



Save the Pine Bush

August/September Newsletter

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Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday August 13, 6:00 p.m.

Theresa Portelli

a Green Party candidate for New York Comptroller, will speak about

Why is the Green Party challenging the Governor?

Theresa Portelli will present the Green Party's positions and vision for New York State; tell us what the Green Party has to offer; and describe why Howie Hawkins is running for governor against a very powerful incumbent.

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 Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or email 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.

Save The Pine Bush is in need of more hike leaders

For the last few years ; the Save the Pine Bush outing leaders have been Andy Arthur, Claire Nolan and John Wolcott. Our outing events are once a month, always on a Saturday and usually the third or fourth Saturday. We three, however, are not always readily available and we will have no hike this month. To prevent this from happening again, we are appealing for more volunteer leaders.

With more leaders we can hopefully have hikes lead by persons with more time and less competing obligations for any given hike date. John and Andy are generally available for going over data about various Pine Bush area and routes. Please e-mail the Newsletter at pinebush@mac.com or call John Wolcott at 465-8930 if you are interested in volunteering for this. Hope to see you out on the trail!

www.savethepinebush.org

*Reprinted from the Daily Gazette
Tuesday, July 22, 2014*

By Sarah Roberts/For The Daily Gazette

Pine Bush Gets National Status

ALBANY — The Albany Pine Bush Preserve, a patchwork of 3,200 acres, has been designated a National Natural Landmark, after National Park Service officials determined it to be “an outstanding example of a globally rare ecosystem.”

The preserve will join 596 other natural landmarks as prime examples of biological and geographical features. The Pine Bush is one of only 20 remaining ixnland pitch pine scrub oak barrens in the world.

Special features

Albany Pine Bush Executive Director Christopher Hawver, originally the park's seasonal ecologist, has worked for the Pine Bush for 21 years. He said that he and the entire Pine Bush Commission staff were overjoyed when they learned it had been selected for national
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Public Advocate

Dominick Calsolaro

ALBANY, NY: Former Albany First Ward Common Council member Dominick Calsolaro spoke at the June 18 SPB dinner about Environmental Issues in Albany. He began thanking SPB President Rezsins Adams for her many years of friendship. During the US-Vietnam War, he said, Rezsins often came into his family's restaurant. Dominick spoke about the many issues he worked on during his 12 years on the Albany Common Council, some of which he continues working on.

He said the big issue in Albany today is the oil trains. He drafted the first rail safety resolution in 2006. Mike O'Brien wrote a weaker one that was adopted. Senator Schumer is today proposing what Dominick proposed eight years ago. Dominick thanked the current Albany Common Council (ACC) for finally looking seriously at rail safety, especially first and second ward members
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National Status, continued from page 1

acknowledgement.

“For us, this is a whole new level of prestige and recognition,” Hawver said. “A lot of people love and appreciate the Albany Pine Bush, but I’m still surprised by the number of people who don’t even know we’re here.”

The preserve has a unique fire-dependent ecosystem that requires controlled burns to destroy exotic species, allowing the environ-

“The diverse flora and fauna of the Albany Pine Bush are an appropriate addition to the great scientific, conservation and educational resources preserved by national natural landmarks across America.” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis in a statement.

The Albany Pine Bush offers multiple recreational trails for hiking, mountain biking and bird watching.

The preserve also has a discovery center,

The Albany Pine Bush will be joining 596 other nationally recognized natural landmarks, including:

- *Bear Swamp Preserve in Westerlo, Albany County*
- *Fall Brook Gorge in Geneseo, Livingston County*
- *Palisades of the Hudson along the west side of the lower Hudson River*
- *Mount Mansfield in Vermont*
- *San Andreas Fault in California*
- *Palo Duro Canyon State Park in Texas*
- *Mount Katahdin in Maine*

ment’s natural flora — which includes over 1,300 species — to regenerate. It even has its own fire-management program for maintaining seasonal fires.

“The landmark status came about from a specific interest in our sand dunes,” Hawver explained.

The Pine Bush’s sandy dunes are a key element to its ecosystem. They are a feature not usually found in environments so far from the ocean; the sands were left behind thousands of years ago by a glacier at the end of the last Ice Age.

The preserve’s open areas provide the optimal environment for blue lupine, a wildflower critical to the survival of the endangered Karner blue butterfly.

Hawver also said that this recognition will boost the preserve’s status if it chooses to apply for additional grants, as will the endangered status of the Karner blue butterfly and the rare inland barrens buckmoth. The unique ecosystem also sustains 156 bird species, 20 species of amphibians and reptiles and more than 30 species of mammals.

where guests can learn more about the Pine Bush through nature lectures, interactive exhibits and outdoor events. Admission is free, and the center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends.

“We’re just ecstatic about the whole thing,” Hawver said. “I’ve worked here for 21 years, and this is probably the most exciting thing that has happened for us.”



The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission scientists were capturing and banding colorful Capital Region song birds in the globally-rare pitch pine scrub oak barrens of the Pine Bush in 2013.

