



Save the Pine Bush

May/June Newsletter

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Virtual Earth Week Meeting Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

Tina Lieberman

Vice-Chair of the Albany Sustainability Advisory Committee and a
Co-founder of Zero Waste Capital District will speak about

Down To Earth: Practical Steps You Can Take to Reduce Carbon Emissions & Save Our Climate

Tina Lieberman will share information about practical actions you can take right now that will curb greenhouse gas emissions and help protect our beautiful Earth. We'll target the three sectors that contribute most to carbon emissions in our community: these are building heating, transportation and electricity generation. Plus we'll discuss some easy ways to reduce methane emissions from landfills. Practical actions include:

- signing up for community solar-and getting a 10% discount on your electricity bill
- increasing the insulation/energy efficiency of your home – with great incentive programs and low-interest loans from NYSERDA
- switching out your fossil fuel furnace and water heaters for electric heat pumps, with rebates from National Grid and vetted installers at HeatSmartCapital Region.com.

see Virtual Earth Week Meeting continued on the back page

Pine Bush Hikes Are Back!

Spring Hike with Hugh Johnson Thursday, April 21, 2022 at 6:30 PM

Meet at: the end of Washington Avenue Extension, at the trailhead called Madison Avenue Pinelands,

Leader: Hugh Johnson • **For More Information:** (518) 588-6708

Hugh will lead us on a beautiful evening hike through the Pine Bush. Please dress for the weather and take precautions for ticks. Afterwards, come grab an evening coffee or snack at Panera's.

www.savethepinebush.org

Save the Pine Bush Update and the War on Terror

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Lynne Jackson spoke about current developments in the Pine Bush and Steve Downs about The War on Terror - Twenty Years Later, at the February 23 Save the Pine Bush virtual meeting.

After thanking SPB members for their financial contributions to assist one of SPB's dinner chefs, Adam Baldwin, with his sudden medical bills, Lynne thanked Andy Arthur for creating an on-line "event sweeper" that quickly identifies proposed projects in the pine barrens sections of Colonie, village and town, Guilderland, and Albany. Lynne also thanked Andy for his excellent maps of the Pine Bush and said about 1/2 the Pine Bush is protected and 1/2 in private hands.

Lynne said that on January 22, SPB filed a legal brief with the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court in Albany asking the court to

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Efforts Continue in 2022 to Rein in Two Local Polluters

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY& RENSSELAER, NY: In early March, the mayor of Cohoes called for the end to Norlite's hazardous waste incineration in the city. He acknowledged Norlite can continue operating its cement business without burning poisonous wastes. Profits would decrease because Norlite would have to purchase and pay for fuel rather than being paid to take it. An end to hazardous waste burning would be a relief to Cohoes and Troy residents.

DEC, which has been obsessed for decades with allowing Norlite to burn hazardous wastes regardless of consequences, might have to develop a new regulatory plan for hazardous waste.

Down the Hudson River a few miles, in mid-March, Rensselaer and East Greenbush (R&EG) residents persuaded both the Questar III BOCES board and the Rensselaer City School District (RCSD) leaders to send letters calling on DEC to deny a permit sought by Waste Connections to relicense its seven-year-old Dunn construction

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examine the narrative SPB presented to the lower court last year in opposition to the Costco, Crossgates, and the Rapp Road projects.

Lynne said a senior housing project at 24 New Karner Road has been approved but awaits funding. The housing and parking lots would cover about 12 of 50 acres with the remaining 38 added to the preserve. SPB objects to this project for many reasons including that many seniors do not drive cars and the housing would be isolated from bus routes and services, and all fifty acres should be protected.

A school bus garage has been proposed for a section of a 50-acre parcel in the Village of Colonie. A November 1 hearing drew fifty people, nearly all opposed.

The newest proposal is in the towns of Colonie and Guilderland on both sides of Curry Road which separates the municipalities. Two large solar arrays would be built. Lynne said Jerry Phibbs, now in his mid-eighties, owns the Colonie site where he tried to construct houses in 1998. The Guilderland proposal was withdrawn last summer. The Colonie solar project would be fully surrounded by fences limiting animal mobility and the parcel almost fully covered with solar panels, ruining habitat for everything that lives there now. No environmental assessment has been submitted so the SEQR process has not begun. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission favors full protection for the entire site.

