



# Save the Pine Bush

## January/February Newsletter

Jan/Feb 14 No. 118 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 1000

## Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday January 15, 6:00 p.m.

## Susan DuBois

*will speak about*

## The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) NAFTA on Steroids

Sue DuBois went to Mexico in 1997 and 2008 with delegations from the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition to look at the effects of NAFTA on working conditions, labor and immigration. She will tell us about what she learned on these trips that, not surprisingly, is very different than what we were promised. She will then discuss what is known about the secret negotiations with 11 countries to give many more rights and protections to corporations at the expense of many rights and protections of people in the U.S. and the other 11 countries.

Sue DuBois is a retired state worker who was and still is active in the Public Employees Federation. She is the Treasurer of the Solidarity Committee.

*"There is almost no progressive movement...whose goals are not threatened" by the TPP. from Censored 2014*

At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsine Adams at 462-0891 or email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com).

**Get It While It's Hot! From now on, we will start serving dinner promptly at 6:00.** Of course, we will be delighted to serve you whenever you get here as we always have. We greatly appreciate your attendance whenever you arrive.

**Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.**

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*Ski/Hike, January 18 at 9:30 AM*

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## Mayor Kathy Sheehan Speaks to Save the Pine Bush

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY: Albany Mayor-Elect Kathy Sheehan spoke at the November 20 SPB dinner. Kathy said she is from a big Irish Catholic family, Albany residents "are desperate for change," and residents told her "Albany is like an incredible stallion that someone keeps pulling on the reins."

She said she plans considerable community involvement in the decision-making processes of Albany. When others make decisions for us, we get the Empire State Plaza that cuts Center Square off from downtown and I-787 that cuts Albany off from the Hudson River. "We get better decisions," she said, "when we involve the people who have a stake in it."

"By engaging residents," [they] "will then buy into city projects; we will have better out-

*continued on page 2*

## The Crude Oil Threat to New York State: The Capital Region as the Focus of Oil-by-Rail

*By Oily Bakken and Rude Crude*

In recent months, the media has carried stories about huge quantities of crude oil being brought into the Port of Albany from the Bakken oil fields of North Dakota by CP Rail, where it is stored and transloaded onto barges or tanker ships to be moved on to distant refineries. This petroleum is highly flammable, even explosive.

There were 11 derailments of crude oil trains in the U.S. and Canada during 2013. Three of these have resulted in huge spills, fires and explosions. One of these, in the small city of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec on July 6, resulted in 47 deaths and the obliteration of most of the downtown area of that city. The other two (Aliceville, Alabama on November 8 and Casselton, North Dakota on December 30) resulted in no deaths or injuries,

*continued on page 3*

*Kathy Sheehan, continued from page 1*

comes.” She said that unlike twenty years ago, today people want to live in cities, “No longer will a group of men sitting at the Fort Orange Club be telling us what to do,” and “[W]e will all have to work harder.”

She favors “goals based budgeting” which asks: What will we get for the money spent? She discussed multi-year budgeting saying Albany now has a \$16 million structural deficit, \$10 million from a “rainy-day fund will be used in 2014, leaving only \$8 million in the fund. Sadly, she said, many NYS cities face similar structural deficits.

Ms. Sheehan said the Jennings Administration has not purchased new computers since 1998 and the last one was out of date when bought. She will upgrade technology to allow expenses to be posted in real time, will split the deputy mayor position into two jobs, and favors having the county place abandoned and vacant property in a land bank to be transformed to buyers.

Regarding bicycling and bicycle paths, she favors a real connection between the Corning Preserve and existing uptown bike paths and strongly supports bike access to the Livingston Avenue railroad bridge. A member of the Albany Bicycling coalition said he is willing to help in many ways and said Albany needs a modern skate park.

When John Wolcott asked about the deteriorated building demolitions mania of the Jennings administration and his (John’s) desire to fix them before they become unrepairable, Kathy said one problem is the county pays the city unpaid city taxes on these properties which encourages the city to do nothing.

A student asked about the city schools. Kathy responded saying although Albany has a strong mayoral form of government, the city does not provide all services. She intends to work with the school district. She said, “[W]e have an entire system that is failing our kids: criminal justice, health care” being two parts. She said she would develop a baseline on student success and then move forward.

One man urged her to discuss the city’s building and codes department; he said it is a now a “political plaything.” Kathy responded saying it is “not an easy thing to transform it” and added that one benefit of living in the present era is that it allows for transparency -- “prevents leaders from telling one person ‘yes’ and another ‘no.’” A woman said many city services are being duplicated “at a great waste of dollars and time.”

