

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Annual Report

Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2021

The following document was prepared for the Peekskill Mayor and Common Council as required by the City Code as it pertains to the CAC's activities for the year ending on December 31, 2021. For more detailed information, please refer to appended copies of the CAC's monthly meeting minutes.

2021 CAC COMPOSITION

Members of Peekskill's CAC include: Kay Barthelmes, Chair; Elaine Caccoma, Vice Chair; Lise Prown; Marie Inserra, Carmen D'Angelo, Chris Barrett. Elaine Caccoma, Sharon Amy Wiggins and Courtney M. Williams terms expire for all members on different dates in 2022, except Melillo in 2023.

On December 1, Kay Barthelmes stepped down as Chairperson. On December 20, Elaine Caccoma was appointed to the position.

Jesica Youngblood, City Planner – Dept. of Planning & Department, was our regular City liaison and recording secretary.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Tree Preservation Ordinance

After many months of work and review by City of Peekskill staff including Andy Stewart, City Manager; Timothy Kramer, Assistant Corporation Counsel and Jesica Youngblood, City Planner, the final version of the Ordinance was opened to citizens at a Public Hearing on December 13, 2021. A resolution adopting the Ordinance was unanimously passed by the Mayor and Council on December 27, 2021.

Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)

The City of Peekskill secured a Hudson River Valley Greenway Assoc. matching Greenway Compact Communities Grant for \$10,000 in 2020, and after two rounds of selection, ultimately hired MJ Engineering, an environmental consulting firm located in Clifton Park, New York, in September 2021 to develop a comprehensive inventory of the city's natural, cultural, and historical resources and conduct public

outreach services in compliance with the grant award. The city awarded additional money to fully fund the NRI and as part of the in-kind volunteer services required by the grant, a CAC member agreed to develop the majority of the GIS mapping content (~ 20 maps) for the NRI. Other CAC volunteers will assist in project coordination and provide guidance and feedback on the NRI as it progresses. While the NRI project held a kick-off meeting in late November 2021, the project was paused at the end of the year when the city planner working on the NRI left her position with the city. The NRI is expected to resume in the first half of 2022.

SOLO (Lower South Street Redevelopment Area DEC Site #: C360145)

Location: The Lower South Street Redevelopment Area site is located at 1005, 1009, 1011, 1013 and 1017 Lower South Street in an urban area. The site is situated east of South Street, south of Travis Lane, and west of Route 9. The northwestern portion of the site (former L&L Salvage Site) includes a scale pit, a soil pile, a pile of cobbles and boulders, a pile of mixed debris including cobbles, boulders, and concrete. The southern-central portion of the site contains four buildings; an office building and three others.

Because this property is part of the Brownfield Clean-up Program, the CAC invited NYSDEC officials to present information to explain the situation.

The property might include residential apartment building, the CAC is concerned about the following:

- isolated location requires a transportation plan
- safe level of remediation of brownfield
- green technologies including LEED certification, renewable energy open space, permeable surfaces, bike storage
- infrastructure - sewage, water system, waste management, emergency, roadways, and school district capacity.

The CAC will continue to monitor the proposals from the developers along with Peekskill's Planning Commission.

1410 Crompond Road and WLT

Westchester Land Trust (WLT) carefully researched the condition and value of purchasing 0.83 acres at 1410 Crompond Road to be awarded to the City of Peekskill. The area is unique because it provides a dramatic view of the City, the Hudson River and the mountains beyond in Harriman Park. The City accepted the offer, and, when the transaction is completed, the City plans to convert the property into an overlook public space, a viewshed.

Mayor Rainey and the Council accepted Westchester Land Trust's offer to purchase 0.83 acres at 1410 Crompond Road.

CEC/CSE Programs - Carla Castilla

In an effort to support the City in adopting environmentally sound practices and participating in New York State's programs: DEC's Climate Smart Communities (CSC) and NYSERDA's Climate Energy Communities (CEC). Carla Castilla was contacted. She holds the position of Deputy Executive Director for the CAC Mid-Hudson area. She is responsible for offering technical support to communities which will help reduce Greenhouse Gases (GHG) and provide savings through specific actions.

Carla Castilla explained the programs in two meetings, one of which was attended by City Manager, Andy Stewart, and Council member, Kathie Talbot. Carla encouraged the formation of a Task Force made up of City staff, CAC members, citizens and the hiring a Sustainability Coordinator. She is invited to present to the Mayor and Council in early 2022.

Compost Equipment Sale with Greenburgh Nature Center

The second compost equipment sale was held on April 24, 2021. Interested citizens ordered items through the Greenburgh Nature Center and picked them up at the parking lot behind the Depew Park swimming pool. CAC members picked up the order and distributed.

Environmental Film Series (EFS)

The subcommittee organized and produced four events to create awareness and help educated the Mayor and Council as well as the community about environmental issues through film and discussion. Each event featured a film, a panel led discussion and music.

The first was on March 19, 2021. Episodes 1 (**City on the Water**) and 2 (**Restoring the Clearwater**) of the **Hudson River Stories** by Jon Bowermaster. The panelists were Kay Barthelmes, Peekskill CAC Chair; Rob Buchanan and Gracie Carter, Billion Oyster Project and Roy Volpe, Clearwater. Music was provided by Fred Gillen, Jr.

