

The Legislature of Rockland County



CONNIE L. COKER

Legislator, District 17

Chairwoman, Environmental Committee

MINUTES

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2008 5:15 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

LEG. C. COKER, CHAIR
LEG. H. CORNELL(LATE 5:30)
LEG. F. SPARACO
LEG. J. HOOD JR.
LEG. G. BIERKER
LEG A. WOLFE

MEMBERS ABSENT

LEG. J. MICHEL

OTHERS PRESENT

LEG. P. SOSKIN
LEG. J. MEYERS
LEG. M. GRANT
R. MCCAY, ESQ
L. INCALCATERRA
P. NAGIN
P. BRENNAN
A. STEWART
S. MATHEWS
M. YUSNT

Chairwoman Coker called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Chairwoman Coker asked for the adoption of minutes from the meeting of January 23, 2008.

MOTION TO APPROVE

COKER/WOLFE

UNAN

1. REFERRAL NO. 9415

REQUESTING THE NEW YORK LEGISLATURE INTRODUCE AND APPROVE HOME RULE LEGISLATION ALLOWING ROCKLAND COUNTY TO EXEMPT GEOTHERMAL SYSTEMS INSTALLED IN ROCKLAND COUNTY FROM THE COUNTY PORTION OF THE SALES TAX.

(HON. CONNIE COKER/HON. ALDEN WOLFE- LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: HOOD JR., CORNELL, SOSKIN

LEG. WOLFE INDICATED HE WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE TWO MORE RESOLUTIONS ONE FOR THE STATE AND ONE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNEMENT TO COVER GEOTHERMAL SYSTEM INSTALLATION WITH TAX CREDITS, SALES TAX RELIEF, AND/OR GRANTS.

Legislator Wolfe said he introduced the same bill with Legislator Coker in 2006, and had a commitment from the last Assemblyman Zebrowski who never had the opportunity to follow through with it because of his unfortunate death.

Chairwoman Coker asked that Paul Nagin speak on the issue because his home is the textbook case of how geothermal systems work. He did pay sales tax on his equipment. This resolution would not benefit Mr Nagin. He is testifying in order to help those who want to purchase such a system and because it benefits everyone by decreasing our use of foreign oil and decreasing pollution and green house gas emissions.

Mr. Nagin stated that for the most part he lives a carbon neutral lifestyle because of his home and car. He went on to say that solar power is not efficient enough yet to use because it is still to expensive and the northeast does not get enough sunlight, in order to have wind power you must live on a hill in a windy area,

With the geothermal system that Mr. Nagin has he had to put in 3 wells, which are 300 feet below the earth's surface. The temperature is always 55 degrees, so in the summer you can make the water cool and in the winter the water can be heated but must use a compressor to get the water. The system basically is 70% free of electricity. You do not need to burn any fossil fuels to use the system and it costs about \$3 to \$4 a day to heat the house. For every \$1 you invest in the system you get \$4.50 on your return, so in 5 to 6 years you get a full return on the installation of the system.

Legislator Wolfe states that there are incentives such as tax breaks from your tax returns to install solar power but not for geothermal systems.

Legislator Hood asked Mr. Nagin, how much did the wells cost to install?

Mr. Nagin responded he paid about \$18,000 to have them installed for his large home. He also said that it was much cheaper to dig trenches instead of the wells. Mr. Nagin emphasized that the cost of wells or trenches would vary based on the size of the home or building.

Legislator Bierker stated that the average homeowner could not install the system.

Legislator Cornell responded that if tax breaks were given to homeowners that more homeowners would install the systems.

Legislator Coker also emphasized that the benefit of these systems extends to all of us by decreasing our reliance on foreign oil and reducing green house has emissions, which contribute to air pollution and global climate changes.

