Environmental Health Task Force
Monday, August 17, 2026 - 11:30 am

Joe Pete Wilson - Chairman

Chairman Wilson called this task force to order at 11:26 am with the following in attendance: Ken Hughes, Mary Lamphear, James O'Bryan, Joe Pete Wilson, Meg Wood, Mike Mascarenas, Anna Reynolds (11:30), Linda Wolf (11:30) and Jim Dougan. Matt Brassard, Richard Preston, and Davina Thurston were excused.

Deputy present: Dina Garvey (11:28)

PLEASE NOTE THE MEETING STARTED PRIOR (11:26 AM) TO THE DEPUTY CLERK ARRIVING AND THE START OF THE RECORDING

DOUGAN: Is my only comment to that is that they aren't, and US Fish and Wildlife as a Federal Agency, they are not efficient at getting anything done. It's definitely an oxymoron to say government efficiency when it comes to the federal government. So, I don't want to give it away, I understand training, but it's just list fine line.

WILSON: And I meant more in terms of how we structure our budget, our planning like that and one way around that is in, we've got the Resilient New York studies going on, Boquet and the East Branch and those could be our way to circumvent that.

DOUGAN: They absolutely are. Those are great to have those studies. Those are opening up opportunities for us without a doubt.

WILSON: That's a good point.

DOUGAN: We found a funding source, we found, like Mike said, we're small enough to get certain things done, okay, so, we've brought in these other funding agencies and we're, I mean this Moss Road project has been, hasn't been easy to execute, it's been slow. We've got BRASS involved, we've got Army Corps. Involved, we've got us involved and making all those pieces fit together, they all work at a different speed, but for the funding that is put in to get us a bridge replacement, while having them be able to get rid of barriers for Atlantic salmon and that kind of spawning works for all of us, but.

WILSON: And we can be strategic, because I was thinking of bigger picture stuff around how you structure the budget with the plan that you came up with. Stuff like that, that's so generic, but it gives a framework, like DEC would be interested in, you know if we can give them a tool they can use, like the Resilient New York studies, where if you adopt this, it opens up this. So, if we have a basic framework, it doesn't have to be the granular level.

DOUGAN: Understood

WILSON: But, a basic level, that's kind of the way I'm pitching it to DEC, to Suzanna, as why this is worth a little extra special attention from her office. So, she gave me a contact, someone to work with. So, I am going to keep following up on that and I will keep you posted.

DOUGAN: Joe Pete and Colin Powers from BRASS, had a real nice interaction back and forth of his being the second steepest river in the State, and Colin dealing with the first deepest river in the State.

WILSON: And that's a relatively granular thing that may not be important to the bigger structure that a lot of counties, like to say, are behind on. So, it's more the planning and the framework you use.

O'BRYAN: I heard you say the East Branch and the AuSable, what are we doing along those? What's going on there?

WILSON: Well, on both the east and west branch of the AuSable, the AuSable River Association is really conducting, they got the funding to conduct these system wide studies and then write up the Resilient New York plan that Jim and I were just talking about. Once you qualify for, DEC accepts your plan and Boquet River is doing the same thing. You get into a smaller pool for bigger funds. So, it's a way to make the competition more focused for the money, do a lot of the vetting upfront, because you're qualified for the plan. So, that's the goal of that program and it is still in its first, did the Town of Jay get Resilient New York funding yet? I don't think anybody has.

DOUGAN: I don't think anybody has yet. Those reports were just completed in the last 6-months for both the Boquet and the AuSable, but that is how we're looking at it. We're looking at it as an opportunity. The whole system of each river has been studied and so everything, wherever we talk about me upsizing a culvert, then we're worried about the one downstream; right? Because we allowed the water, so it's looking at an overall system and their studies are a little bit more focused on the wildlife, but most of our structures are tied into that. So, it's really a pool for funding.

O'BRYAN: The reason I ask that is, one of the things that we want to be looking at in my town is the LaChute River for historical purposes and for not only that, but commerce in the future. It is such a beautiful piece about 2 ½ miles from the falls out to the Fort that people never really get to be a part of and it's all through the historical lands and the Fort has been talking been talking to us and we've been talking to them, that's why I am asking.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, have you talked to him about that?

REYNOLDS: No, so you do have a local waterfront development plan, which is a plan that can lead to funding.

MASCARENAS: Right

REYNOLDS: On the Phase Two, that's how we got the trail funded on the LaChute River a couple of years ago. So, that could be a part of the next steps.

MASCARENAS: He's got a really cool idea that we could touch base on. It would probably be better for you to have your own conversation on it.

REYNOLDS: Okay

WILSON: But would the LaChute qualify for Resilient New York if someone were to spearhead the study?

REYNOLDS: No, because it has to be in the plan. The State adopted plan or you it's a science based study, that is what that study is.

MASCARENAS: His is more of an economic development, waterfront usage plan.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, so that would be different.

MASCARENAS: Than a resiliency for the water. Like the LaChute, do you typically have spillovers in different areas, floodplain issues, that kind of thing?