Switching gears to an entirely different issue, SPB attorney Stephen Downs discussed some of his other work: protecting wrongfully-convicted Muslims in the courts.

Steve said that when the Muslim community in the capital region was attacked by the FBI, the public stood up and said "No." He recounted how, after the September 11th attacks, a Muslim immigrant was arrested for taking a photo of a reservoir and expelled from the United States.

Steve said the FBI concocts crazy schemes targeting Muslims in the hope of finding violent terrorists. After Yassin Aref and Mohammed Hossain were arrested in Albany in 2004, Mr. Aref hired attorney Terry Kindlon, who worked with Kathy Manley, who works with Steve. The terrorist plot against Aref and Hossain was a complete frame-up. The Muslim Solidarity Committee (MSC) was formed in 2006 to assist the two men and their families including ten children, and raised more than \$100,000 over the next fifteen years.

MSC activities included lots of vigiling and petitioning. Aref and Hossain were eventually sentenced to fifteen years each in federal prison. During the months between his conviction and sentencing, Aref, with considerable help from

MSC, wrote his autobiography, *Son of Mountains*. Majid As-Salam Mosque President Shamshad Ahmad, also wrote a book, "Rounded Up: Artificial Terrorists and Muslim Entrapment After 9/11." Steve said the vast amount of high quality work MSC performed led the local news media to carefully report on the case. A podcast about this case can be found at www.terrortalk.org.

Steve said MSC members learned that the Aref-Hossain case was one of many similar cases targeting Muslims with phoney charges. Another group, Project Salam, was organized to work nationally and in 2014 published the book "Inventing Terrorists" about pre-emptive prosecutions of Muslims. He said ninety-four percent of cases were pre-emptive prosecutions.

Steve said that after a Muslim man, who amazingly won a jury trial, contacted him, the Coalition for Civil Freedoms (CCF) was established. Preemptive prosecution of Muslims, he said, is an international problem. Steve was the CCF executive director and Kathy Manley is the legal director. CCF has examined the cases of about 200 preemptively prosecuted and convicted Muslims, and provides each prisoner \$100 at Ramadan each year, which helps them realize they are not forgotten.

A national conference is held once or twice a year at which the families of the preemptively prosecuted gather and network, and share resources, skills, and information. Steve said Kathy Manley has drafted a federal Government and Illegal Entrapment Act, that if enacted, will require prosecutors provide proof of terrorism intent in prosecutions and put an end to the use of secret evidence. Steve thanked Kathy Manley for her work filing motions in many of these cases.

Steve said the 20th anniversary of the War on Terror occurred last fall and another book, "The Terror Trap," is about to be published. The goal is to end the War on Terror. He said a War on Terror film festival with twenty films drew 15,000 viewers last fall and winter. The film fest will continue with "Official Secrets" to be shown in March. A briefing for Congress is planned.

Steve said a former FBI entraper became a whistleblower in 2016 and CCF is working with him.

Yassin Aref and his wife were deported to Kurdistan, Iraq after his release from prison, Aref is raising funds to publish his books, and he recently received a \$2500 donation. One of his sons is in his third year at Harvard Law School. Mohammad Hossain and his wife, Fatima, live in "retirement." Steve briefly described the current activities of each of the ten children, most now young adults, and is greatly impressed with their career choices and considerable success. He described them as enthusiastic, delightful,

and lacking bitterness, and said local residents who assisted the two families played a huge role in their success.

Another recent development said Steve is that the informant, Shahed Hussein, who helped the FBI entrap Aref and Hossain, owned the company involved in the 2018 limousine crash that killed twenty people.

Steve said the fightback local residents embarked on in defense of Aref and Hossain and their families has been a great inspiration to many people. He concluded his remarks saying Aref has translated *Son of Mountains* into Kurdish and has written a poetry book.