Unfortunately many issues near and dear to SPB were not mentioned. These include (1) enlarging the Pine Bush preserve; (2) changes in solid waste policy -- reduction, reuse, recycling,

composting, education, and enforcement; (3) a preferred solid waste technology(ies) after the Rapp Road landfill is closed; and (4) the solid waste institutional framework -- authority, consortium, go-it-alone -- Albany will pursue during her administration.

I asked about the landfill. Kathy responded saying no rational business-person would continue operating the Rapp Road landfill because operating costs and future closing and “restoration” expenses exceed revenues. One change she insisted on is that bonds must be for an individual project -- no more multiple projects combined into one bonding; another is landfill bonds approved by the city council since she became city treasurer do not exceed the expected time the landfill is likely to remain open. Both changes make it easier to match revenues and expenses.

Kathy displayed a quick mind and an ability to easily discuss complex matters in detail. She is a policy wonk to some extent.

In her comments and again during the Q&A, she explained that cities in New York are being shortchanged by the state and she intends to work with other mayors --especially fellow women mayors in Syracuse and Rochester --to “restore fiscal fairness.” In response to a question about Hudson River water quality, sewage conservation, and water and waste-water infrastructure, she said federal and state governments spent billions of dollars subsidizing suburban sprawl in recent decades, and “we must demand the states reinvest in cities and urban sewer systems.” The man who asked the question said that “[A] day after heavy rainstorms, the river is disgusting.” Another man urged the city help its residents to capture rainfall into underground cisterns adjacent to the houses, thus keeping it out of the sewers.

Kathy said she is taking a careful look at downtown revitalization but said the current state imposed tax structure is a huge detriment to revitalization. When asked about the large vacant downtown parcel where a convention center has been planned but never built, Kathy said it is important to link it to the cultural strengths the city possesses. She asked, “What is the one thing in the world that is unique to Albany?” A few minutes later, Mark Platt said, “The Pine Bush is what makes Albany worldly unique.” Chet (please include his last name) mentioned the Boys and Girls Club and the senior center on Delaware Avenue. Kathy said the property would be redeveloped but one building is historic and will not be demolished.

Kathy was asked about renewable energy and conservation. She said Albany has an Office of Energy and Sustainability, the city spends \$4 million annually on street lighting alone, “[W]

e must think long term,” and “We must have a balanced budget.”

Brian Bush asked, “How do we reduce the residential tax burden?” Kathy said Albany has “very high tax rates.” She said 80 percent of the non-residential property in the city is tax-exempt including properties owned by the state, schools, county, hospitals, and public housing. She said, “[W]ealthy suburbs are being subsidized by poor city residents...I will advocate an equity agenda.” She said suburbanites use city hospitals but the city earns no revenues for these services.

One listener said a continuing problem in Albany is that houses are sometimes destroyed when emergency personal shut off the heat in a house but not the water. This occurs when a resident is taken to a hospital. He said, “[The city’s incompetence leads to buildings being wrecked.”

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*The Crude Oil Threat to New York State, continued from page 3 (opposite page)*

oil east is that the crude oil would be shipped by rail from the source in northern Alberta to the western Great Lakes, then by water (cheaper than rail) to the Montreal area (CP Rail) or Buffalo (CSX), and finally by rail to the Port of Albany or to refineries on the East Coast.

Tar sands oil has been called “the world’s dirtiest oil” by some people. If you do some Googling, you will find there is already resistance to the idea of Great Lakes shipments.

The large volumes of these two types of crude oil have come about because crude oil is being pumped out of the ground faster than was ever anticipated.

The prospect of more oil being brought to the Port of Albany and through our region is alarming. We don’t know if our emergency responders are prepared to handle an emergency. And the risks associated with these crude oil shipments into Albany is being disproportionately borne by lower-income neighborhoods near to the Port. If there was ever an environmental justice issue in Albany, this is it.

Crude oil shipments may be the most important environmental issue directly affecting Albany during 2014.

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You are invited to hear  
Lynne Jackson speak about the

## **Journey for Justice**

*A 133-mile walk for*

*Yassin Aref in July 2013*

**Thursday, January 9, 2014 6:30 PM**  
At the Bethlehem Public Library  
451 Delaware Ave., Delmar NY 12054

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# The Crude Oil Threat to New York State: The Capital Region as the Focus of Oil-by-Rail - *Continued from Page 1*

but only because they occurred in rural areas.

In December of 2012, the tanker ship *Stenna Primorsk*, filled with 12 million gallons of crude oil (about the same amount that spilled from the *Exxon Valdez*), crashed into the Hudson River bed and suffered two holes in its outer hull. Fortunately, this tanker had a double hull, the inner hull was not penetrated and no oil leaked out.

