

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Annual Report  
Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended  
December 31, 2019

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, 2019. For more detailed information, please refer to appended copies of the CAC's monthly meeting minutes,

**2019 CAC COMPOSITION**

Members of Peekskill's CAC: Kay Barthelmes, Chair; Jeff Miller, Vice Chair; Lise Prown; Marie Inserra, Mario Sansotta, Chris Barrett, Elaine Caccoma, Sharon Amy Wiggins and Courtney M. Williams. Barthelmes, Prown and Williams terms expire in 2020.

Change in membership: Jeff Miller, Vice Chair, did not reapply for member ship; Elaine Caccoma was elected as the new Vice Chair. Jan Melillo was welcomed in December.

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

A liaison from the Parks Advisory Board attended meetings due to overlapping areas of concern, and their input was invaluable during discussions.

**ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**NY State DRI Award**

The City of Peekskill was awarded a \$10 million grant by New York State to improve the downtown. The Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) requests proposals for business, not-for-profit organizations, arts organizations, City entities and individuals. A Committee was formed to work with a consulting firm to read and evaluate proposals, producing a consensus by Mary 31, 2020. which will be submitted to the State for evaluation. The CAC wrote and submitted a proposal requesting the greening of the downtown. It is entitled "Increase Green Infrastructure in Downtown Peekskill" to mitigate climate change with the additional goal of beautification."

**ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives)**

The local representative, Kale Roberts, explained ICLEI's program at a CAC standing meeting. The support this group would offer to the city is important and helpful. The CAC communicated with the Mayor and Council that this would be a valuable membership to maintain. The annual fee to re-join is \$600.00

### **Decommissioning of Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant**

Attended many meetings with community and elected members from Peekskill and Buchanan as well as NY State representatives, about the importance of all details of the transition.

### **645 Main Street**

Wrote environmental statement for Planning Commission regarding the proposed residential development by Wilder Balter Partners, Inc. at 645 Main St. Main areas of concern are the challenging steep slope site; sensitivity of location because of proximity to MacGregory Brook; removal of over 200 trees and situated within WLRP area. Also encouraged the use of green infrastructure and efforts to manage the increase in stormwater runoff.

### **806 Bay Street**

Presented information to Planning Commission regarding proposal to build a single-family house and garage in a probable wetland. New York State DEC maps verified the wetland designation. A neighbor presented photographs depicting the applicant's removal of many small trees and bushes. All were also alarmed by the proximity of construction plans next to a unique, mature oak tree on the property.

### **NYPA Energy Performance Contract**

Encouraged the city to enter into a contract with NYPA.

### **Repair Cafe'**

To help residents avoid discarding an item, or replacing it, this group of volunteers comes together to fix things. Items include clothing/textiles, electrical appliances, bicycles, furniture, and wooden objects. On Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup> from 12pm to 4pm, the Neighborhood Center was transformed into a place where many things got fixed at no cost. A local Toastmasters International group acted as host/hostesses providing coffee and tea and serving as a contact point for both

visitors and repairers. This effort was successful as more than 100 people participated. It is essential to kindle people's enthusiasm for a sustainable society.

### **Peekskill Community Congress (PKCC)**

Peekskill residents showed a strong desire to engage civically, with 887 respondents (57 percent) providing their email address and or phone numbers indicating they would like to learn more about how to help work on the proposals they voted for.

### **Vendor Compostable Materials**

The concept that all vendors who participate in city sponsored events be required to use compostable items such as utensils and other materials. The BID was very receptive and will work to design a contract for all vendors with these changes.

### **Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)**

Once completed, the inventory will serve as the foundation to prioritize and recommend implementation strategies to preserve and protect the city's critical vacant lands, open spaces, and wetlands. It will also contain advanced mapping capabilities that can be incorporated into the city's goals and objectives. The CAC met with Nate Nardi-Cyrus, Conservation and Land Use Specialist, Hudson River Estuary Program/Cornell University, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on November 15, 2018. He brought information to assist in this daunting project and will continue to be available to assist in the writing and assembling of the information about Peekskill as it is gathered.

### **New Ordinances**

Began researching and writing two ordinances: a tree ordinance regarding care and maintenance of trees on city-owned property, and an ordinance incorporating guidelines about requirements and restrictions for development on steep slopes.

### **MacGregory Brook**

The CAC continued to maintain the restoration site on the south bank of MacGregory Brook between the railroad tracks and the Hudson River. There was a growth of an invasive plant called sweet autumn clematis covering some of the plantings on the western portion of the area. Although it was removed by hand, the CAC recommends carefully managing this area next year. Members of the CAC toured Lower MacGregory Brook with a Riverkeeper professional. He confirmed the poor state of the brook biome at this time.

## **Annual Citywide Clean-up of City Parks**

On Saturday, April 29, CAC members met staff and volunteers at Depew Park, Fort Hill Park, and the Riverfront to clean up trash. DPW picked up the refuse throughout the day.

## **Other Outreach, Training, and Education**

- 3/12/19 ELLA
- 3/23/19 Westchester Social Justice Forum, Indian Point Decommissioning CCA presentation
- 3/19/19 – 5/19/19 Peekskill Community Congress
- 4/2/19 “Got Funding,” Dyson College Institute for sustainability and
- 10/8/19 NYPA Conference, “Customer Clean Energy Exchange,” Albany, NY
- 11/8/19 Environmental Justice Conference, Pace University, sponsored By FWCW
- 11/11/19 Assisted Peekskill Water Department to create educational mailers

## **Goals for calendar year 2020**

- Support City’s initiative: Community Choice Aggregation (CCA).
- Develop Sustainability Campaign: *Road to Resilience*.
- Continue developing the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)
- Research and write draft of City Tree Ordinance.
- Research and write draft of City Steep Slope Ordinance.
- Monitor and maintain MacGregory Brook planting at the Riverfront.
- Participate in the annual Clean-up of City parks.
- Sponsor a public education outreach program on a conservation issue.
- Advise Mayor and Common Council on conservation issues and development impacts as they occur.

Apply for “Tree City USA” certification.

Continue the Environmental Film Series.

Maintain the Weatherbook.

Study and share results of the Community Air Screening.

Monitor overall health of City parks.