Kathy Manley said Aref has also written a book in Kurdish about his years in prison in the United States. Lynne said that many of the entrapped Muslims are enduring what are essentially life sentences, including the Fort Dix five and the Holy Land case. Lynne said local MSC members may visit Aref in Kurdistan next year; a trip planned for two years ago was canceled by the pandemic. Lynne said Aref's poems can be read at YasinAref.com.

Steve mentioned Ali Yaghi who was sentenced to 42 years in prison for "absolutely nothing."

Dunn & Norlite Update continued from page 1

and demolition debris and who-knows-what-else dump located right next to the RCSD campus, a cemetery, and in between Rensselaer and East Greenbush residential neighborhoods.

QUESTAR educates students from Rensselaer, Greene, and Columbia counties in the RCSD building. Classrooms for the BOCES students are located closest to the dump of all campus classrooms.

The RCSD letter is signed by the district superintendent, all five board members, and the presidents of the CSEA local, teachers union, and PTA. This is an about-face for many of these people.

QUESTAR and RCSD join the East Greenbush Town Board, Rensselaer City Council, and Rensselaer County Legislature, who have all unanimously approved resolutions calling for a closure of the dump.

R&EG residents, many working with the Rensselaer Environmental Coalition (REC), are intensifying efforts to convince Assemblyman John McDonald and state Senator Neil Breslin to demand dump closure. Assemblyman McDonald insists he favors finding some way to eliminate problems R&EG residents experience from the dump and its associated dump traffic. This is interpreted as also finding some way to keep the dump operating long term. Senator Breslin has said almost nothing about the dump over the

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Wanted Dead or Alive: Karner Blues — My Pine Bush History Report

By Olivia Rose, age 13

Social Media Today and Then

I'm a kid and I know that social media can take societal issues we care about and make them go viral in real time. But in 1977, way before the internet or even personal computers, when my grandfather Rocco Ferran was a resident in Albany New York and active to help secure the Pine Bush for future generations, like me, social media was, well, slower and had far less reach. From my research, social media in the 1970's meant taking out an ad in the newspaper (what's that?), seeing a news item on the evening tv (no replay!), or chatting with a neighbor (does anyone even know their neighbor anymore?). While the systems of social media have changed, what is similar is that like today, it sometimes takes a bold, creative, and innovative way to get people to pay attention and inspire people to act. My grandfather, who passed before I was born, did something I think was ingenious even for today's standard.

Wanted Dead or Alive - Karner Blues

In August 1978, a Rensselaer newspaper classified ad read: "Karner Blue butterflies wanted", \$1 each. The ad was posted in a local weekly circulation that was read by residents who picked up the paper at the grocery store or gas station.

When the ad came out, most of the general public did not know what a Karner Blue was, where it was, or even that it existed! But this ad made readers want to know more... especially since they could potentially make money for turning one in! It also got the attention of EnCon Enforcement because the Karner Blue was on the state's endangered species list making it illegal to transfer, offer for sale, or possess the insect.

The Result

Shortly after the ad was discovered by local news who began reports on the plight of the Karner Blue butterfly, what was being hunted now by the press was not the butterfly, but the person who wrote the ad! My grandfather eventu-

ally came forward publicly about his "Save the Pine Bush Campaign", the objective of his ad. His goal specifically was to:

dozer which could kill thousands of butterflies, because the law does not prohibit destruction of the Karner Blue's habitat by developers."

News of the bounty ad went viral, then went away eventually, like all social media sensationalization stunts eventually do then and now, but thankfully, his efforts to

protect the Pine Bush did not. Today the Karner Blue and the Pine Bush have lots of friends.

I am so glad we found a box of Rocco's records and I was able to learn more about him and the Pine Bush. Even though I never met him, my grandfather taught me that one person can make a difference. A later article confirmed that grandfather never received a single butterfly in the mail, nor accolades for his effort, but that was never the point- he was thinking to help save the butterflies habitat for the future generations. I am glad The Pine Bush is still around for me and my sister, who will now be a third generation protector of the butterflies.

FUTURE PLANS:

In August 2022, Olivia and Rebecca along with their mother Laura, known as the "The Rose Girls", are planning to host the 2nd Annual Pollinator Day Celebration, to be held in SEBS, the South End Butterfly Sanctuary, a new urban garden and eco-hub located in downtown Albany, New York. This event is in honor of their grandmother and grandfather's legacy of saving the butterflies in the Pine Bush and a free community event to bring urban kids closer to nature.

Albany man puts 'bounty' on butterfly to bait state



Rocco Ferran

- 1) bring awareness that there was no law preventing the destruction of the butterfly's habitat.
 - 2) To make people care to protect it.
- It worked!!! The news interviewed Rocco who said "the state would do nothing against a bull-



Olivia Rose, author of this article, is 13 years old and lives in Albany, NY's South End



Rebecca and Olivia Rose dressed for butterfly success!

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Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. with Tina Lieberman

- switching to a hybrid or electric vehicle with tax incentives and NYS rebates
- reducing food waste and composting your food scraps in your backyard, at free community drop-off sites or with a door-to-door pick up service.

There are a growing number of resources to help us make changes that reduce our carbon footprint – let's learn about them together in honor of Earth Day.

How to Join the Zoom Meeting

A link to the Zoom meeting will be posted on the Save the Pine Bush website at savethepinebush.org/zoom.html. Or call in to the meeting at (929)205-6099. The meeting ID for Zoom and for calling in is **899 5893 7861**. **The Zoom meeting will open at 6:00 PM for anyone who wishes to socialize prior to the presentation.** Also, you may call or text (518)366-7324 for assistance.

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

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years. Many R&EG residents believe that if and when McDonald and Breslin demand closure of the dump, located in their districts, other state legislators will do likewise, greatly increasing pressure to force closure.

More than two years ago, US Representative Paul Tonko signed a petition calling for the immediate and permanent closure of the Dunn dump.

Save the Pine Bush Appeal Heard in the NYS Appellate Division, Third Department

by Lynne Jackson

ALBANY: On March 23, the Supreme Court, Appellate Division Third Judicial Department heard Save the Pine Bush's appeal of the dismissal of our case against the Town of Guilderland and Pyramid over the proposed apartments, Costco and office buildings.

Todd Ommen, of the Pace Environmental

Litigation Clinic argued for Save the Pine Bush. The main argument was that the issues Save the Pine Bush raised in our case in Supreme Court have never been heard.

Residents in the Town of Guilderland had also sued over the proposed developments. Property and business issues were raised in their lawsuit. Though the residents won in Supreme Court, their win was overturned by the Appellate Division. In our lawsuit, we raised issues regarding preserving the Pine Bush and threatened and endangered species. The Supreme Court dismissed our case last October citing the loss of the neighbors' case. We appealed because none of our issues had been heard by the court.

The Pine Bush ecosystem is being destroyed by developments one acre at a time. What will our grandchildren ask us - why we have one less gas station on Western Avenue or why there are no more Karner Blue butterflies? We hope the court will side with us. A decision may be made in the next couple of months.

Lasagna Dinners

by Lynne Jackson

We all miss getting together every month to eat delicious lasagna. Covid is still with us, and probably will be with us for decades to come. Is it time for Save the Pine Bush to start thinking about getting together again to eat delicious lasagna and enjoy each other's company?

But, is the loosening of covid restrictions a good idea? On February 9, 2022, the *NY Times* reports that 2576 Americans died of the disease on just that one day — a horrific, on-going, death toll. The media reports that people are "moving on" from the pandemic. As an older person myself, I feel that seniors are being thrown under the bus.

Are we ready to start meeting in person again? Given the average age of people who attend dinners, should we protect ourselves by requiring proof of vaccination for all attendees?

I am very interested in peoples' thoughts regarding getting together again in person. Or, under what conditions you think we can safely get together. Please let me know what you think by emailing me at contact@savethepinebush.org.

Volunteers Needed!

Want to volunteer with Save the Pine Bush? Volunteers needed for the newsletter, including writing articles and preparing the layout. In addition, volunteers are needed to organize the speakers for the virtual Zoom meetings

Tulipfest - May 7 & 8!

We are hoping to have a table at Tulipfest this year. We need volunteers to create an exhibit and to setup and sit at the table. Email contact@savethepinebush.org to volunteer!

Return Service Requested

Save the Pine Bush
A Project of the Social Justice Center
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