In spite of this sobering accident, the state last spring issued permission for double the amount of oil to begin passing through the Port of Albany by ship. At the same time, New York's rail lines have become a vital link in delivering millions of barrels of oil from Canadian fields.

In a December 13 article appearing in the *Times Union*, Brian Nearing reported on a meeting of the Albany County Local Emergency Preparedness Committee (LEPC) regarding the shipment of this crude oil in Albany. This was the first time that Global Partners, the owners of the Port of Albany facility handling this crude oil, had met with the LEPC, even though the oil has been shipped into the Port for nearly two years. No representatives of CP Rail showed up for the meeting.

LEPC Chairman, Harry Merriman stated to the TU that this crude oil was "as safe as your car in your driveway." This is a ludicrous statement. Nearing FOIed the LEPC for records of their past meetings, plans for addressing an emergency situation resulting from this crude oil, as well as other information relevant to this matter, but these documents have not been forthcoming. One might suspect that the LEPC, and therefore emergency responders, are not prepared to meet an emergency, should it arise.

It is interesting that Mr. Merriman was so confident that Bakken crude oil is safe. When rail safety consultant Fred Millar telephoned Merriman in September, Merriman was unaware that unit trains of Bakken crude oil were coming into Albany.

A December 9 article by Capital New York reporter Scott Waldman carried a candid assessment of the situation by a DEC official. When asked if state agencies were ready to respond to a major event on the Hudson River, Dennis Farrar, chief of the state Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Remediation Division, responded, "To be honest, I don't know. Until we have a drill or a review of plans or an event, we really don't know."

According to Waldman's article, many of the officials tasked with handling clean up say they are ready for any spills, including Albany

Port District Commission general manager Richard Hendrick. He said port officials have already hosted week-long drills on rail car safety. Waldman quotes Hendrick as saying, "It is deemed completely safe."

But the Port of Albany is not the only location of crude oil trains in our area. It's important to understand that three different railroad companies are shipping Bakken crude oil through the Capital Region. The first is CP Rail (on its Delaware & Hudson subsidiary), which brings Bakken crude oil from North Dakota via the Montreal area and into the Port of Albany for storage and transloading onto tanker ships and barges destined for distant refineries.

The second railroad company is CSX, which picks up its unit crude oil trains from Warren Buffet's Burlington Northern Santa Fe near Chicago, and brings them east by way of Buffalo to Selkirk, where the trains head south along the CSX River Line through New Jersey to a refinery near Philadelphia.

The third railroad company is Pan Am Railways (formerly Guilford Transportation Industries), which picks up its unit oil trains from CSX at Rotterdam Junction (just west of Schenectady), then heads through Mechanicville into Massachusetts and north through Maine to the Irving refinery in St. John, New Brunswick (Canada).

At present, Bakken oil trains pass through 23 counties in New York State and seven of its nine DEC Regions.

Each of these unit trains is typically 80-120 cars long. Each of the tank cars (model DOT-111 tank cars) has a maximum capacity of approximately 34,500 gallons. The safety of the tank cars used to transport this crude oil is another issue which can be discussed another time.

Global Partners, the Waltham, MA-based company bringing crude oil into the Port of Albany, now owns a 60 percent interest in Basin Transload, a company which which operates two facilities in North Dakota which load Bakken crude oil onto tank trains. The transloading facilities are approximately 195 miles apart in Columbus and Beulah, North Dakota. The Columbus facility is located along the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP Rail) and provides single line haul service to Global's recently expanded terminal in Albany, NY. The Beulah site, which supports crude oil production efforts in the Williston Basin, is located along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) with direct long-haul service to the West Coast and Gulf Coast Markets. BNSF also interchanges Bakken crude oil trains

with CSX, whose oil trains cross New York State and pass through the Capital Region.

The Bakken oil coming to the Port of Albany via CP Rail must be coming from the Columbus, ND facility. The Bakken oil being shipped on CSX is coming from Beulah, ND on Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) to Chicago, then on CSX through Selkirk to a refinery in Philadelphia.

According to the Global website, the two Global/Basin Transload facilities have a combined rail loading capacity of 160,000 barrels a day (in the U.S. and Canada, one barrel equals 42 U.S. gallons). Sometimes you will see crude oil reported in the news as gallons, and sometimes you will see it reported as barrels.

Even while the public doesn't know if it is safe from Bakken crude oil shipments, Global Properties/Global Partners is preparing to ship another type of crude oil, bituminous crude oil from the tar sands of the Province of Alberta, Canada. This is undoubtedly the infamous tar sands crude oil from the Province of Alberta in Western Canada. Apparently, judging from information on oil spills in other parts of the U.S., this stuff is nearly impossible to clean up.

