (SC)

Chris Cohan (CC)

Gretchen Kaye Crowley (GC)

Sara Goddard (SG)

Pamela Haas (PH)

Amy Kesavan (AK)

Judi Linton (JL)

Linda MacKay (LM)

James Ward (JW)

ABSENT:

None

Agenda ([February 3, 2021 agenda](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SrgDNty1VqiPZ3dDGp_PmgNXzGe7xAOxAPBnR1k6kIc/edit))

Minutes

The Committee convened at 9:30 A.M. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by unanimous agreement.

Greenhouse Gas Inventory:  JW shared the current status. He has renewed our $600 annual membership in ICLEI, or Local Governments for Sustainability. This organization has a powerful cloud-based application, CLEARPATH, for energy and greenhouse gas emissions management. CLEARPATH can perform inventory tasks with all standards met to conform with those of other communities. It also provides access to Google mapping, which enables us to look at community data such as the number of rooftop solar installations and number of cars in Rye, and the mapping can visualize these things as well. CLEARPATH also enables us to  compare ourselves to other towns. The data will be useful for the Mayors’ Covenant and more.  JW is being trained and will continue to share information as it becomes available.

A discussion ensued regarding promotion of this technology and data. SD said in the Rye Sustainability Plan it had been announced that Rye had joined the ICLEI, and noted that there is a good opportunity for RSC PR and networking here. PC asked whether JW had requested 2019 information from Noga Ruttenberg, because the potential going forward is high, including its use by the City Council and even the opportunity to “green up” city buildings. JW agreed that there are ramifications in this for each RSC goal and for measuring our success in meeting those goals.

CC urged resident communication and education, in order to bring everyone along.

JW shared plans to put information about ICLEI and CLEARPATH on social media, including asking Lori Fontanes to write a piece in the next month. The City Council will be approached to present numbers and information at a Council meeting. SG said that would be a good opportunity to educate the public, and perhaps we could also use the library venue for a meeting/talk, once the pandemic allows. PC offered material from the Climate Reality slide show for use in that talk. JW will sign up for the newsletter and provide links to the other committee members.

Invasive Vine Removal:   PC has sent an email to Bob DelTorto and Noga Ruttenberg and will follow up if no reply by February 5. Rye Lions Club will provide lunch.

Community Clean Up Day: The event is scheduled for April 11, with a rain date of April 24. A decision needs to be made where to hold the event. JL suggested Disbrow Park, which needs cleaning several times a year. PC said she would do a walk-through. JW suggested we clean different locations for variety, to keep people coming back.

**Clean Energy Webinar:** JL updated the group on the Sustainable Westchester Clean Energy Webinar, for which a date of March 4 has been requested but not yet confirmed, and which might take place as a lunchtime event. A panel is being assembled. It has been suggested that Rye Brook be included in the event.

Food Scrap Recycling:  LM provided an FSR update. She is working on a partnership with Rye High School student Charlotte Levine and the Environment Club to start a household registration campaign leveraging middle school and high school students and teachers. The goal is to get at least 500 more households signed up. They have made an action-oriented flyer, and there is a possibility of extra credit for participation in the project.

LM said a new welcome letter has been generated, with tips for households joining FSR. We are answering emails and looking at barriers and issues such as people wanting to put out their bins the night before (with associated animal problems).

PC has been approached by a parent whose student is willing to make a highlight reel about topics such as vine removal or the FSR. LM said that Rye TV video footage could be used if updated.

JL spoke about Compost Cycle, in which bikes with trailers are used to pick up food scraps. She has spoken to a Mamaroneck High School teacher who is working on something similar -- a quadricycle with electric assist and two students per bike. That district has put up an insurance/liability  barrier, so they may create a nonprofit that would purchase insurance.

SG said a well-thought-out plan would be doing the City a service, especially if staffed by volunteers. It would save tax dollars. And the  fact that it has been done elsewhere is a plus. As for the school end, she felt the district would probably be happy to listen.

JL has spoken with a lawyer, who said we could use a waiver for parents and students to sign. She will speak to the school district before getting any equipment.

SG suggested starting with the Rye Country Day School as a pilot. LM said the Environment Club at RHS has already expressed interest, with lots of excitement generated by the idea. JL said Hix  Park might be a good place to begin the service as a pilot. She stressed that volunteer commitment would be important. Perhaps we could charge a fee and pay students?

