



Save the Pine Bush

April Newsletter

Apr 26 No. 169 • 223 S. Swan St., Albany, NY 12202 • email contact@savethepinebush.org • phone 518-366-7324 • web www.savethepinebush.org • Circ. 600

Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Thursday, April 30, at 6:00 p.m.

Mary Beth Kolozsvary, PhD

Professor Environmental Studies and Sciences, Siena University

Climate Change and the Study of Periodic Biological Phenomena

Mary Beth Kolozsvary, PhD, Professor Environmental Studies and Sciences, Siena University, will discuss her work in phenology—the scientific study of periodic biological phenomena, such as flowering, breeding and migration—in relation to climate change and its implications.

At the St. Andrew's Church, 10 North Main, Albany, NY (please note new location!!!). All-you-can-eat lasagna dinner, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. Only \$20 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please email contact@savethepinebush.org or go to savethepinebush.org/dinner. Please feel free to wear a mask when not eating.

Everyone is welcome!

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

www.savethepinebush.org

Uncovering the Pine Bush's Hidden History

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY: Schenectady County Historical Society Historian and Director of Education Michael Diana spoke at the October 29, 2025 Save the Pine Bush dinner. His topic was Uncover the Pine Bush's Hidden History. Mr. Diana grew up in Guilderland and attended Pine Bush Elementary School.

He said the pine bush was mostly untouched until recently and congratulated Don Rittner for his considerable pine barrens research. He asked and answered the question: Why is the Pine Bush unique? Rare ecological features emerged from melting ice that settled in a delta just west of present-day Albany. The landscape literally

continued on page 2

Apartments Proposed for Pine Bush Recommended for Full Protection

by Lynne Jackson

GUILDERLAND: Pine Bush Parc, LLC, is proposing to build 210 apartments on eleven acres of Pine Bush that is recommended for Full Protection in Guilderland.

Though the Pine Bush preserve now protects about 3500 acres of Pine Bush ecosystem, there are still about 1,795 acres of privately-owned Pine Bush ecosystem in danger of destruction in the Town of Guilderland (there are about 1400 acres in the Town of Colonie).

The site of the proposed apartment complex totals about 50 acres. The developer proposes to donate 39 acres to the Preserve and build on 11 acres. Sounds like a good deal, right?

Only, it's not.

The remaining Pine Bush ecosystem that is privately owned and not protected, is in danger of destruction. These days, the remaining privately-owned Pine Bush is being eaten away a few acres at a time. Years ago, developers proposed huge projects of 80 or more acres. These days, the proposals are small; a few acres here and a few acres there. Currently, there are several pro-

continued on page 4

Uncovering continued from page 1

rose up after the thick Ice Age ice melted. The local pine barrens is also unusual in that they are so far inland.

Vegetation stabilizes the sand dunes. Today's pine barrens are "a fraction of a fraction" of those from yesteryear. At one time, they stretched from the east part of present-day Albany to where the Schenectady Stockade is now located. Perhaps ten percent is protected. The pine barrens being not easily farmable contributed to their being mostly intact well into the twentieth century.

Written records go back to the seventeenth century, he said. The pine barrens had been a border of sorts between Mohawk and Mohican lands. During the 1600s, Mohawks pushed east into Mohican lands. Dutch written records beginning in the 1650s noted Indians conducted burns to limit underbrush and enhance hunting success.

Beaver pelts drove the colonial economy in 1600s. Beverwyck, later renamed Albany. Indians delivered pelts to Beverwyck. As they became increasingly vested in the fur trade, Mohawk traders avoided the Cohoes Falls and walked through fifteen miles of sandy scrubby pine barrens.

Native communities experienced mortality rates of up to fifty percent from European diseases. Dutch traders competed with each other and captured Mohawks to confiscate their furs. The Dutch West India Company sold and gave tracts to Kiliaen van Rensselaer of about one million acres; people who lived on his tract paid him rent. Most of the pine barrens were on Van Rensselaer's lands. Private ownership of property was allowed in what became Albany.

Schenectady was established in 1661 when the Dutch built another town just beyond the pines. They adapted the Mohawk trail, later named the King's Highway, to connect them. After the English rulers replaced the Dutch in 1664 and allowed people to live along the King's Highway, residents began removing sand from the pine barrens for unknown reasons. For the most part, lands between the towns remained an unused-by-people wilderness.

During the early 1700s, Palatine refugees from Germany settled in the region, later blazing a trail to Schoharie County. Their belief that pitch from the pitch pines was not usable in ship construction may have motivated their move to the west.

