



## Town of Riverhead Environmental Advisory Committee

200 Howell Avenue, Riverhead, NY 11901  
631-727-3200 TownOfRiverheadNY.gov

*Mark Haubner-CoChair, Cara Fernandes-CoChair*

### **Issue Recommendation** : 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update

Submitted to BFJ Consulting on behalf of the Town of Riverhead (ToRH) Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), by review and consensus, subject to further comment and edit 20230328

#### **Overview**

Created in 2018, the Town Board resolved to:

"...establish an...Environmental Advisory Committee for the purpose of advising the Town Board on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural and man-made features and conditions of the Town insofar as beauty, quality, biologic integrity and other environmental factors are concerned and, in the case of man's activities and developments, with regard to any major threats posed to environmental quality so as to enhance the long-range value of the environment to the people of the Town."

The adopted mission of the Riverhead Environmental Advisory Committee is to serve as a resource for the facilitation of conservation and environmental stewardship by the Town and its residents through education, government policies, and incentives. Published 03.April.2019

The EAC meets monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month. There are currently 10 members on the team; one Town Board member as liaison and a member of the Engineering Department are standing invitees.

The Committee provides Bulletins of information and education, Issue Brief and Position Statements discussing issues and taking a position, and Issue Recommendations based on position for the Town Board, Planning Board, Planning Department and all other interested boards, staff and committees of the town as necessary.

#### **Recent Projects:**

The EAC is actively involved in carrying out the many Pledge Elements (PE) of the New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)'s Climate Smart Communities program. With 140 PE's from which to choose, this committee spent about 2 years attaining 80 points solely in the energy sections of the program. Energy consumption benchmarking, employee training, vehicle fleet assessments and much more comprised the entirety of this work.

For 2022 and 2023 we focused on the Climate-smart Materials Management section (PE5) which is dedicated to Vegetative Organics, Solid Waste (to include recycling) and integration with the Engineering Department's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). By achieving success in the various PE's the town's SWMP is maintaining and exceeding compliance levels and timeline targets.

For one long-term program specifically, we partnered with the Engineering Department, the Greater Calverton Civic Association and a non-profit, the North Fork Environmental Council, to design, plan and implement a Food Scraps-to-Compost (on-farm) pilot program. This yielded 2200 pounds (one metric ton) of Vegetative Organic Resources which equal 2200 pounds of CO2e diverted from the solid waste stream (REV2030, SWMP requirements) and were introduced back into on-farm soil as an Organic Content amendment. This is only one example of a Circular Economy and Zero Waste.

Starting in 2020 we partnered with PeconicGreenGrowth.org (Glynis Berry), the Riverhead High School,

**Issues of concern:**

No issues of concern exist in isolation from each other, and all issues of concern are based on the health of the ground upon which we stand. Not one of these impacts is more or less important than another as we are living on a planet of inseparable, integrated systems.

Dumping an excess of CO2, methane, NOx, SOx and black carbon into our atmosphere has caused Planetary Overheating.

We in the Peconic Bioregion (the 5 towns of the East End of Long Island) are susceptible to not just higher energy storms, wild fluctuations in rain and drought and the impact on plants, animals, insects and our people, but to what is now a 1-foot rise in sea level since 1950. Coastal inundation impacts coastal properties and the increased risk to residential, commercial, agricultural and government assets must be assessed.

**Priorities:**

*Short term programs:* Food scraps (diversion, recovery, reuse); water conservation; Best Management Practices for landscaping; achieve CSC Bronze status (2023)

*Medium term goals:* Implement Comprehensive Plan Update in all sectors (R, ICI, G), begin path to NYSERDA Community Choice Aggregation

*Long term goals:* Meet REV2030 stated goals, work to Climate Smart Community Silver status

**Other considerations:**

Without a doubt, the Town of Riverhead is subject to and has a responsibility for meeting (or exceeding) the law: Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), Reforming the Energy Vision for 2030 (REV2030) and the New York State Solid Waste Management Plan (NYS SWMP, draft currently open for public comment).

The goals of all these laws are attainable, but only if we work in concert between all of the Boards, Departments, Committees, Civic Associations and all other community groups: individual efforts are lauded but are now insufficient by themselves—only collaboration will get us to where we need to be.