The second was on April 30, 2021. Episodes 3 (**Seeds of Hope**) & 6 (**Growing with the Grain**) of the **Hudson River Stories** by Jon Bowermaster. Panelists were Chris Barrett, Peekskill Sustainability Network, Peekskill CAC member, Jason Angell, Director, Ecological Citizens' Project; Sarah Brannen, Associate Director of Programs, Hudson Valley Farm Hub and Sharon Burns-Leader, Co-Owner, Bread Alone Bakery.

The third event was scheduled and canceled due to inclement weather on June 30th and July 27th. It featured the film **Kiss the Ground** by Joshua Tickell and Rebecca Harrell Tickell. A video of virtual panel discussion was made available to the EFS email list. The panelists were Anne Jaffe-Holmes, Managing Director, Federated Conservationists of Westchester County; Director of Education & Sustainability, Greenburgh Nature Center; Kay Barthelmes, Chair, Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council; Anthony Carbone, President, Sustainable Materials Management, Inc.; Lise Prown, Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council and Lise Gutkin, Musician and Environmentalist.

The final film was held virtually on October 7th, 2021. The film was **The Sacrifice Zone** by Julie Winokur. The Panelists were Courtney Williams, PhD, Cancer Researcher & CAC member; Paul Presendieu, Outreach Manager, Sustainable Westchester; Robert Amler, MD, MBA - Dean & Professor of Public Health; Professor of Pediatrics and Environmental Health Science, New York Medical College; and Mike Ewall, Founder & Executive Director of the Environmental Justice Network. Music by Lisa Gutkin.

Letters of Support

Letters were sent in support of the following efforts in grant applications:

- The Westchester Land Trust was applying for a grant to purchase property near Peekskill's water source in Putnam Valley.
- The City of Peekskill applied for a grant to complete the Fleischmann's Pier Project and requested support.
- City's application for a grant for the Riverfront Connector Trail.

Peekskill CAC's Public Comments on New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act ("CLCPA")

On 5/12/2022, the CAC provided comments at the public hearing to get input on the Draft Plan to get New York State off fossil fuels. The public hearing for the Hudson Valley was held in Peekskill at the Paramount Hudson Valley Theater. Please see the Addendum for the CAC public comments.

Other Outreach, Training, and Education

11/10/2021 – Virtual Workshop on Sustainable Landscape Maintenance
(Sustainable Westchester)

12/2/2021 - Champlain-Hudson Power Express (CHPE) (Sierra Club and Riverkeeper)

Informational session on what Hudson Valley environmental advocates need to know about the Champlain-Hudson Power Express, a high-voltage transmission line planned to bring Canadian hydropower into New York City.

10/23/2021 - ArcGIS for 30 by 30: Esri's Vision for Conservation Planning for a Sustainable Future.

10/14/2021 - Visit Food Scrapping Center, CRC Carting, Cortlandt NY

- Met with Fort Hill Management team with Anthony Carbone to promote food scrap program
- Visited Scarsdale recycling site to get ideas on how to implement to Peekskill
- Worked on the food scrap flier
- Attended the film festival- almost a panelist
(Went to Italy to visit how they manage their recycling program)
- Worked on gathering information about trees with County wide committee for a month
- Panelist with Jesica Youngblood new park on the waterfront
- Zoom conference on the new Stretch Code affecting buildings in NY making them more energy efficient.

Goals 2022

- Set up Food Scraps / Composting System
- Complete Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) with consultants MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.
- Support the Protection and Conservation of the City's Drinking Water
- Obtain Tree City USA Designation
- Establish Heritage Tree Program
- Support Climate Smart Communities Program, including working with Peekskill's Sustainability Coordinator
- Facilitate adoption of the Tree Ordinance, including publishing informational flyer
- Continue to advise the Mayor, Council and Planning Commission on environmental issues
- Monitor CAC's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) proposal
- Continue Environmental Film Series
- Develop Spanish Version of the Recycling Brochures; Distribute CAC developed materials at various tabling events
- 1410 Crompond Road Viewshed
- Revisit Environmental Justice Survey and Forum
- Hold compost Kit sale with Greenburgh Nature Center

ADDEDUM

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council Public Comments on Draft Scoping Plan

NYS Climate Action Council Public Hearing, May 12, 2022

Paramount Hudson Valley Theatre, Brown Street, Peekskill, NY

Hello my name is Elaine Caccoma and I reside in Peekskill. I'm the chair of the Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council.

I'd like to address 3 topics in the scoping plan:

First...**BUILDING CODES AND HOMES**

Given the building sector is the largest source of emissions statewide, the climate plan must adopt advanced building codes, all electric construction and appliance standards statewide for new development. Peekskill is a disadvantaged community with an aging housing stock, families will face an affordability challenge in transitioning to new clean heating and cooling technologies and replacing fossil fuel reliant home appliances. The Climate Plan must address this through generous incentives for low to moderate income households.

Second...**TRANSPORTATION**

Many Peekskill residents rely on bus transportation, taxi service and personal autos for school, work, and daily travel. To improve the air quality in Peekskill, the climate plan must incentivize the transition to zero emission buses, cars, and trucks. The plan must expand state-funded charging infrastructure and amend codes to require new buildings be EV ready. It must also fund local projects to encourage walking and cycling by introducing pedestrian walking paths and designated bike lanes.

Third... **ZERO WASTE**

Peekskill's garbage along with that of Westchester County is incinerated at a (WIN-Waste) facility located several miles from here on the Hudson River. To improve and protect public health and the environment, the Climate Plan must address ending trash incineration in NY and aggressively move toward Zero Waste and support of Food Scraps Recycling programs like the one we are starting here in Peekskill. ***Thank you for your attention.***