Global has submitted a last-minute application to the City of Albany Planning Board for the construction of a boiler house at Kenwood Yard, its stated purpose being to heat petroleum products so that they can be off-loaded from tank cars. The application does not state that this is crude oil or where it is coming from. But the only reason petroleum products would need to be heated in order to be off-loaded is if they are too viscous (thick) to off-load at ambient temperatures. This is likely tar sands crude oil from Alberta. Reporter Waldman has asked Global officials several times whether the heavy crude they plan to bring into Albany is tar sands crude oil, and they have refused to say. Waldman says his conclusion is that it is tar sands oil.

One wonders how it could be economical to transport crude oil from Alberta to the East Coast of the U.S. for refining. But there is indication that the tar sands oil receives an exemption from an eight percent federal excise tax. There is also an indication that tar sands oil has been exempted by the federal government from all financial responsibility in the event of a spill.

People on the West Coast have prevented the tar sands oil from going into their ports. And some of the areas between Alberta and the West Coast are opposed to having the material pass through their lands. One scenario for shipping tar sands

*continued on page 2*



## Things that can be recycled: 14 unique items

Check with your local department of public works because in many areas, you can recycle more than ever.

*Cris Carl originally wrote this for Networx.com. Fri, Jun 03 2011 at 10:22 AM*

As environmental awareness has grown, so have greater opportunities to recycle. Recycling is incorporated into the waste management systems of most every town in the U.S., and what can be recycled has expanded because of changes in technology and marketing.

Justine Fallon of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection said that even within the last year, changes have occurred. "Aerosols used to be a safety issue (for workers). Some of the procedures in how the materials are baled now have brought about less concern," said Fallon.

It is always a good idea to check with your local department of public works regarding what can be recycled where you live. There is a range of differences in each recycling plant as to what they will recycle, but you might be closer to going waste-free than you think.

Here's a list of 14 items you used to have to throw in the trash, but can now be recycled in many areas:

### 1. Water filters

Water filters are composed of a mixture of materials. It's always good to check with the company's website to see if they have recycling capability. For example, Brita has a recycling program. If you send dry, plastic-wrapped used filters back to them, Brita will recycle the plastic portion into such items as tooth brushes, cups and cutting boards. The carbon filter and ion exchange resin contained in the filter is converted into energy. Brita will even recycle the plastic bag and box you send the filters in.

### 2. Pizza boxes

Food and grease contamination is the primary reason pizza boxes were unacceptable for recycling. Many recycling plants will now accept the box, as long as there is no grease or cheese on it, but not the insert the pizza sits on.

### 3. Receipts

Some recycling plants accept receipt material and some don't. Today, many businesses use thermal paper, which is reactive to heat in the machine/cash register it's being used in. The heat darkens the ink on the receipt. Thermal paper is impregnated with a variety of chemicals which often makes it unacceptable for recycling. Regular paper receipts are naturally fine to recycle. You can tell the difference between the two types of receipt paper, as thermal paper is usually shiny.

### 4. Metal and plastic bottle caps

All metal caps from soft drink and beer bottles are recyclable. Most of these types of caps are made of steel. Previously, the thin layer of polyethethylene (that plastic bit lining the cap) made it difficult to recycle. Now the layer of plastic is burned off during processing.

Many plants now accept plastic bottles with the caps on. Previously, leaving the caps on the bottles was unacceptable because the caps are a different type of plastic from the bottle. Mixing the two plastics in the melting process would create a lower quality material.

### 5. Wine corks

Cork can't be recycled curbside, but a company called Terracycle will recycle cork to be made into cork boards. You can request a mailer

from the company (for 15 pounds of cork at a time). Also, most Whole Foods Markets accept corks for recycling.

A few other items you can now often recycle:

6. The wire from around wine bottles
7. Aluminum screw tops
8. Plastic stoppers
9. Plastic and metal reusable drinking bottles
10. Clean plastic zipper bags
11. Plastic straws
12. CD/cassette cases
13. Plastic cutlery
14. Phone books

Many towns provide routine information regarding recycling via mail and Web sites. Check with your department of public works at least annually for any changes and new items to recycle. "Every plant is a little bit different. It all depends on the market and who they are selling it to," said Fallon.

## Next Dinner Dates

Wednesday, January 15

Wednesday, February 19

Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85  
Chestnut Street, Albany, NY

## Save the Pine Bush History

SPB is compiling a history. Do you have a memory or observation you would like to share? Email your memories to [lynnejackson@mac.com](mailto:lynnejackson@mac.com)

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A Project of the Social Justice Center  
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