O'BRYAN: No

WILSON: Yeah, okay, so it is different.

MASCARENAS: So, we're talking two different things.

WILSON: Okay, so I'm going to keep working on that, keep talking to Jim, keep trying to make inroads with DEC and see, because it can help countywide in some of our towns. Willsboro and anywhere the Boquet flows through, they're working on it and we can build on that. So, that is just something that's on the way if you have ideas let me know.

DOUGAN: So, just trying to follow the same path that we followed last time. So, Fish Hatchery; DEC has approved our fall stocking list and so those are the surplus fish as we're preparing to close the Fish Hatchery. And what we're doing, we're still trying to get vendors to give us pricing to provide stocking next year, but DEC has approved that we're going to be stocking all 8 of those ponds this fall. So, we're going proactively use some of our surplus fish this year. We're still waiting from a letter from DEC for the total amount that they are going to put in the two ponds, the two fishing derby ponds that meet DEC requirements. One being Roe Pond and the other being Deep Hallow, Kilkenny, right here in Elizabethtown. But at least they agree to go ahead and put some of these fish in there and hopefully some of them make the winter as a jumpstart. So, that's the Fish Hatchery piece.

WILSON: So, really that means come November, we're buttoning that up for the winter, forever?

MASCARENAS: The last stocking date, Jimmy?

DOUGAN: We're planning to have all stocking done in October unless the weather stays really warm. But temperatures are already starting to drop, already starting to see some of the temperatures come down on some of those streams. So, that's what they're waiting for.

WILSON: Alright

DOUGAN: And we're in the SEQR process or starting the SEQR process for that actual closing.

WILSON: So, will the committee have any tasks left for this, do you think?

MASCARENAS: No, I think we're in good shape.

DOUGAN: I think we're in good shape there. The only other part of the discussion.

MASCARENAS: The decommissing is we still don't really know. We're decommissing the SPDES permit, which is different than people think, but we haven't got that list, really from DEC on what the expectation is on that decommissing plan, but other than that. We have an agreement with Crown Point that we worked out, because that's some tasks on each end for the attorneys, but other than that there's not a lot.

DOUGAN: Yeah, I hope to do some of the demolition that we agreed to with Crown Point, this winter, when crews are in-between snowplowing and cutting trees.

WILSON: If there's stuff that the committee needs to do, we'll put in on the agenda, but otherwise, maybe we're winding down on that after a lot of years of discussions.

DOUGAN: Share services was the other point that I didn't think either of us came up with anything additional for that, Joe Pete, right?

WILSON: Nothing new, no.

DOUGAN: So, solid waste. DEC has responded, although barely, but they did respond to our letter requesting a meeting. The technician responding, the technician who wrote the comments, who responded and wanted to know if we wanted an in person meeting or if we were going to do a Zoom meeting. I told her that it was our intent to come to Albany, as per the discussion with the Chairman. So, that was probably 10 days ago that she responded, and I haven't heard back yet. I did tell her that we would like to go to Albany, that it's going to include myself, the Chairman, the County Chairman yourself Joe Pete to have that discussion. So, I will see what they say.

WILSON: And maybe if we're going to be meeting with the technician for the technical pieces…

DOUGAN: I requested, as politely as I could, that we wanted a decision maker from DEC to be part of the conversation.

WILSON: Perfect.

DOUGAN: So, beyond that, outside of that there's still a piece of that report that our consultant still could have some work to do and part of that was the government, efficiency part of it, of that report. And we focused on the response to DEC, but there have been other, there maybe ways to put things in the back of the report, regarding the Local Solid Waste Management Plan, that are really us requesting ideas that make our whole system more efficient long term, as well, including things that Mary talked about today, how do we deal with some recyclables and things like that. So, we may have some thoughts like that to add to the end of the report that fall into our every other year update requirement of that report in the future, where it's a little more about applying for grants from DEC.

WILSON: We're actually going to have to start budgeting, aren't we, for updates to that management plan? I mean that was a cost savings we incurred by neglecting to do for 30 some years, but it's going to be an expense. It just adds on to the costs of running solid waste. But we probably should start budgeting for it and figuring out how we can get some creative ideas out of it.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, my guess is an updated isn't going to cost us $100,000 a year, but like this did, because it's a start over. But it's another one of those things that it's easy to legislate from afar and not actually come see how things work. And I understand going to Albany, if we can talk to decision makers but boy, I wish somebody would show up here once in awhile and just see the enormity and let's go for a ride for one day and it will take you 8-hours to hit every site, just to drive from site to site and then haul to Franklin County.

HUGHES: The Canadian Border

MASCARENAS: Yeah, let's see if we can do it in an 8-hour day and let's see what kind of barriers you come across.