Dominick Calsolaro, continued from page 1

Dorothy Applrys and Vivian Kornegay.

Dominick said DEC has repeatedly extended the oil trains comment deadline from December 2013 through at least August, 2014. He said this is an environmental justice issue despite DEC saying earlier that it was not.

Dominick said we need round-the-clock air monitoring, not an occasional one-hour monitor. He said the only regional air monitoring station is located at the Albany County Health Department office building on Green Street in the South End.

Dominick said CSX is “hypocritical” to cite Homeland Security concerns in its attempts to block local emergency planners from receiving train schedule information when there are many large holes in the fences along the tracks. “We also want an EIS on the project,” he said.

He said the DEC approved a solid waste management plan for the city of Albany in January that excludes organics composting. It is a ten-year plan that “does not change anything.” He also said DEC is going to allow Albany to dispose trash ten feet higher than previously permitted because the landfill will partially collapse into itself.

He said Mayor Kathy Sheehan is attempting to persuade DEC to ease up on landfill “restoration” funding and plan. He said the city’s debt service is currently about 12 percent of its budget but will soon drop quite a bit because bonds issued by the city when Sheehan was treasurer are not 20 or 30 years; they will last no longer than the landfill is expected to remain open.

Speaking about the Styrofoam ban law passed by the county legislature last fall and signed by Albany County Executive Dan McCoy, he said, “I am glad McCoy’s daughter got through to him because no one else could.” Regarding hydrofracking, he said, Governor Andrew Cuomo delayed fracking within NY -- a good policy -- but the crude oil passing through the Port of Albany is fracked oil. He asked, “Is Cuomo for or against fracking?”

Dominick said he is now on the Albany city industrial development agency (IDA). He said the new Tech Valley High School is to be located in a larger 350,000 square foot “zero energy” building at Washington Avenue and Fuller Road. However, since there is no public transit to that location, many students will be driven there by their parents. He said Albany City School District (ACSD) students can not attend Tech Valley HS because ACSD is not part of the Capital Region BOCES.

Dominick discussed legislation he unsuc-

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Michael McLaughlin, Director of Research for Albany County Executive Dan McCoy Speaks to SPB

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Michael McLaughlin, the Director of Research for Albany County Executive Dan McCoy, was the SPB dinner speaker on May 21, filling in for McCoy who was attending the convention of the NYS Democratic Party. He said he is involved in many of McCoy's policies.

Mr. McLaughlin said the Polystyrene ban signed by McCoy in December is a flawed law, the county executive is taking steps to strengthen it, McCoy wishes to extend it to all restaurants, the intent of the law is good, and the cafeteria in the county office building still uses Styrofoam.

Regarding the more than one billion gallons of oil passing through the Port of Albany each year, he said a catastrophe in downtown Albany would be much worse than in Quebec (where 47 were killed last summer) in terms of lives lost. He said the county is removing asbestos when renovating county buildings and systems, the Times Union Center now has a new more fuel-efficient roof, and the sewer district has many new "green" initiatives including that dry sludge now runs through the cogen station. He said solar now provides 35 percent of the energy used in the hockey facility.

Regarding land conservation in Albany County, he said two parcels will be incorporated into the Pine Bush Preserve. He said the CSX rail line connecting Albany and Voorheesville is being converted to a trail but several bridges need considerable work or replacement.

He provided a few details about McCoy's efforts to advance solid waste planning in the county. He said a meeting would be held the next day of a committee selected from the participating local governments within the county.

During the Q&A, in response to Lynne Jackson, he said the county has no role in solid waste

except sewage and "Let's make improvements toward 'Pie in the Sky' zero waste." Lou Ismay urged people to use the word "discarded" instead of "waste." Speaking about the city of Albany's solid waste efforts a few years ago when then-Mayor Jennings established a steering committee, Tim Truscott said the city strongly favored establishment of a solid waste authority and so did DEC. Tim said it is outrageous and unacceptable for DEC to favor solid waste authorities when so many other viable and democratic political structures exist. Mr. McLaughlin said he is very familiar with reasons not to have an authority and there has been no decision made by the county executive to have or not have an authority. Tim said Tompkins County operates the best solid waste management system in NYS with an inter-municipal agreement and no authority.

Grace Nichols said old sewer lines run through the Tivoli park, a Zero Waste conference was held locally several years ago, and we need open processes to hear from everyone. She said it is absurd to expect everyone to drop off their household hazardous waste at a facility, as currently required by the city of Albany. She said the Patroon Creek has considerable untreated waste and bacteria in it.

In response to my question about the proposal to reduce the size of the Albany County Legislature from 39 to 25 members, McLaughlin said McCoy has taken no position on it and "It is not his place to do so."

Mark Schaeffer commented on climate change. He said the recent climate change assessment report predicts an increase in major rain events and said we must prepare for it. He said San Francisco achieves a 75 percent recycling rate and we should look there, and urged the

county to hold a major sustainability conference in 2015.