The pine barrens remained undesirable for settlement during most of the Eighteenth Century. Fifteen miles was a long road to travel in the 1700s. A few seedy taverns were built, Isaac Truax's tavern being one. Truax was a Revolutionary War Loyalist. George Washington traveled the King's Highway.

The pine barrens were mostly left intact during the 1800s too. Erie Canal construction 200 hundred years ago had little impact. A steam locomotive-powered Albany-to-Schenectady railroad began operation in 1831. The railroad traversed the pine barrens but did not stimulate development along the route. Four-hundred Oneidas moved to the fringes of Schenectady on the edge of the pine barrens. Although expert basket makers, Mr. Diana said there are no known primary sources about them. Land swindles occurred in the 1800s as Albany city sold pine barrens lots that were often rebought and sold. In 1858, one man tried to sell a large lot to uninformed buyers.

A few settlers learned to farm the pine barrens, one man grew celery, but the Nineteenth Century left the pine barrens mostly untouched.

Blacks escaping from racism, repression and poverty began building a community on Rapp Road in the 1920s leading to a chain migration with dozens coming north and creating a transplanted southern community. Rutted roads and criss-crossing dirt paths were still common in the 1940s.

Rapid change came after World War Two as car owners escaped the cities to rural areas. The 1950s were a decade of suburbanization and quickened development; the NYS Thruway cut directly across the pine barrens stimulating construction of other roads. Large numbers of people came to settle in the pine barrens for the first time. Today there are many paved parking lots. Suppression of fires allowed newer tree species to move in. Mr. Diana concluded his comments with, "It is a geological and historical onclave; I would hate to see it go."

During the questions and comments, Mr Diana said much of his information came from Don Ritner's publications and the SPB website, it was probably not economically viable for the Palatines to live in the pine barrens during the 1700s, and other than Six Mile Waterworks, there is not much freshwater in the Pine Bush. Lynne Jackson said the Pine Bush sits atop a primary aquifer. He said the 17th and 18th century pine barrens was a lawless area other than the King's Highway.

Use the Save the Pine Bush Mapper!

Want to see where a property is in the Pine Bush? Want to know what properties are protected? Want to see public meeting agendas? Use the Pine Bush Mapper!

New features have been added, including DEC information wetlands, National Wetlands Inventory, and year building built.

www.savethepinebush.org/agenda
www.savethepinebush.org/m

Breathe Free Hudson Falls

by Tom Ellis

HUDSON FALLS, NY: Residents of the Village of Hudson Falls are making huge strides to close the 35-year-old Wheelabrator trash incinerator that has plagued their community 45 miles north of Albany. Organizing began in earnest following a June 10, 2024 two-a-half-hour incinerator fire that no fire trucks responded to. Nine days later there was enormous incinerator noise. Breathe Free Hudson Falls was soon established.

Rosemary Madona who lives a few hundred yards from the trash burner says her neighborhood has declined enormously and the noise and stench are horrible. She believes many lives were and are being ruined and shortened by the burner.

Residents attend each village board meeting and work with local environmental-health advocate Tracy Frisch and Earth Justice who have drafted a local law the board will likely soon enact. The law will require continuous air monitoring of eighteen air contaminants including dioxins and furans, PAHs, PCBs, PFAS, zinc, selenium, nickel, mercury, lead, chromium, arsenic, and VOCs; and mandate installation of latest equipment at the incinerator. The hope is that Wheelabrator will close the old incinerator rather than incur the additional expenses and oversight.

Many Albany residents remember the infamous state-owned ANSWERS trash incinerator that polluted Sheridan Hollow from 1982-1994 until a malfunction coated newly-fallen snow with black soot and led to its quick closure. While it operated, local residents and public health advocates including me were faced with the challenge of how do we force the state environmental conservation and health departments to rein in the poisonous behavior of the state Office of General Services. When it was closed 32 years ago, nearby children could breathe much cleaner air for the first time in their lives. The children of Hudson Falls deserve the same.

Seeing as the federal and state governments refuse to protect Hudson Falls residents, it is the duty of village residents and their local government to step in and protect public health. It is great to see a village exercise its power to control a large corporation.

NY's Energy Policy

By Tom Ellis

As March ended, residents, politicians and corporations were engaged in a major tug-of-war over New York State's energy policy while largely ignoring the dire accelerating ecological crisis of the Earth.

During March, the Green Education and

continued on next page

NY's Energy Policy continued from page 2

Legal Fund reported: "Several years ago, the UN Secretary General warned that the slow action by elected officials in addressing climate change had opened the gates of hell. Two years ago the UN reported that significant parts of the world would become uninhabitable within 18 years. Seven of the nine global life boundaries have already been breached. Global warming is happening faster than most scientists predicted, sea levels are higher than previously thought, and we are rapidly approaching catastrophic tipping points."

The World Meteorological Organization State of the Global Climate report 2025, issued late in March, "confirms that 2015-2025 are the hottest 11-years on record, and that 2025 was the second or third hottest year on record, at about 1.43 [degrees] C above the 1850-1900 average. Extreme events around the world, including intense heat, heavy rainfall and tropical cyclones, caused disruption and devastation and highlighted the vulnerability of our inter-connected economics and societies."

As the April 1 state budget deadline neared, Governor Kathy Hochul was advocating for weakening the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and for the state to establish a goal of constructing five billion watts of new electricity generating capacity. The governor proposed delaying by seven years the already late issuance of regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, delaying actual reductions by ten years, and making it easier to undercount the warming impacts of methane. Opponents countered urging the state legislature to retain CLCPA and enact a carbon tax.

The Alliance For a Nuclear Free New York urged the state to enact a two-year moratorium on any state funding or subsidies for new nuclear energy. Based on a half-century of soaring nuclear construction costs, five thousand megawatts of new nuclear electricity generating capacity would

Developer Entities

by Alex Brownstein

In Guilderland and the surrounding region we are currently seeing multiple large development proposals — including Hamilton Parc, Foundry Square, Pine Bush Parc, and Saratoga Parc.

The projects themselves are separate legal entities, but public records suggest they are part of a larger development network centered around the Markstone Group and its principals.

Seeing the full network provides a clearer understanding of who is involved and how the projects relate to one another.

Each project appears under a different

Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update

By Lynne Jackson

GUILDERLAND: The Guilderland Town Board has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town. Beginning the plan update process in the fall of 2022, the Town Board adopted the Town of Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update, November 2025.

Starting last summer, members of Save the Pine Bush attended many meetings of the Guilderland Town Board to advocate for Pine Bush Preservation. Initially, the Plan Update mentioned the Pine Bush in a sentence or two. Due to the advocacy of Save the Pine Bush volunteers, the Comprehensive Plan Update now has an entire section on the Pine Bush beginning on Page 10. The cover of the Plan Update even has two photos from the Pine Bush — a photo of the Karner Blue butterfly and a photo of blue lupine.

In the Plan, the Town acknowledges the importance of Pine Bush preservation.

From page 10 of the Plan:

"The single largest portion of privately-owned undeveloped Pine Bush ecosystem is located in the Town of Guilderland and constitutes approximately 1,795 acres. ***The Town of Guilderland should strive to protect all of this remaining, undeveloped Pine Bush ecosystem.***" [emphasis added]

From page 17 of the Plan:

It is important for the Town of Guilderland to preserve land in the Albany Pine Bush ecosystem to protect a globally rare ecosystem, conserve endangered wildlife, manage stormwater, and maintain the region's character." [emphasis added]

On page 107, the Plan outlines steps for Pine Bush preservation:

"Create an action plan for the identification, voluntary acquisition, and management of properties that comprise a comprehensive open space and natural resource preservation system. . .

"The Town should also consider adopting an overlay zone within the Pine Bush Preserve

Management Area as a land preservation tool. Utilizing these land preservation techniques will assist in preserving land within partial protection and full protection areas within the Pine Bush Preserve Management Area."

From page 113 of the Plan:

"E-19. Establish a program for acquiring key properties in Town to preserve as open space by prioritizing land that offers significant ecological, recreational, scenic, and community benefits. It will be funded through a dedicated mechanism and guided by clear, publicly vetted criteria."

Save the Pine Bush volunteers submitted extensive comments on the draft update plan. Read the comments here: <https://www.townofguilderland.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4523/Save-the-Pine-Bush-PDF>.

In late October, 2025, Town of Guilderland Supervisor Peter Barber spoke at the unveiling of the John Wolcott Pine Bush Hikers' Underpass. In his speech, he mentioned a couple of the Save the Pine Bush volunteers who had attended so many meetings, including a Town Board meeting the night before. He said he knew that Russell Ziemba lived in Troy and cared so much about the Pine Bush that he came all the way to Guilderland to speak about the Pine Bush. And, he said he kept thinking of one word Lynne Jackson kept saying over and over at the meetings, waking up at 3:00 that morning, thinking of "ecosystem."