WILSON: So, here's an idea, remember the old bump road video? How about if we did a video from the drive from Newcomb to Franklin County and you know did a little video and talk about what we were talking about, that this isn't just about burying solid waste in the ground. This is about the carbon footprint of driving big diesel trucks 100s of miles. If we do that concept though of driving some of these roads, calculating the carbon footprint and are we really protecting the environment or are we just trading off one, you know, which is more of an impact? Burying it locally or driving it all over and giving it a tour of the Adirondacks every day, at a high cost in fuel burn to do it. You know, it's not going anywhere in Priuses, it's being hauled in giant trucks, and I think we could make a good video like that. I don't have the technical skills to do it, but I've got a lot to say about this. But if we were riding in one of those big trucks and showing the start up and

showing the clips of the day with a map and the carbon footprint. I think that would help frame the discussion in a different way, because it really is. If this is environment health, you can't look at solid waste in isolation and just regulate what we do with our solid waste from down in Albany, when you're telling us to burn this much diesel fuel every year.
That was a great video, but that concept, because this is a real thing, because if you're talking about environmental health, what is the impact of burning that diesel year after year versus a landfill closer to home. And we've got the counterweight to this saying, where we're able, we took glass out of the trucking business and we use it locally, it finds a second value right here where it was disposed of. I think we could do a good thing like that to help frame this discussion a little more and put us out as leaders again in the way we were with like EMS.

MASCARENAS: Well, and that's the issue with planning and so when you look at that report, it's not about what you did for me yesterday. So, what you did with glass is irrelevant, because it's like, oh you've already done that. Whereas another county puts glass in their report, you get all kinds of credit, and we've been doing it for years. So, how are you going to further reduce, keeps becoming the question and it's hard to get at those, especially with our unique lawsuit issue that kind of determined what we were going to do, ahead of time through courts, not through a local planning process, the courts said what we were going to do. That's kind of the way it shook out in the end.

HUGHES: Where did anything go with Davina's effort with her vision?

WILSON: Did you follow up with her, Jim?

DOUGAN: I haven't had any more conversation with her. I did point her towards the State's solid waste management plan, which their solid waste management plan was getting rid of burning plants and some of those other things, which was integral to her plan.

HUGHES: It was, that's why I asked the question.

DOUGAN: So, she's directly going against the State, not necessarily against, but it's going to be tough when that's their public plan.

HUGHES: Understand

LAMPHEAR: I think the visual of a video is really important. They're not going to come up here, so we bring, if they were, what they would see.

WILSON: An opening scene would be at DPW with all those trucks lined up, start them all up at once, cold engines and see that big cough of black smoke and say, these guys are setting out for 8-hours of trucking garbage around, because we can't bury it here. You've got to ask yourself the question, in the big picture what has, I mean that's the way to start it, line they all up in Lewis and see them starting coal and all that black smoke. That will be like the bobblehead.

MASCARENAS: Well, even a lot of towns, not a lot, but there's a handful that don't have transfer stations and those that do, it's becoming inherently more difficult to operate and stay in the black.

WOOD: What's that?

MASCARENAS: I know, so, if I were to look at Jay, for instance, doesn't have a transfer station, so those people in Jay are collecting garbage, separating garbage and they're likely driving to Keene to get it to a transfer station. That might take your morning, like if you live in AuSable Forks, that's not just 3-miles down the road.

WILSON: And one thing I hadn't thought of before, when that lawsuit took place, recycling was only reducing the waste stream by a fraction. Now, the waste stream is a fraction of what it was even 20-years ago.

MASCARENAS: Right, and you have a system built on tonnage.

WILSON: Right

O'BRYAN: And you're talking about being in the black. I sit on the border with two other counties, and they come in from the other counties into our system, every day.

MASCARENAS: So, you're subsidizing them. I can tell you I have towns that live along borders that we take more garbage out than could possibly be generated.

WILSON: And if it wasn't for the recycling…

O'BRYAN: And where we really get hit is in the C&D materials. I mean you guys are changing it out for us, at least a couple of times a week, C&D boxes. At least a couple of times, maybe three times and we have two at once going and it's amazing that they're all bringing it there.

MASCARENAS: Right, I don't know how many take C&D. Do you, Jimmy?

DOUGAN: There are a number that take it, but they take it in small, they just take boxes. I think about half of the transfer station, about 5-6, take C&D.

O'BRYAN: So, instead of travelling to Fort Ann, they are bringing it to us.

MASCARENAS: Yeah

WOOD: I was just talking with a contractor last week who did some work for me and he, if he has the right about of weight, he can go all the way to Washington County and get rid of his C&D for $0.06 a pound, rather than $0.25 with us. I didn't generate enough waste, so he paid the $0.25 a pound. But it's a real racket, because he can go down there, go the Hannaford, Market 32, go through McDonald's or whatever, all on my dime. But the difference is mind boggling.

MASCARENAS: It is.

WILSON: So, we've got some good strategies to take to Albany. We'll keep you posted if we ever hear back with a commitment of a time to meet and we'll see how that goes.
Jim, do we have anything else? Any stray thoughts that people have? Well thanks, this is a quick meeting because we're treading water expect on the Fish Hatchery.
Thank you, we are adjourned.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:50 AM

Respectively Submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors