



Save the Pine Bush

September Newsletter

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Virtual Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday, September 16, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.
(Please logon between 6:30 and 7:00)

Honoring Rezsins and Celebrating Her Life

Remembering Rezsins Adams

Rezsins Adams was a founding member and the president of Save the Pine Bush. She became involved when she attended the famous February 6, 1978 Planning Board hearing at the Albany Public Library in the middle of a snow storm. She was the backbone of Save the Pine Bush — she mimeographed the newsletters; organized the dinners, including buying and cooking all the food; attended hearings; obtained important documents; raised money; donated money; ran the Save the Pine Bush day care; but, most important of all, provided the strategy and a guiding hand to Save the Pine Bush. Her passing leaves very big shoes to fill and we miss her very much.

At our virtual meeting, everyone who attends is invited to tell stories about Rezsins, and how she affected people's lives. Everyone is invited — please feel free to share your favorite stories about Rezsins. Lynne Jackson will moderate the meeting.

People can join using their computers or phones. **Join the call to test your connection and chat between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. Please join early, so the program can begin promptly at 7:00. People can join using a phone, computer or iPad.** Dial-in number (US): (712) 770-4104; use the access code: 878906#. The online meeting ID: lynnejackson9. Join the online meeting: <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/lynnejackson9>

See you online at 6:30! • Everyone is welcome! • Easy to Join!

No Save Pine Bush Hike

However, the Pine Bush is open for social distancing hikes and walks. The Discovery Center and outdoor rest rooms are closed. But, the ecosystem is open to visitors. Please practice social distancing, and take precautions for ticks, and enjoy the great outdoors

www.savethepinebush.org

Rezsins Adams, leader of Save the Pine Bush, passes away

by Lynne Jackson and Daniel W. Van Riper

ALBANY: It is with great sadness that Save the Pine Bush announces the passing of one of its founders and long-time leader, Rezsins Adams.

Rezsins, born in Brooklyn on February 13, 1927, died peacefully on August 13 at the age of 93.

Rezsins was famous for her Save the Pine Bush lasagna dinners, which she made monthly for the group for about 39 years. Dinners were vegetarian lasagna, salad, garlic bread and pie. Everyone was welcome. After making all of the food to be served, Rezsins would serve the lasagna buffet style - standing behind the pans of spinach, pepper and lasagna, waving her spatula, and greeting each person and chatting while asking what type of lasagna they would like.

Save the Pine Bush was known for its litigiousness. Begun in the middle of a snow *continued on page 2*

Pyramid Gets Special Treatment

GUILDERLAND: The Planning Board of the Town of Guilderland has been busy this summer, holding two special, very short meetings (one in July, the other in August) to first accept the Final Environmental Impact Statement and then adopt the Findings Statement for the Rapp Road Residential/Western Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Projects. The proposed development contains three sites; apartments are proposed for Site 1, a Costco is proposed for Site 2 and Site 3 is to be unspecified offices and apartments.

Members of the Planning Board attended both meetings in Town Hall in person; however, members of the public were not allowed due to the pandemic. Usually, the Planning Board posts all of its meetings on the Town of Guilderland website at the beginning of the year. However, these two special meetings of the Planning Board appeared on the website only a few days before the meetings. Both meetings had only one agenda item each, motions to approve or adopt various

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storm during a hearing held by the City of Albany Planning Board in 1978, SPB filed dozens of lawsuits over the years against Albany, the Town of Guelderland, the Town of Colonie and the Department of Environmental Conservation and others. SPB set case law on the State Environmental Quality Review Act. The last lawsuit SPB file filed was decided in 2010, again setting case law expanding the right of who has standing to sue under SEQRA. Rezsins's leadership guided Save the Pine Bush for years.

Rezsins met her husband, the late Dr. Theodore Adams, while attending college at the University of Rochester. After marrying in 1947, working at Woods Hole, and receiving a masters degree in physiology, Rezsins and her family moved to the City of Albany Center Square neighborhood in 1959.

Rezsins was a member of the activist community. She freely gave of her time and volunteered. Other than short-lived paid positions to lobby against nuclear power, run an art school in Buffalo, and a few other short-term jobs, Rezsins was never paid for her activist work in the community. In opposition to the Albany Democratic political machine, she became a committee woman in 1969, and held that post until recently. She helped the first dissidents against the machine get elected to the Albany Common Council and was involved in electoral politics for decades. She was a leader in the protests over the Viet Nam war, including getting arrested and going to jail.

The last time Rezsins was arrested for protesting was in 1990. Opposing the Gulf War, protesters sat down in a major intersection for about two minutes and were arrested. Rezsins sat down with the protesters; she was concerned for the young protesters, and got arrested with them to be with them and to help them.

Rezsins was famous for her mimeograph machine in the basement. She printed newsletters for many local groups, including the Peace newsletter.

Rezsins visited China many times as a member of the U.S. China People's Friendship Association. She was in China on 9/11, and was delayed in returning to the US for many days. Rezsins volunteered for the Peace breakfast.

A mainstay of the Social Justice Center, Rezsins volunteered at the store in the center, keeping it open on a daily basis for years. Rezsins volunteered for all of the WAMC fund drives, taking the 4:00 AM shift.

For twenty years, Rezsins had a radio show on WRPI. Never identifying herself on the show, Rezsins read articles from various publications on a wide variety of interesting topics. Rezsins's voice was so distinctive that people would often

recognize her at the grocery store or other places as the host of the show after she only spoke a few words.

Rezsins was very generous to people, helping people with money or loans. She watched people's children and took care of people. For twenty years, Rezsins ran the Pine Bush day care, where she offered an informal day care for the children of activists, giving all of the proceeds to Save the Pine Bush.

Rezsins was a role model. She was generous and worked to make life for everyone better. She worked for peace. Rezsins was a pillar of the community. Known for her distinctive sartorial style, Rezsins always wore a sweatshirt and stretch pants. She often carefully chose her sweatshirt based on what event she was attending; making sure the statement on the shirt matched the event.

Rezsins is survived by Frances Adams and son-in-law David Patterson, son David Bleecker-Adams and daughter-in-law Elaine Bleecker-Adams and grandchildren Esme and Zayda.

Save the Pine Bush was extremely unpopular in its early years due to its adoption of litigation (using the newly passed SEQRA law) as a tactic. At one point, a developer sued Save the Pine Bush for \$15 million. A reporter asked Rezsins, "Mrs. Adams, you have just been sued for \$15 million dollars. What assets does Save the Pine Bush have?" To which she responded, "Oh, about 200 'I will never shop Crossgates' bumper stickers!"

Pyramid continued from page 1

environmental documents for the Pyramid proposal. These special meetings demonstrate that Pyramid is receiving special treatment from the Guelderland Planning Board to move its project through the State Environmental Quality Review Process.

At both special meetings, members of Save the Pine Bush and the Guelderland Coalition for Responsible Growth had a socially-distanced, mask-wearing, sign-holding protest. At the first protest, we lined the sidewalk, which required the Planning Board members to walk past our signs asking for Pine Bush preservation and opposition to the project. A protester asked Planning Board Chairman Steven Feeny "Do you ever think ever think about your son who you play hoops with at the Y and what kind of a world he will have to live in?" This comment was interpreted by another Planning Board member as "threatening the child of a Planning Board member," which resulted in the Planning Board members being escorted out of the meeting by armed police detectives. A reasonable person understands that the one thing the Planning Board should be thinking about is how their actions will impact the future.

At the August meeting, the Planning Board members arranged to enter the building in rear, so as to avoid the protesters on the lawn. Clearly, the Planning Board members are so ashamed of their actions they are taking to quickly pass this proposal to pave over more Pine Bush, that they could not even bear the thought of walking past people holding signs.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been adopted and approved. The FEIS proclaims that this land is not at all important to the Pine Bush. However, our experts note that Pine Bush preserve has been highly manipulated or managed by people and that not all land in the Preserve is necessarily typical Pine Bush; these three proposed development sites have value. The FEIS dismisses the idea of protecting this land by saying "The development sites are not and have no potential to support significant ecosystem services." Our experts contend that this is just not true. For example on Site 1 the land was Pine Bush ecosystem for thousands of years before it became a farm. Unlike what Pyramid contends, it would not be at all expensive or difficult to restore Site 1 back to Pine Bush, using the techniques that have been successful in other parts of the Pine Bush.