### **Energy and Technology:**

The technology and systems available to us in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan look almost nothing like the ones we are facing at this moment in 2023, a short 20 years later—and what we are facing right now will look nothing like what is available to us 20 years from now. Technology changes in a nanosecond (refer to ChatGPT already at Version 4 after one year) and so will the requirements for a trained and nimble workforce. Only long horizontal thinking and proactive study, not planning, will keep us going in a direction of our choosing.

Buildings are a major source of carbon emissions and commercial buildings which have a life span of 50 years, a skyscraper of 75 and residential homes of 100 and more built without regard today are going to quickly become a liability, not an asset. Think of the 100-year-old home with the tar paper-covered electrical wiring and lead pipes which require a complete gutting of the building before it is habitable and this is what our current building codes are creating for not 100, but perhaps only 30 years. Retrofitting after the fact is far more costly than the upfront costs incurred at inception. <https://blog.cityelectricsupply.com/new-construction-vs-retrofit-what-you-need-to-know/> Studies are easy to come by to prove this as a business case. New York State will be codifying what is now an optional plan under NYSERDA's Clean Energy Community guidelines. One must ask why we would not simply adopt the Stretch Code as it is and keep moving forward.

A final concern to recap all of the emissions discussions are how NYS DEC is going to approach non-compliance against its Greenhouse Gas inventory rollup (GHGir). Just as the Food Scrap Generators (FSG) are bound since 01.January.2022 to donate usable food and then find a composting facility within 25 miles, there is phase-in of ALL food scrap generators, including K-12 schools and Residential on a published timetable. At some point the DEC will be doing an inventory of not just our Municipal operations and carbon-fossil fuel purveyors (oil and gas) as they are in 2023, but will incorporate ALL emitters to include Commercial and Residential buildings in their analysis.

We can catch up, keep up and stay ahead if we go to work right now.

Mark Haubner, Co-chair, Town of Riverhead Environmental Advisory Committee



## Town of Riverhead

### Environmental Advisory Committee

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*Mark Haubner-CoChair, Cara Fernandes-CoChair,*

To: Town of Riverhead, Town Board, Tue.01.November.2022

### **Issue Brief & Position Statement:**

#### **Moratorium for Industrial Development in the Hamlet of Calverton**

Riverhead has upwards of 12,000,000 square feet of proposed warehousing, e-commerce distribution and fulfillment centers in the application and approval process right now.

These kinds of construction projects demand large losses of land, the many acres of which are finite in number overall and will not be recovered for any other purpose within our lifetimes.

Our town is in the process of creating our Comprehensive Plan Update which, when complete, will guide us more surely in the realms of zoning for land use and codifying those designations to address situations which have not even yet arisen—technology is changing faster more often than we would like and quicker than we can respond at times.

Many small changes have cumulative effects over time, perhaps much more so than single large changes. Looking west on Long Island we can see what our future holds when we look at Hempstead, Huntington, Centereach, Brookhaven and other towns which have allowed unfettered economic growth to be the driving force in all of their decisions.

We are not proposing the halt of every future project to be turned away—we are asking that we all take a breath and consider not just the Environmental, but also the Social and Economic impacts of our decisions as they relate to the sensible growth of our town for generations to come.

We have several other considerations to make in the form of several New York State laws and mandates (CLCPA, REV2030, GreenHouse Gas emissions inventories) which we are prepared to present and discuss as part of the conversation revolving around a General Moratorium.

As we have in the past, we will continue to base our judgment and recommendations on science and be driven by logic for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Mark Haubner, Co-chair, in agreement with the members of this Committee



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*Mark Haubner-CoChair, Cara Fernandes-CoChair*

### **Issue Recommendation: Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) 20221230**

The pressure of our current energy consumption in the U.S. is driving us faster in 'renewable' sources (hydro, solar, wind, geothermal) to which Riverhead has responded by allowing the installation of large tracts of solar energy equipment. Because of the intermittent nature of solar and wind, a logical add-on to these (BESS) is to level the demand load as well as provide a short backup for blackout conditions.