John Wolcott discussed the county land bank. He urged responsibility for it be removed from the Habitat For Humanity and Historic Albany Foundation in favor of the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region. McLaughlin responded saying the county executive has no involvement in the land bank; "It is a legislature creation." He agreed with John that the land bank director should not favor building demolitions en masse. He said taking down buildings is a last resort when buildings are compromised and the purpose of a land bank is to preserve property.

Sue DuBois asked about the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline that would be built along the NYS Thruway from Albany to the NYC metro region. McLaughlin said the county has not been approached about it. He said in NY, counties are primarily human services providers. He said the county government is looking at installing solar on the roofs of many large flat buildings the county owns.

A man said the rail cars arriving in Albany have oil in the bottom of the cars and volatiles in the top of the cars because the volatiles are not removed prior to pumping oil into the cars. He said in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, the volatiles are first removed. He said the county and municipalities possess sufficient police powers to require detailed information about the contents of all incoming rail cars.

Grace Nichols urged the county to plant native flora along the sides of roads; she said doing so would also provide jobs for hard-to-employ people.

Dominick Calsolaro, continued from previous page

cessfully proposed years ago "when everything was always 'no' in the prior administration" for a permeable asphalt demonstration project. The 2014 reconstruction of the Million Dollar Beach parking lot in Lake George Village will have permeable asphalt. He said "around here, people are usually unwilling to try good things." Another unsuccessful initiative was his proposal to sell Rapp Road landfill methane to the SUNY Nanotech Center for heating and cooling, instead of selling it on the electric grid.

He concluded urging listeners to keep up the good work and to recruit younger activists.

During the Q&A, he said the city has a sustainability committee that will re-write city

building code and possibly include low flush toilets. He said organics composting is excluded from the current NYS solid waste plan. He said he hopes the NY Court of Appeals will uphold (it did) "home rule" local government zoning laws to block hydrofracking. He attended the oral argument.

He said the Styrofoam ban law is only a preliminary law. He said, "Sometimes you have to pass legislation in pieces." Dominick said he also tried to reduce diesel truck and bus idling, noise, and pollution while on the council.

He said sixty percent of the city of Albany -- mostly the older parts of the city -- have combined sewers subject to overflow problems during the increasingly frequent heavy rains. He said back flow valves can be installed. He said the

capital region is still the most polluted part of the entire Hudson River. Lynne Jackson said, "You can see the flow of sewage in the river after a major storm."

Dominick said the new SUNY dorms on Western Avenue have both rain gardens and permeable asphalt.

Next Dinner Dates

Wednesday, September 17
Wednesday, October 15

Westminster Presbyterian Church,
85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY

Reprinted from the Times Union, Wednesday, July 9, 2014

THE ISSUE:

Editorial:

A toast to the Pine Bush

Albany's Pine Bush has been designated a National Natural Landmark.

THE STAKES:

It's a tribute to those dedicated to protecting it from development.

In the late 1970s, the Pine Bush, the sprawling pine barrens that extend from the city of Albany to Schenectady County, was considered by some a vast wasteland ripe for development.

Its central location appealed to investors, who saw it as a prime building location, with easy access to major highways, including the Interstate

87 and 90 interchange. It was an ideal spot for retail, offices and residential use. Plans to plow through the craggy landscape abounded.

Fortunately, this effort to pave the Pine Bush was stopped, largely due to the efforts of "Save the Pine Bush," the grass-roots environmental organization launched in 1978. It has been a sustained force dedicated to rescuing and protecting the unique environmentally sensitive land.

Historically, the Pine Bush's had a footprint that covered nearly 60,000 acres. King's Highway was the original stagecoach route connecting Albany with Schenectady. Today, commercial and residential development and Albany's many landfill expansions have taken a toll. Only about 3,200 pristine acres survive, yet the preserve remains a globally rare ecosystem and one of the premier examples of an inland pine barrens, supporting rare species.

The best known of these is the revered

Lycaeides melissa samuelis We know it as the Karner Blue butterfly, which is on the federal Endangered Species List. The tiny, winged creature depends on the availability of the blue lupine, which thrives in the dry, sandy soil of the Pine Bush.

Thanks to the community supporters and the state Legislature's creation of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission in 1988, the preserve has become a valued community treasure — a year round place for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Its Discovery Center propels its mission to educate and protect the treasured land that is home to 300 species of vertebrate animals, more than 1,300 species of plants, and more than 10,000 species of insects and other invertebrates.

Those dedicated to ensuring the preserve's future have another achievement to celebrate. The U.S. Department of Interior has designated the Pine Bush preserve a National Natural Landmark. The status is shared by 25 other environmentally sensitive sites in New York state, including the Bear Swamp Preserve in Westerlo, and 600 locations nationally. It represents a resounding affirmation to the efforts of those who have supported and worked to protect the Pine Bush for so many years, and it recognizes the outstanding geological and biological qualities of the land area. The designation came on the urging of U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

Much as the caterpillar emerges as the majestic Karner Blue, there has been a metamorphosis in the way we see this valued acreage.

The National Natural Landmark designation underscores how, through the efforts of many, the area once seen as wasteland is now recognized for its beauty.



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