



# Save the Pine Bush

## February/March Newsletter

Feb/Mar No. 150 • 223 S. Swan St., Albany, NY 12202 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 518-366-7324 • web [www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org) • Circ. 625

### Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

### Meg Marohn and friends

*From Extinction Rebellion - Capital Region  
will speak about*

### Climate Change: Heading for Extinction (And What to Do About It)

The planet is in ecological crisis: we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction event this planet has experienced. Scientists believe we may have entered a period of abrupt climate breakdown. This is an emergency. In this talk, climate speakers from Extinction Rebellion will share the latest climate science on where our planet is heading, discuss some of the current psychology around climate change, and offer solutions through the study of social movements.

**At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street** (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat lasagna dinner, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com).

Interested people are welcome to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for no charge.

### A Late winter's Pine Bush Hike

Saturday, February 22, 2020 at 9:30 AM

Meet at: The trail head at the end of Route 155 (past the water tower)

For GPS - 98 Madison Avenue Extension. Albany, NY 12203 (Lat/Long - 42.716563, -73.878508)

Leader: Hugh Johnson • For More Information: 518-588-6708 • [239rosewood@gmail.com](mailto:239rosewood@gmail.com)

Come one, come all to the Madison Pinelands. To get there take Washington Avenue west all the way to Rt. 155, cross over Rt. 155 and the road becomes Madison Ave. Follow Madison past the water tower, and park near the fence where the road ends. The hike will meet there. We will tackle the White, Yellow, Red, and possibly Blue Trails. The hike will range from 3-4.5 miles depending on consensus of the group. Afterwards you are welcomed to join us at Yonder Farms for a nice lunch. (They were

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### Pyramid Submits the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

*by Lynne Jackson*

GUILDERLAND, NY: On Christmas Eve, Pyramid Crossgates submitted the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for their project, "Rapp Road Residential/Western Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Projects." When first brought before the Town of Guilderland Planning Board in late 2018, the project consisted of building 222-unit apartment complex on Rapp Road. The project has morphed into 312-unit apartment complex on Rapp Road, a Costco complete with a gas station plus other commercial development.

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### National Weather Service and the Climate Crisis

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY: Retired National Weather Service (NWS) meteorologist Hugh "Woody" Johnson spoke at the November 20 Save the Pine Bush dinner about "How Trump could ruin our national Weather Service and trump our chances to reverse climate change for good."

Using a multi-page Power Point, Hugh quickly covered a considerable amount of material, and, when finished with his presentation, asked listeners what can we do about climate change. Many comments were offered. Bert S. said, "Don't spend money." Wendy D. said turn the heat way down indoors and sleep in a hat with long underwear. Chris K. said go to second-hand stores for clothes. Tom E. (me) said stop flying. A man said install more solar and wind, but not everywhere, and said we must move fast. Wendy D. said compost foods and don't put it in the "garbage." Lou S. urged compost human wastes and use composting toilets. Lynne J. said put solar panels on all the flat roofs in Albany which would also put many people to work. John W. said to track down and read a November 9 US Rep. Paul Tonko email that said it may be too late to control or limit climate change. Hugh J. insisted we must try, that it can be done. John said we must admit how far we have gone, and

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[www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org)

## *Weather Service continued from page 1*

how bad it is. Bert urged that we drive less in the Hudson Valley, but this is hard to do for many due to the nature of continuing development in places without mass transit. Andy A. urged that we update infrastructure to make it more resilient.

Hugh began his presentation saying he worked for the NWS from 1990-2015, the final twenty years in the Albany office. He defined weather as the hourly/daily change of temperature-pressure-wind-precipitation and other issues; climate is longer term weather measured up to thirty or more years. Many natural changes occur in climate due to sunspots, volcanic eruptions, and ocean currents. Displaying an 1880-2019 graph, he said the average Earth temperature is about 57 degrees Fahrenheit, with the coolest of those years all occurring before 1980, most before 1940, and the last forty years all above the 1901-2000 average. The past five years have been the warmest yet.

