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Kinnelon has yet to decide on revised Environmental Resource Inventory

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012

BY DEBORAH WALSH

STAFF WRITER

SUBURBAN TRENDS

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Although the Borough Council heard from open space advocates that the municipal Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) should be updated, the governing body did not render a decision on expending funds on a revised document.

Barbara Heskins Davis of the Land Conservancy of New Jersey and Carol Vreeland the borough's Environmental Commission (BEC) vice chairperson, who also sits on the Kinnelon Sustainable New Jersey Advisory Committee and the borough's open spaces advisory committee, delivered a presentation at the March 8 Borough Council work session.

Vreeland said the last environmental resource document, known as a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), was undertaken by Lucy Meyer in 1973.

Different boards that use the document have recognized how outdated it is in that the borough has changed a lot since the 1970s. Now that the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) is willing to provide matching funds for an ERI, Vreeland said it makes sense to draft a new one. The application deadline is March 30.



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The Borough of Kinnelon is rich with environmental resources, including such treasures as the Pyramid Mountain parklands. The borough has been asked to perform an environmental resource inventory, which was last undertaken by Lucy Meyer in 1973.

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Davis said the fee for the land conservancy completing the report is \$10,000, but the borough should be able to obtain \$5,000 of that fee from ANJEC. Also, the borough will be able to use funding from its open space tax to pay the \$5,000 balance.

Councilman James Freda asked if a new ERI would add further impediments to developing recreation fields in the borough. State Highlands officials told municipal representatives that they would not likely support Highlands exemptions for the field adjacent to the municipal building because of its proximity to a trout production stream or at the [Boonton Avenue Field](#) because it sits next to the Taylortown Reservoir.

Freda said he envisioned a new ERI making it even harder for the borough to make municipal facility improvements.

"The Land Conservancy has been great. I'm just frustrated with all the DEP (state Department of Environmental Protection) and EPA (federal Environmental Protection Agency) hurdles that we have faced," said Freda.

Noting that the borough is in a Highlands Preservation Area and virtually no new buildings can go up within its borders, Councilman Daniel O'Dougherty questioned the need for a new ERI.

Councilman Gary Moleta said the ERI can be used by the borough as a tool whenever there is any land use application. It will help the municipality make responsible decisions. Citing examples, Moleta said the updated ERI could have been helpful when considering improvements to the Department of Public Works building and when Fayson Lakes Water Company was pondering a location for a water tower.

Mayor Robert Collins said he feels the updated ERI will be used as a tool to support where active recreation can be located in [Kinnelon](#).

Currently the borough must update its Master Plan for land use and the revised ERI will be part and parcel to that, he said.

"I view it as a resource, not as a detriment," said Collins. "Otherwise we have to rely on the DEP to tell us with its maps where things can and cannot go. I think this could potentially support active and passive recreation."

Vreeland said the drafting of an ERI will gain the borough 20 points toward its Sustainable New Jersey certification. According to the Sustainable New Jersey website, Sustainable Jersey is a certification program for New Jersey's municipalities that are making the effort to "go green," save money, and take steps to sustain the quality of life over the long term. [Kinnelon](#) is in the process of becoming certified.

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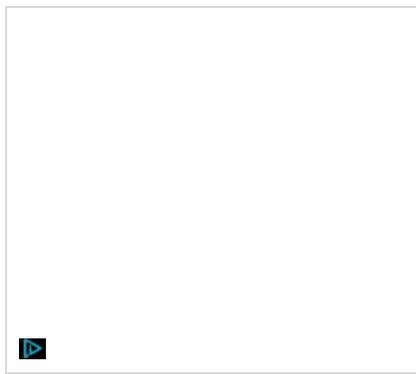
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Davis said a new digitally produced ERI would be much more easily changed and updated than the 1973 NRI. The Geographic Information System data on a new ERI will include geography, geology, topography, vegetation, flood hazard areas, aquifers, potable water, ground water sources, wetlands wildlife, historic places, air quality, and climate.

Davis said some updating of the information contained in the 1973 NRI was done when the borough went through the Highlands Plan Conformance process. Under this process, the borough completed a Highlands Environmental Resources Inventory module. The information contained in this report is not as complete and detailed as the ERI, she indicated.

Though the council did not commit to supporting the new ERI, the governing body could vote on the matter at its March 15 meeting.

Email: walshde@northjersey.com

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