Chairwoman Coker thanked Mr. Nagin for his time, and asked for a motion to approve.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:
WOLFE/COKER**

**4 AYES
2 NAYS**

4 AYES: COKER, CORNELL, HOOD JR., WOLFE

TRANSFER TO B & F

2 NAYS: BIERKER, SPARACO

2.REFERRAL NO. 8239

SETTING A DATE FOR A PUBLIC HEARING: A LOCAL LAW
BANNING POLYSTYRENE FOAM PRODUCTS FROM
ROCKLAND COUNTY GOVERNEMENT OFFICES,
DEPARTMENTS, AND AGENCIES.
(HON.ALDEN WOLFE-LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: COKER, CORNELL, HOOD JR., SOSKIN

Chairwoman Coker stated that this law only applies to County departments and not the public. She asked that Paul Brennan the County's Director of Purchasing come and speak about the costs if the ban was put in place.

See attached cost analysis from Paul Brennan, Director of Purchasing.

Paul Brennan stated costs for paper products fluctuate more because it is a commodity than recycled products do.

Legislator Hood stated that costs for the county would triple and considering the budget problems he couldn't see adding the ban at this time.

Legislator Sparaco stated that since it is only 6 products it would be a waste of time and taxpayer money.

Legislator Bierker asked what percent of the products go into our solid waste stream?

Janet Burnet who works at the Rockland County Solid Waste Management Authority said she could look into the question if the Legislature wanted an answer.

Chairwoman Coker asked for motion to approve.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:
COKER/WOLFE**

**5 AYES
1 NAY**

5 AYES: COKER, CORNELL, HOOD JR., WOLFE, BIERKER

1 NAY: SPARACO

3.REFERRAL NO. 1290

SETTING A DATE FOR A PUBLIC HEARING: A LOCAL LAW
MANDATING THAT RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS OVER A

CERTAIN SIZE OFFERING PLASTIC CARRY-OUT BAGS MUST
ESTABLISH A RECYCLING PROGRAM FOR THEIR STORES.
(HON.CONNIE COKER/HON.ILAN SCHOENBERGER-LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: HOOD JR., WOLFE, CORNELL, SOSKIN

Chairwoman Coker explained that plastic bags break down into miniscule pieces and get into the water, which harm fish and wildlife. She said the bill that she and Legislator Schoenberger have proposed models the one from New York City and Suffolk County on Long Island which is designed to reduce dependence on foreign oil as 35 million barrels of oil are used each year to make the plastic bags used in the United States. The resolution also would decrease the number of plastic bags that litter our countryside. At this time the SWMA is not able to recycle these bags.

Legislator Hood said that this bill could make a big difference. He has reusable bags that cost 99 cents, and every time you bring them back and use them you get 2 cents off of your grocery bill.

Legislator Bierker agreed that this bill would make a difference and that we should ban plastic bags all together in Rockland County. Any store that has plastic bags should charge 25 cents to use them and the proceeds should go to Keep Rockland Beautiful. Legislator Coker invited Legislator Bierker to join with her on the resolution that she is working on which uses the Dublin law as a model and includes a fee of \$.25 if a customer needs a plastic bag. This resolution will come before the Environmental Committee within a month.

Legislator Sparaco said he did not see any down side as a small business owner.

Janet Burnet said she feels like America is finally coming to their senses when it comes to the environment and that it all starts locally, right here.

4.REFERRAL NO. 4124

REQUESTING THAT THE NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY PASS
ASSEMBLY BILL A.02002-AN ACT TO AMEND THE
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION LAW, IN RELATION TO
HIGH LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT COMMUNITIES,
AND URGING THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE TO
INTRODUCE AND PASS, AND THE NEW YORK STATE
GOVERNOR SIGN
SIMILAR LEGISLATION.
(HON.ALDEN WOLFE-LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: CORNELL, COKER, HOOD JR., SOSKIN

Legislator Wolfe stated that the same communities such as Hillburn have always been host to illegal dumping from Ford Motor Company. The Rockland County Solid Waste Management Authority and their facilities are all located in Hillburn and it is not fair to keep subjecting the same community to harmful things.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:
WOLFE/COKER**

**5 AYES
1 NAY**

**5 AYES: COKER, CORNELL, HOOD JR., WOLFE, BIERKER
1 NAY: SPARACO**

Chairwoman Coker asked for the meeting to be adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

HOOD JR/CORNELL

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