In the middle of the 20th century, far more cold weather records were set in Albany than warm weather records, but since 1990, the opposite is true. He said 2017 was the first time we hit 70F in Albany in February; it occurred again the following year. The first freeze was on November 2, the latest since 1931. Albany had 44 consecutive days with 80F or higher in summer 2018. Annual precipitation is also increased with 2000-2009 the wettest decade on record.

Another graph showed carbon dioxide (CO2) atmospheric concentrations are higher now (413 parts per million (PPM)) than any time during the past 400,000 years. CO2 concentrations have steadily increased from under 320 ppm in 1960 to almost 100 more now. Hugh said the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) believes that a CO2 concentration of 1200 ppm would increase average Earth temperatures by 8C and lead to the extinction of humans. Before that occurs, Arctic ice would disappear, methane releases would soar, and famines and heat waves would be far more common and severe. At present, we are experiencing more aggressive wildfires, extinctions of birds, declining bee populations, the geographic spread of mosquitoes, more flooding and natural disasters, and sea levels rising faster than before.

He said the goal of the national Weather Service is to protect life and property through accurate and timely forecasts and warnings, provide accurate forecasts that enhance the economy, and notify people to action. Hugh said the NWS is a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is a part of the US Department of Commerce. He said Wilbur L. Ross heads the Commerce department, Barry Lee Meyers has been nominated by President

Trump to head NOAA, and Dr. Louis Uccellini directs NWS.

Hugh briefly explained the controversy Mr. Trump got into last summer when he falsified a weather forecast using a Sharpe on a four-day old chart to say Alabama was threatened by Hurricane Dorian. Among the problems Hugh sees with Trump overseeing the national government are his refusal to grasp the severity of current climate realities, a lack of communication, and a potential degradation of services provided by NOAA and NWS.

Among the ways to combat climate change Hugh identified are renewable energy and more efficient farming. He sees the Climate Leadership and Community Act enacted last year in New York as a step in the right direction. Hugh predicted a colder and wetter winter locally than what used to be normal weather. However so far, a persistent ridge in the west has yet to develop while one has popped up in the southeast like last year. Therefore temperatures have been running milder than normal and precipitation near normal.

Additional note: Shortly after Hugh's talk, Barry Meyer removed himself from consideration due to an illness. In the interim, Neil Jacobs is the acting director now for the NOAA Agency.

## *February 22 Hike - Continued from Page 1*

were closed in January but will reopen in February).

Cross country skiing and snow shoes are welcome! If there is over six inches of snow I will likely be snow shoeing myself.

A wind chill below zero, significant precipitation of any type, high winds or a treacherous trail (mainly of ice) will cancel the hike. I will make the final call by 8 AM Saturday Feb. 22nd whether the hike is a go or not. You can contact me via phone, 518-588-6708 or email, 239rosewood@gmail.com for any questions.

## **The hike is free and open to the public. Bring your friends!**

***Mark Your 2020 Calendars Now!***  
***Dinners will be the third Wednesday of every month in 2020 (no dinner in July) at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY***  
***Wednesday, February 19, 2020, Wednesday, March 18, 2020, Wednesday, April 15, 2020, Wednesday, May 20, 2020, Wednesday, June 17, 2020, No dinner in July, Wednesday, August 19, 2020, Wednesday, September 16, 2020, Wednesday, October 21, 2020, Wednesday, November 18, 2020, Wednesday, December 16, 2020***

## *Crossgates continued from page 1*

According to the NY State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the Planning Board has 45 days to decide if the DEIS is complete - which would be February 7. Though the Planning Board had the DEIS, they were not going to release it to the public. James Bacon, a lawyer from New Paltz representing a local business, submitted a FOIL request, asking for the DEIS. The town responded that the DEIS was "intra-agency documentation and is not subject to FOIL." While some people may *think* Crossgates is an agency of the town government, Crossgates is, in fact, a separate entity. Mr. Bacon sent another letter, appealing the denial of the FOIL, and the town posted the entire DEIS on the town website.

To view the DEIS, go to [townofguilderland.org](http://townofguilderland.org) and click on "Boards and Committees", select "Planning Board". On the lefthand side of the screen, you will see a brown box with blue letters, click the third item down, "Environmental Impact Statement - Rapp Road Residential/Western Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Projects."

In addition to this project, Regal Theaters in Crossgates Maul has a proposal to raise the height of their theaters, which would shade the Karner Blue butterflies on Butterfly Hill. The Board of Zoning Appeals appears to be waiting for comments about the project from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Save the Pine Bush is now represented by Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic. A big thank you to Grace Nichols who contacted Pace and made the case to them to represent SPB in this matter.

To donate to help pay for experts and other expenses related to opposing these developments, please go to:

**[RappRoadGoFundMe.org](http://RappRoadGoFundMe.org)**

## ***Save the Pine Bush Loses a Friend***

It is with great sadness that we learned that Chet Burch passed away on New Year's eve. Chet was a long-time volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, becoming involved more than 40 years ago. Most recently, Chet volunteered at dinners, making sure the church was open and available for our monthly lasagna dinners. A beautiful tribute to Chet was published in the Times Union: [https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/TimesUnion-Albany/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=195093273&\\_ga=2.74561810.1659726381.1580676900-136007804.1570571361](https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/TimesUnion-Albany/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=195093273&_ga=2.74561810.1659726381.1580676900-136007804.1570571361)

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Save the Pine Bush, c/o Lynne Jackson, 223 S. Swan Street, Albany, NY 12202. Chet will be missed.

## Burn Tires vs. Clean Air

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Paul Tick and Tina Lieberman spoke at the January 15, 2020 SPB dinner about plans by Lafarge to burn tire at its cement factory in Ravenna, twelve miles south of Albany. Paul began his comments with saying that when he moved to the capital region 32 years ago, he immediately looked for activists to hook up with and found Save the Pine Bush.

Paul quickly reviewed important Lafarge events of the past 26 months. In late 2017, Coeymans residents and allies worked quickly and successfully when we learned that Lafarge hoped to burn one-third of Connecticut's solid waste in Ravenna. Public pressure blocked the plan. Over the past year, Lafarge has tried to begin tire burning in Ravenna. [Ravenna is a small village that lies within the much larger Town of Coeymans.] The Coeymans Town Board passed a local Clean Air Law that requires nearly continuous monitoring of many air contaminants, essentially blocking tire burning. Three candidates supported by Lafarge then won seats on the town board in November's election as did a Lafarge-supported candidate for the Albany County Legislature (ACL). After the election, the ACL began consideration of the town law that is expected to be gutted or ignored by the new town board. The bill was tabled for further tweaking at the ACL's final meeting of the year in mid-December, at which many spoke in favor of the law. On that same day, more than one-half of the ACL signed a letter urging Albany County Executive Dan McCoy to issue an executive order barring any tire burning for four months, while the ACL carefully evaluates and holds a hearing on the proposed new Albany County Clean Air Law.

Paul said enactment of the 1970 federal Clean Air Law helped immensely reduce auto and vehicle tail pipe emissions. He said 325 million used car tires are discarded annually in the US, including 18-20 million in New York. Tire fires are difficult to extinguish and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) allows tire burning. Paul said Nova Scotia recently banned Lafarge from burning tires and then reversed itself a year later. He said millions of tires are dumped illegally, often along roads and in water bodies. Paul said both Lafarge and its Steelworkers union claim tire burning is safe. If the tire burning ever occurs, some of the coal that Lafarge now uses would be replaced with tires, increasing profits.

Tina said tires are now piling up at the Port of Coeymans, located near the Lafarge property. Paul said air pollution increases when tires are added to coal burn mixes. He said the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a tire

hierarchy for dealing with used tires--descending order, re-purposing, recycling, burning, and land-filling as the acceptable ways to deal with discarded tires.

Tina said the Albany Times Union recently reported that in 2006, DEC issued to Lafarge a Beneficial Use Determination (BUD) that would allow Lafarge to burn up to 4.6 million whole tires per year in Ravenna. Former EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck was told by the DEC the BUD expired in 2017, but DEC revised its regs to renew the BUD. Tina said no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required for the BUD. Tina said 106 million tires were burned in 2017 for fuel in the US, with 46, 25, and 25 percents in cement kilns, electricity generating stations, and pulp and paper mills, respectively. Tina said Mike Ewall of Energy Justice network believes tire burning increases specific air pollutants by up to 1000. Tina said there are two public schools located next to Lafarge.

Tina said the Ravenna cement plant is a "gold mine" for Lafarge, and, contrary to rumors Lafarge workers may be spreading and believing themselves, it is not likely to be closed if the tire burning is permanently blocked. During the past decade, Lafarge invested \$300 million upgrading the factory, partly in response to high mercury emissions, large amounts of high quality limestone are located nearby, and Lafarge is very close to the Hudson River and a port, and large markets for its cement. Tina said Lafarge currently employs 130 workers in Ravenna, the parent company is based in Switzerland, worldwide annual profits are \$27 billion, and cement pilings for two of the NYS approved off-shore Long Island wind power stations, will be built by Lafarge. Lafarge is the world's largest cement company. Tina said Lafarge has paid \$50 million in fines in Boston for violations and \$5 million in fines to EPA for Ravenna violations. Tina and Paul identified other law-breaking by Lafarge.

Tina said used tires can be retreaded, used in retaining walls, turned into mulch, shingles, mats, drain pipes, and cable protectors. Tina said we can reduce tire use by driving less, car-pooling, using public transportation, and walking.

Paul said we can block Lafarge's plans to burn tires. More than twenty organizations and governments have joined the growing regional Clean Air Coalition including the Towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland.

During the discussion a woman said Lafarge could be burning tires now. Lou Ismay spoke about fine particulates. He said visible dust particles can be seen when sun lights up a room, and invisible smaller dust particles are also present. He said more than one-million dust particles can fit into one cubic centimeter. Many of the tini-

est dust particles remain in human lungs, others remain airborne for a long time, and it is almost impossible to clean the air in a room or building.

I read from a letter to the editor County Executive McCoy had printed six years ago and said we can probably coax Mr. McCoy to assist us in our efforts because he very much desires to retain his pro-environmental reputation. In his April 10, 2014 Altamont Enterprise Earth Day letter to the editor, Mr. McCoy wrote: "Our success is not complete until we establish practices that will serve the public not just for today, but for years to come. My administration is continuing its work to make Albany County the greenest in the state... As an environmental leader, I am encouraged to see how the seeds of environmental awareness and activism have sprouted over the years, with each generation celebrating and taking action to protect our air, water, and land. It can only give us hope for the future."

Barbara Heinzen urged us to not demonize Lafarge or its workers. She recommends we ask Lafarge and its workers where is the proof that tire burning is not a polluting operation. They can not answer this question.

Albany County Legislator Bill Reinhardt said that when winds blow from the south, air pollution blows up (north) the Hudson River valley and into the Albany County river-bordering municipalities. He urged listeners to contact county legislators who live in and represent those cities, towns, and villages and urge them to support the Clean Air Law.

Former county legislator Doug Bullock said this Lafarge tire burning proposal is motivated strictly by a desire to increase profits. Lafarge will get paid to take the tires from vendors, partly replacing the coal it must purchase.

Additional comments: While working successfully with Coeymans and Ravenna residents from 2005-2007 to block the City of Albany from siting a large regional solid waste landfill in Coeymans (near Lafarge), I attended hearings and meetings concerning Lafarge's proposal to burn almost five-million whole tires per year in its old cement factory. DEC issued a negative declaration in 2005, thus allowing Lafarge to avoid preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for this project. Many of us were outraged at DEC. We insisted that an EIS was legally and morally required due to the enormity of the project and that Lafarge is directly across Route 9W from the Ravenna-Coeymans-Selkirk Middle and High Schools. DEC would not listen to reason then nor now. No EIS has ever been prepared for Lafarge's massive tire burning project.

Have Governor Cuomo and DEC lost their minds? DEC will celebrate its 50th anniversary

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# Please Help the state of New York to Declare a Climate Crisis

by Hugh Johnson

A group called Extinction Rebellion (XR) was founded in London England in 2018. They non violently protested in the city blocking major bridges which ultimately forced it to declare a Climate Crisis and rapidly reduce a carbon footprint.