The elimination of the 9 'peaker plants' in the Peconic Bioregion (6 of which are on the North Fork) is highly desirable. Hosting BESS in our town may be desirable overall and will be a part of our town's contribution to the New York State Reforming the Energy Vision 2030 goals in reducing emissions and increasing 'renewable' energy at the same time.

BESS is comprised of some half dozen engineering types, one of which is a mature but still-evolving technology, that of lithium-ion batteries, and which is coming into its own as an Early Adopter stage implementation. This is similar to the increasing popularity but very high expense of solar energy in the early 2000's. We have seen both solar panels and inverters decrease in price 10-fold which makes the technology better and safer over even a 10-year span.

A quick review of the many departments, committees and volunteers of Riverhead which are directly impacted in the decision-making process around this technology reveals not a lack in intelligence or logic but simply in experience and know-how.

We are recommending that we create an Energy Committee which will pool our many talents but also cross-cut the many stakeholders in this decision—firefighting, medical safety, air quality, quality of life and quite a few more.

Our departments, committees and volunteers from the community are in agreement that we will commit the time and effort needed to assist the Town Board in making an intelligent, safe and satisfactory decision on BESS. We recommend that we create this Energy Committee immediately so that all of the concerns of the many impacted sectors of our community are addressed and that we all work together to assist in making the right decision for Riverhead.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

30.December.2022  
132 Promenade Drive  
Aquebogue, NY 11931

Town of Riverhead  
200 Howell Ave.  
Riverhead, NY 11901

Attn: Town Board, Planning Board, Water District, Fire Department, Police Department heads  
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The creation and function of an Energy Committee will aid in an engineering evaluation, alternative energy recommendations and participate in creating the draft Scope for an EIS. The committee could also create cogent presentations for various target audiences (Town Board, various Departments, Civic Associations, etc.). The committee will *not*, however, circumvent the process of SEQRA or necessarily interject in matters of zoning for these kinds of projects.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.  
Mark Haubner



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*Cara Fernandes-CoChair, Mark Haubner-CoChair*

### **Issue Brief & Position Statement: Anaerobic Digesters**

(information and general disposition of committee) (discussion of issue, EAC position)  
20220621

Anaerobic Digestion as a scientific process has been around for hundreds of years and includes biological, chemical and physical processes that are complex, diverse and provide dozens of products which can be used in hundreds of applications.

For discussion in the Town of Riverhead we will limit our scope to the inputs and outputs of a system designed for several needs and benefits.

The last two landfills on Long Island are closing in 100 months (2024). Fully 25% of our solid waste is currently food waste and are the target of the NYS DEC's efforts in aiding in the reduction of food waste and the reuse of food scraps as a resource.

The Town of Riverhead has eight Large Generators of food scraps creating 2 tons per week each (Walmart, Best Market, 2 hotels, Splish Splash, etc.) and these are the first in line which are required to dispose of their food scraps in a designated food scrap treatment facility. This could be either an ANaerobic Digester (no oxygen) or an AERobic composting (presence of oxygen) facility.

The biggest contributor of Food Waste, however, is the Residential sector: 36,000 people of Riverhead create 18,000 pounds of food scraps every day (9 tons). The remaining 30% of the total food waste comes from our restaurants, college, nursing homes, hospitals and schools which create another 6,000 pounds per day (3 tons).

Even without an effort in Reduction of Food Waste (which is planned through our work with the Engineering Department and other entities) Riverhead's demand for Digestion (either Anaerobic or Aerobic) is far less than 20 tons per day.

Anaerobic Digesters produce Renewable Natural Gas (methane in this case) which is piped directly into the Compressed Natural Gas grid (CNG or 'street gas') which provides a stream of revenue for the provider of the product. A provider can be private equity, Public-Private Partnership or Municipally-owned and operated.

Another product of an Anaerobic Digester is compost which can be treated and managed into a saleable product as well. (Aerobic Digestion is a greens-plus-browns operation which creates high quality compost as the only product.)

With so many options at hand for what used to be food 'waste' we can start to see this as a Resource to be Recovered and Reused to the benefit of everyone involved.

Our Committee welcomes the chance to continue working with the Town Board and other departments to take advantage of the benefits of sensible and scientific approaches to our solid waste issues.