SG said this could be a collection service, to bring scraps to the dropoff when a family needed extra help. PH noted that this would be particularly useful for elderly residents and those who live in apartments such as hers, where there is no curbside pickup, and a discussion ensued regarding Osborn as a potential “customer.”

JW noted that restaurants also might be a target, since he believed they may be required to food scrap. He suggested a technology solution, such as Uber Eats -- which could make Rye’s Compost Cycle project worthy of New York Times interest.

LM talked about missed bins and other problems that this project could help with, building on a service that has attracted lots of passion and commitment we could build on. JW suggested going to the schools and suggesting they come up with business ideas we could support. SG cautioned against mixing business with a city service that is already fiscally responsible and very popular.

CC suggested regarding apartments, with the St. Regis coming online, why not bring them in as a sales point for potential buyers and a requirement for residents? PH pointed out that apartment dwellers are getting a raw deal on FSR, since they pay taxes like any other Rye resident and represent large clusters of households in a small space. It was agreed that she would speak to Ron Schulhof and Michelle Sterling in Scarsdale about how it’s going there with apartment participation.

Donation/Recycle Guide: PC informed the group that an intern has updated the Recycle Guide to bring it in line with COVID-19 restrictions, and it will be going online by next week. LM expressed appreciation for the immense amount of hard work being done by PC with FSR updates.

Green Screen:  GKC said that the documentary has been confirmed for April 22 at 7:00 pm. It is, JUST EAT IT. They are working on getting producer Jenny Rustemeyer as a speaker for the event. And two out of the three panelists have been lined up. Mike  from Mike’s Organics in Stamford will show a video. Chef, Tina Connelly, will speak about making meals from leftovers and about expiration dates. GKC will share the press release draft.

PC asked about soup kitchens and food justice aspects of the screening. GKC talked about the possibility of including someone from the RCDS kitchen, where they are extremely conscious about food scrapping and food justice. PC asked about connections to food drives. GKC answered that was a logical step and could also include access to resources such as Misfits.

New RSC Member:  GKC and PC announced that Amanda Sackay, a Rye Country Day School science teacher and active Rye resident, will be joining the committee, pending mayoral approval.

Pollinator Pathway:  AK  and SD updated the group. They said Liz Garrett will tag everything to be planted in the spring. They are  working with Rye Town Park to add plants. As a result of the article circulated to committee members by SG, they are looking at creating separate beds at the Park and have started a list of potential sites specifically for Monarch-friendly planting.

AK said beehives are planned at the pond.

CC shared his long-term experience with the Town Park. He was involved with the master plan years ago. They generated a list of 1200 native plants, but over time all were weed-wacked by Park maintenance staff. He shared that the pond would be perfect for pollinators. He has seen cosmos full of monarchs, and suggested we focus our attention there. CC referred to Stairs to Nowhere and agreed to share the master plan. Advised following the KISS principle in this Park work.

AK had found the plan but had trouble reading the plants list -- asked for CC to share. They have identified some first-phase beds for pollinators in the Park:

* Flagpole and sundial beds (near changing rooms)
* Flagpole bed (near the pavilion)
* Two beds that flank the duck pond

Signage will be in these locations as well as in the corner bed at Forest & Dearborn and probably other locations as well.

Locations will be finalized as conditions improve on the ground and plant lists are approved.

AK believes that it will be critically important to plant hardy plants and avoid windy areas, and it was agreed that planting against the mural wall would be a big help with regard to protection from wind. Dogs and ignorant visitors represent the main dangers to plantings. She asked for CC’s help with these decisions. He said based on his experience working for the NYC Parks Commission, it’s critical to design with industrial-strength plants. And time is the enemy, because over time, plantings disappear from neglect or destruction.

SD pointed out that signage should be helpful in educating visitors and preventing destruction.

JW suggested that we might consider adding more cleanup days, because they provide an educational venue and also can be used to build community. The more days, the more skills will be attracted. And he suggested the African-American cemetery is another potential cleanup site. (See [Facebook entries](https://www.facebook.com/FOAAC/) about the MLK Day of Service cleanup in January 2021.)

CC recommended focusing on a plaque and protection there. SC thanked him and said  plans are ongoing for funding a survey of the site. Few of the graves are marked, and SC said ground-penetrating radar is needed to identify grave locations. She urged the group not to plant within the cemetery without grave location knowledge. GKC said she had contacted David Thomas, organizer of the Friends of the African American Cemetery regarding planting pollinators there. And CC suggested that outside the cemetery’s stone wall might be a good place to plant.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:50 am.