A local chapter held a meeting that I attended Sunday January 26th at the Troy Library.

We need to fight the continue abuse of fossil fuel in Albany. Here is how you can help right from the comfort of your home.

CALL Government Cuomo's office at 518-474-8390 (Extension 1). Tell him "Governor Cuomo, PLEASE declare a climate emergency for NYS immediately which means a ban on all new fossil fuel infrastructure."

Call this number EVERY day, it only take a minute or two. I have done this. The more calls are made the more likely this message will get his attention!

Thank you — Hugh Johnson

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## Burn Tires continued from page 3

this year. What went wrong? DEC allows a dump to operate right next to a 1000 student pre-K to Grade 12 public school in Rensselaer, and will not block tire burning across a road from two schools in Ravena. I can't believe I live in New York or the United States. We as a nation and a state used to be smarter than this. Does the health of children not matter? Could it be that the demands and profits of giant corporations trump public health?

# Updates on the trash problems in Rensselaer

Chris Kielb and Tom Ellis

Rensselaer and East Greenbush residents and their allies (Rensselaer Environmental Coalition, REC) continue to organize to block the proposed Bio HiTech municipal solid waste processing facility on the former BASF industrial site, south of Columbia Turnpike. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) sent now-departed Rensselaer Mayor Moody a memo late last year detailing the faulty methods the city used in fast-tracking their approval of the proposed BioHiTech plant and urging them to consider a full environmental review. The applicant proposes to truck in 150,000 tons of municipal solid waste each year to the banks of the Hudson River, separate, dry and shred the paper and plastic in underground pits, and have a different fleet of trucks transport this material to a cement plant in Pennsylvania to be burned.

This month the applicant, Rensselaer Resource Recovery LTD, re-applied to DEC for a permit. There are many reasons to reject this application: 1) the proposed site is a capped toxic brownfield site, and the project will likely involve piercing this cap to create underground storage areas for the garbage, possibly releasing toxic chemicals into the air and groundwater; 2) this site is located next to the Hudson River, and so it is vulnerable to flooding, which could contaminate the river and land; 3) this project adds to the already unacceptable truck traffic in the city from the Dunn Construction & Demolition Landfill, with up to 225 truck trips on weekdays and 175 on Saturdays predicted. This will add to diesel pollution and noise, both public health hazards; 4) this site is located near an Environmental Justice community; 5) this project is based on outdated ideas on how to handle waste. Instead of being recycled, paper and plastic waste is set

to be dried and trucked to an incinerator, which is the most expensive and most environmentally destructive way of dealing with such waste. Because this project has the potential to pollute the Hudson River, please consider commenting to DEC by the January 30 (or later) deadline at: [https://www.dec.ny.gov/enb/20200115\\_reg4.html#438140008400001](https://www.dec.ny.gov/enb/20200115_reg4.html#438140008400001).

REC also continues working to close the Dunn construction and demolition debris dump located right next to the Rensselaer public school campus and close to many Rensselaer and East Greenbush neighborhoods. We recently found out that dumping will soon begin in a new cell built even closer to the school, which is unacceptable.

Rensselaer residents are tracking activities at the dump and have photographed the dump debris not being covered each day as required by permit. They have notified DEC of this. Drones are also being used to document the proximity of the school to the dump. In December, Rensselaer residents, accompanied by incoming mayor Mike Stammel, who dressed as Santa, presented a lump of coal to Dunn dump operators. This event was covered on local TV. Dump neighbors continue to report noise and odor complaints on ItStinks.org. These complaints include odor complaints inside and outside of the public elementary school.

A rally will be held January 25 at Rensselaer City Hall, 62 Washington St, Rensselaer at noon to alert people to the new cell at the Dunn dump and to the soon-to-expire public comment period for Bio HiTech. Dr. David Carpenter, local officials and others will speak at this event.

Assemblyman John McDonald and state Senator Neil Breslin have not as yet called for dump closure.

Return Service Requested

Save the Pine Bush  
A Project of the Social Justice Center  
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Albany, NY 12210



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