Clearly, attendance at public meetings can have a significant impact on public policy. Getting such an extensive mention of the importance of the Pine Bush in the new Guilderland Comprehensive Plan Update will hopefully move Guilderland to preserve more of the privately-held Pine Bush ecosystem land in the Town.

See the entire Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town:

<https://www.townofguilderland.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4536/Comprehensive-Plan-Update-PDF>

company name: Hiawatha Land Dev LLC, Guilderland Village LLC, Pine Bush Parc LLC, and others.

Using separate LLCs for each project is common in real estate development. However, it also means the public often sees each project as an isolated proposal, when in reality they may be part of a much larger regional development pipeline.

So residents and decision-makers may encounter Hamilton Parc, Foundry Square, Pine Bush Parc, and Saratoga Parc as separate hearings rather than as one expanding regional portfolio under a shared development platform.

While this is not improper, when evaluating projects of this scale, it is important to look at the cumulative impact of development across the region, not just each project individually.

Apartments Proposed continued from page 1
 posed projects in the Town of Colonie to build warehouses which consist of just a few acres for each proposal. Plus the 75-acre proposed solar farm on land recommended for full protection. In Guilderland, there are a couple of proposals to build houses on land recommend for protection. These housing proposals are on a few acres of land. But, add up all of these proposed projects, and they have a significant, cumulative affect on the Pine Bush, which, unfortunately, destroys the ecosystem.

For this Pine Bush Parc proposal, the entire 50 acre parcel is recommended for Full Protection by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, with one of the highest scores that can be given – 60. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission gives this area of the Pine Bush high scores for pitch pine/scrub oak ecosystem, linkage, water resources, and historic resources.

The developer is asked for this parcel to be re-zoned a “PUD” or “Planned Unit Development.”

The Town code definition of a PUD is: “The PUD District provides for flexible land use and design so that small- to large-scale neighborhoods can be developed that incorporate a variety of residential types and nonresidential uses, and which may contain both individual building sites and common property which are planned and developed as a unit. The PUD District shall include preservation of trees, natural topography and geologic features; efficient use of

Town of Guilderland Planning Board Public Meeting Wednesday, April 22 at 7:00 PM

Do you live in Guilderland? Do you want to see Guilderland preserve its Pine Bush? Come to the Town of Guilderland Planning Board Public Meeting Wednesday, April 22 at 7:00 PM and express your opposition to the Planning Board accepting the proposed apartment complex in the Pine Bush. There is no public hearing scheduled for that evening. However, the Planning Board chair often allows people who attend the meeting to speak.

The agenda for this meeting can be found on line at: <https://www.townofguilderland.gov/AgendaCenter/Planning-Board-7>

Bring your concerns about Pine Bush preservation. Ask the Planning Board to not recommend changing the zoning to a PUD (Planned Unit Development).

The Guilderland Planning Board meets on the first floor of Guilderland Town Hall, 5209 Western Turnpike, Guilderland, NY.

Save the Pine Bush expects there will be several Town Board and Planning Board meetings on this proposed project. If you would like to receive emails regarding government meetings where proposals in the Pine Bush are presented and voted on, please email contact@savethepinebush.org.

land resulting in smaller networks of utilities; interconnected streets; and a plan supportive of transit service and consistent with smart growth principles.

The proposal does not include a variety of residential types. The proposal only includes two apartment buildings; one is four stories, the other five stories. The proposal does not include any non-residential uses. Other than gifting the un-buildable 39 acres to the Preserve, there is no preservation of the Pine Bush ecosystem on the 11-acre building site itself. Despite offering 39 acres for preservation, the developer is still building on every square inch of the parcel that can be built on.

People can view a map of the proposed site by visiting savethepinebush.org/m to view the

Mapper. The proposed project is made up of four parcels of land. These parcels are 20, 22, and 24 New Karner Rd (there is an additional tiny .15 acre parcel with no street number). To view a parcel, enter the address of 20 New Karner Rd and the Mapper will display an outline of the parcel. Roll your mouse over adjacent parcels to view the other parcels in the project.

This proposed project, if built, will further fragment the Pine Bush ecosystem.

At some point, the Town of Guilderland needs to decide whether or not it will follow the goals for the Pine Bush preservation in the new Guilderland Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Board is holding another meeting on this proposal on Wednesday, April 22 (Earth Day!). Come celebrate Earth Day by attending the meeting. See announcement above.

PRESORTED
 STANDARD
 US POSTAGE PAID
 ALBANY, NY
 PERMIT #509

Return Service Requested

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