Volunteer citizen scientists have been looking for bats on the sites, and have found calls of Myotis bat species. It is unknown if the calls are from the Little Brown Bat or the Federally Endangered Indiana Bat. Due to the dramatic decline of bat species due to white nose syndrome, saving occupied bat habitat seems more important than ever. The FEIS dismisses any concerns about bats.

What may be troubling for neighbors of the proposed projects is the change in traffic patterns. Neighbors probably are not aware of how much the traffic patterns will change. The FEIS proclaims that "Alternative 9" will be chosen if the City of Albany does nothing. This alternative will close Rapp Road to all traffic (except emergency vehicles) just north of the entrance to the proposed apartment complex, and re-align Gipp Road to continue east onto the Crossgates ring road. Other alternatives are offered in the FEIS, but these alternatives are located in the City of Albany and no suggestion is made as to which one is best. The FEIS proclaims "Alternative 9 is located entirely within the jurisdiction of the Town of Guelderland and will be implemented in the event the City of Albany declines to participate [emphasis added] in the implementation of any of the other acceptable Alternatives." The implication of this statement is that the City of Albany may refuse to participate in solving traffic problems created by these proposed Pyramid developments. Why the City of Albany should

spend time, resources, and tax dollars to help Pyramid when the City receives no benefit from the development is not clear.

In its comments about the proposed development, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission threw the Pine Bush under the bus. The Findings Statement quotes the Commission:

“The proposal for Site 1 will result in the irreversible loss of the ability to protect and manage 19.68 acres recommended for partial protection (Area 57). We do not disagree with the conclusions regarding potential impacts to listed wildlife species, and the fact that the site is highly degraded and dominated by invasive plant species. However, the soils analysis indicates the site supports APB soils and could be restorable to pitch pine-scrub oak barrens (PPSOB). As such, the applicant’s proposed mitigation to offset the loss of this restorable acreage on Site 1 is appreciated and consistent with the site’s Partial Protection recommendation.”

Pyramid is not proposing to offset this irreversible loss of land by restoring Pine Bush elsewhere; Pyramid only proposes to give 8 acres of full protection existing Pine Bush land it owns north of the mall to the Commission for preservation. Changing the status of eight acres of Pine Bush from privately owned to publicly owned preserve land seems like a drop in the bucket for the destruction of the three building sites.

No discussion of this development proposal would be complete without mentioning that Pyramid is seeking a 50% reduction in its property tax assessment. According to the *Altamont Enterprise* (8/6/2020), “Seeking redress from its retail woes, Crossgates Mall is suing the town of Guilderland in an attempt to knock \$139 million off its \$282 million tax assessment — a near 50-percent drop in the assessed value.”

What Happens Next

Now that the environmental review process is complete, the next step in the process is to continue the site plan review of Site 1 (apartments) and begin the site plan review of Site 2 (Costco). For Site 1 the Planning Board is the lead agency as this is a site plan use. For Site 2 the Zoning Board of Appeals will be the lead agency as Costco is considered a special use. The Planning Board will complete a site plan review/report for the Zoning Board of Appeals prior to the Zoning Board starting their review.

People who are concerned about these encroachments on the rare inland pine barrens community by a huge corporation that does not want to pay its fair share of taxes, can send comments to Kenneth Kovalchik, AICP, Town Planner via email to kovalchikk@togny.org, or by mail to Town of Guilderland Planning Department, 5209 Western Turnpike, Guilderland, NY 12084.

Counting Dump Trucks on the Way to the Dunn Landfill

by Tom Ellis

RENSELAEER: Rensselaer residents and friends (Rensselaer Environmental Coalition) who desire to close the Dunn Waste Connection construction and demolition debris and who-knows-what-else dump in Rensselaer conducted their fourth annual ten-hour truck census on August 14 at 36 Partition Street, a location all inbound and outbound trucks must pass.

The census location is in downtown Rensselaer at the corner of Third Street and at the top of the downtown Partition Street hill. Tractor trailer trucks—particularly full trucks—exert considerable energy climbing the hill in either direction, often in low gear, making considerable noise, and spewing diesel exhaust more so than on flat land. Inbound trucks drive east on Partition Street and outbound trucks drive west. (There is another long uphill on Partition Street that trucks must climb as they approach the dump entrance.

Each inbound tractor trailer entering Partition Street turns right off of Broadway, a narrow street. Trucks turn onto Broadway from either Routes 9 & 20 or from the Dunn Memorial Bridge that crosses the Hudson River from Albany. Broadway is a major commercial and residential neighborhood and corridor through which each tractor trailer traverses to and from the dump.

The census location is in a residential neighborhood with houses on both sides of the street; many house fronts are within thirty-five feet of the center of Partition Street. Most Partition Street houses between Broadway and 36 Partition Street have no front yards, and many are much closer to traffic than is 36 Partition Street.

During the ten hours, 172 trucks passed by, either entering or departing the dump. Fifty tractor trailers entered and fifty departed. Of these, five were tanker trucks that both entered and departed. Thirty-five of the 45 non-tanker trucks were covered entering the dump, eight were uncovered, and two had undetermined covering. Thirty-seven of the 45 non-tanker trucks departing the dump were covered and eight were not. Sixteen of the fifty tractor trailers had seven axles, thirteen had six axles, and twenty-one had five axles.

Thirty-seven “dump trucks” entered the dump and 35 departed. Of the 37 entering, three were covered, 32 were uncovered, and two had undetermined covering. Of the departing 35 dump trucks, 33 were covered, one was not, and the other not determined. One of the dump trucks had two axles; all the others had three or four.

The first inbound tractor trailer drove past 36 Partition Street at 6:20 a.m.; the second at 6:39 a.m. This particular truck had seven axles

and appeared to be so over-loaded that it crawled up the hill between Broadway and Third Street. Three tractor trailers immediately followed it, all having to travel at the same very slow speed. Fifteen inbound tractor trailers drove by census observers between 6:39 a.m. and 7:12 a.m. Thirteen of these passed between 6:39 a.m. and 6:50 a.m. Diesel exhaust was clearly noticeable to census observers as these multiple trucks passed by at more than one per minute. Eleven inbound trucks passed by census observers between 6:39 a.m. and 6:44 a.m., a rate of two per minute. Of the fourteen inbound trucks that drove past census takers before 7:00 a.m., six had seven axles, four had six axles, and four had five axles.

Of the 37 inbound dump trucks, three were covered, 32 uncovered, and 2 with undetermined covering. Thirty-three of the 35 outbound dump trucks were covered, one uncovered, and one with undetermined covering. Covering on the dump trucks was a loose flap that did not fully cover the truck bed.

Prior ten-hour censuses were done on June 9, 2017; May 31, 2018; and April 25, 2019 at the same location or (2018) directly across the street at 45 Partition Street.

The 2019 census counted eighty-five (85) tractor trailer trucks passing by 36 Partition Street in each direction; five of these were tanker trucks. The first inbound truck passed census takers at 6:40 a.m. and twelve passed in the first five minutes.

A 2018 census counted eighty-one (81) inbound tractor trailer trucks and eighty (80) outbound. The first inbound tractor trailer passed census takers at 6:41 a.m. and twenty-three passed by 6:53 a.m. Twenty-two (22) dump trucks headed east past 45 Partition Street and twenty (20) returned in the opposite direction. Some of these dump trucks may not have been dump-bound because a road project on Sixth Street was in progress that day.

The 2017 census counted ninety-nine (99) inbound tractor trailers and ninety-six (96) outbound. The first inbound truck passed census takers at 6:31 a.m., nineteen (19) went by during the first ten minutes, and twenty-seven (27) in the first hour.

Discussion: The heaviest truck traffic occurs before 7:00 a.m. The second inbound truck (6:39 a.m.) on August 14, 2020 was almost certainly over-loaded as it groaned coming up the hill. Weighing each of the earliest arriving six-or seven-axel trucks might show that many are over the legal limits.

A Victory for Residents of Rensselaer

by Tom Ellis

RENSSELAER: Rensselaer residents, the Rensselaer Environmental Coalition (REC), the larger capital region, and Rensselaer's new mayor, Michael Stammel, scored a big victory in August when the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) denied Rensselaer Resource Recovery (RRR) LLC (aka BioHiTech) a Part 360 Solid Waste Management Permit and an Air State Facility permit.

The permit denials came in an August 10 DEC letter to RRR, which had sent DEC an August 4 letter demanding DEC issue its final decision within five days of receipt of the demand.

DEC justified its decision saying Mayor Stammel had made it crystal clear to RRR on January 25, that a site plan and special use permit granted to RRR by the city during the prior administration had expired, the city would insist that RRR would have to begin again, and the city would require preparation of an environmental impact statement. DEC decided that because the application was thus nowhere near complete, the agency could not issue the requested permits.

RRR had sought city and state permits to construct a \$35 million solid waste management facility to process 150,000 tons per year of "municipal solid waste, consisting of residential waste, commercial waste, and waste generated by hospitals, long-term care facilities, schools, prisons, government agencies, and other similar type facilities." The RRR project would have been located atop a hazardous waste site at the BASF manufacturing facility a few blocks south of downtown Rensselaer, and a few hundred feet from the Hudson River. The processed wastes would have been taken to a cement factory to be incinerated in a kiln. Local residents feared the

likely cement factory was Lafarge, 12 miles away in Ravena, although RRR representatives insisted Lafarge was not being considered.

RRR has thirty days to appeal the DEC decision. My prediction is RRR will move elsewhere, search for a badly managed, corrupt municipality, and try again. Congratulations to Mayor Stammel, Rensselaer residents who elected him, and all those who helped win this victory.

Short Note from Karen White regarding the Writer's Institute Book Festival:

There was an article in the 8/20/2020 TU that might be interesting to Save the Pine Bush readers. The title of the piece is "Albany Book Festival returns online". Noam Chomsky, linguist, philosopher, and activist, will give a talk on the climate crisis and the Global Green New Deal as part of the third annual New York State Writers Institute, September 10 - 14.

I first became aware of Noam Chomsky when the Guilderland library showed his DVD "Requiem for the American Dream" which explained in a succinct hour and 13 minutes why we now have unprecedented wealth inequality in our society.

The article says that the festival will be available on the NYSWI's website, YouTube, and at albanybookfestival.com. Given the festival dates, the topic of this talk, and the timing of your newsletter, this could be a nice opportunity for SPB members.

And here is the article Karen is referring to from the Times Union:

Albany Book Festival returns in online format

by Shannon Fromma Aug. 19, 2020 Updated: Aug. 19, 2020 11:16 a.m.

Scholars Noam Chomsky and Harold Holzer are among those scheduled to speak at The New York State Writers Institute's third annual Albany Book Festival set for Sept. 10-14.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, this year's festival will be held entirely online.

All events will be free and open to the public.

The event will feature pre-recorded conversations with National Book Award winner Colum McCann, National Book Award finalists Edwidge Danticat and Kali Fajardo-Anstine and Sister Helen Prejean, author of "Dead Man Walking."

Festival highlights include a talk with presidential scholar Harold Holzer on his newest book, "The Presidents vs. the Press: The Endless Battle Between The White House and the Media — From the Founding Fathers to Fake News"; a discussion on the Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal with linguist, philosopher and activist, Noam Chomsky and writer/professor Robert Pollin; a conversation about books and a bookish marriage with Cree LeFavour and Dwight Garner; and an exchange on taking risks with your writing presented by authors Gish Jen and Jane Leavy.

Other featured authors include former child soldier and the Sierra Leonean and American author Ishmael Beah, Sierra Crane Murdoch, David Treuer, J. Courtney Sullivan and more, along with workshops and an online place for local authors, non-profits, and publishers to share information.

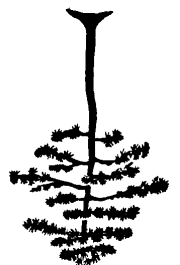
"We are inspired to make this year's virtual book festival the best experience possible," says Paul Grondahl, director of the NYSWI. "This year's lineup reinforces our commitment to diversity and inclusion and offering voices across the spectrum."

The festival will be presented on the NYS Writers Institute's website, YouTube channel and at albanybookfestival.com.

In a continued show of support for independent local bookstores, the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza is the sole bookseller for the Albany Book Festival. All featured books can be ordered directly online (bhny.com) through the Albany indie bookstore.

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Save the Pine Bush
A Project of the Social Justice Center
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