

## **Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Annual Report**

### **Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2018**

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, 2018. For more detailed information, please refer to appended copies of the CAC's monthly meeting minutes,

#### **2018 CAC COMPOSITION**

Members of Peekskill's CAC include: Kay Barthelmes, Chair; Jeff Miller, Vice Chair; Lise Prown; and Courtney M. Williams. Terms expire for Miller in 2019; Barthelmes, Prown and Williams in 2020.

Change in membership: Leigh Draper resigned in May. Elaine Caccoma and Marie Inserra volunteered from January through April 2018 became members May 29, 2018, Sharon Amy Wiggins joined in September. Maurizio Sansotta and Christopher Barrett joined in December. Their terms will expire in 2020.

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

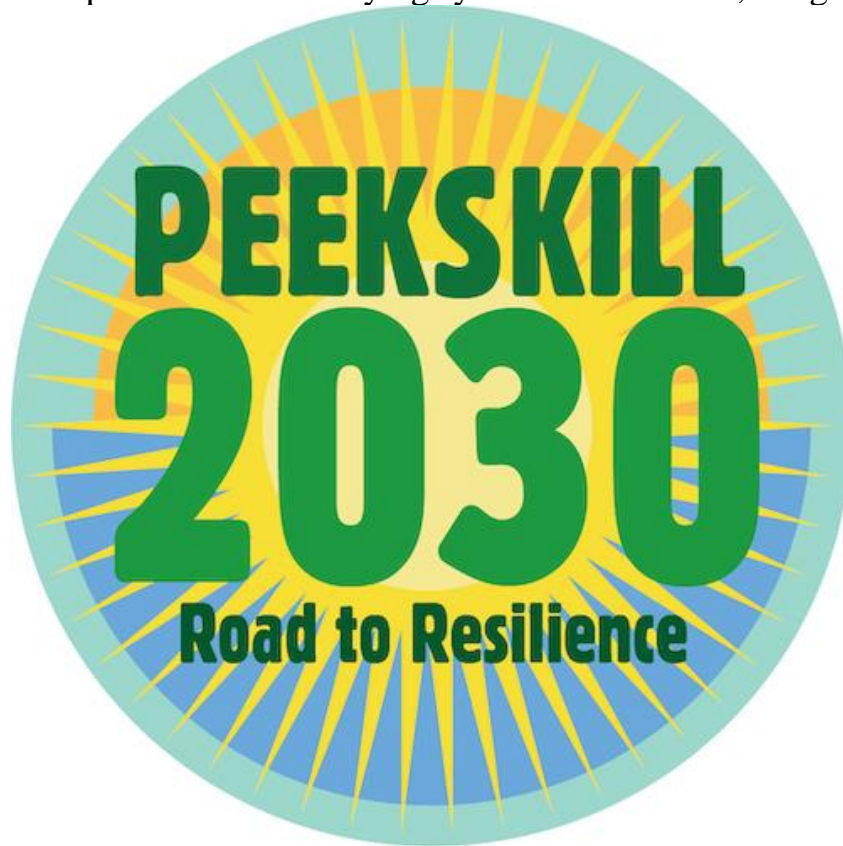
A liaison from the Parks Advisory Board attended meetings due to overlapping areas of concern, and their input was invaluable during discussions.

#### **ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

##### **Sustainability Campaign**

Throughout the year, plans were developed to launch a campaign that would encourage and support citizens efforts to protect Peekskill's natural environment and work toward reducing green-house gases. The city is a NY State designated Climate Smart Community and has taken the pledge to work toward making the

city as resilient as possible. As a unifying symbol of the effort, a logo was designed



and adopted:

### **Weatherbook Project**

Data about Peekskill's weather continued to be collected for the years 2009 to 2018. An analysis of the data was presented to the Mayor and Council and can be viewed at [www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/peekskill/ny/files/uploads/weatherbook\\_feb\\_2018.pdf](http://www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/peekskill/ny/files/uploads/weatherbook_feb_2018.pdf).

Next steps for this project are to replace the solar radiation equipment and continue to gather detailed information about the weather in Peekskill.

### **NYS DEC's Community Air Screen Program**

Peekskill was one of 11 communities and the only Westchester County community selected across New York State to participate in the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) 'Community Air Screen Program'. This community-based program works with volunteers from local communities to screen for toxic air pollutants. The goal of the Community Air Screen program is for community groups and citizens to partner with DEC to collect local-scale air samples to address some local air quality concerns. The sampling measures Volatile Organic Compounds known as VOCs. Details on the program can be found at the link below.

The CAC tested four sites in Peekskill in 2017 to address air quality concerns identified by residents: Main Street in Peekskill in front of Bohlmann Towers; near Dunbar Heights/City's Water Treatment Plant; Charles Point Park, near the Wheelabrator facility; and, the intersection of Lower South Street and Albany Post Road at the site of the "Algonquin" Transmission Pipeline Metering regulating Station.

The CAC received results of the monitoring and the information is attached. In summary, the CAC program results for the city concluded that all results are well below the short-term health-based air concentration values and are not considered an immediate public health concern. The results also are below the long-term health-based air concentration values or similar to concentrations found in DEC's ambient air monitoring network. In conclusion, the sampling conducted by Peekskill's CAC and its partnering group Peekskill's NAACP did not identify anything unusual or that would warrant follow-up sampling.

[https://www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/peekskillny/files/uploads/2018\\_dec\\_community\\_air\\_screening\\_program\\_results\\_-\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.cityofpeekskill.com/sites/peekskillny/files/uploads/2018_dec_community_air_screening_program_results_-_full_report.pdf)

### **Environmental Film Series**

For a third year, the CAC sponsored and organized two environmental film events. The first focused on the Hudson River and were produced by journalist-activist filmmaker, Jon Bowermaster with his company, Ocean 8 Films. The following short films were shown at Westchester Community College on April 5, 2018. *Hope on the Hudson*, *Hudson*, *A River at Risk*, *Algonquin Pipeline* and *Seeds of Hope*. In addition to Mr. Bowermaster, and Aaron Mair discussed the films and answered questions from the audience. The event was well attended and included 15 students from the Peekskill High School Environmental Club.

The second event was held at the Hudson Valley Paramount Theatre in Peekskill on July 29. The film *Unfractured* and its subject, Sandra Steingraber, as well as the documentary filmmaker, Chanda Chevenes, were present. They held a discussion after the showing.

### **Natural Resources Inventory**

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.

### **Community Leaders**

The October 11 CAC meeting, brothers Hudson and Harrison Darling along with Andrew Hull were honored by the CAC for their regular efforts to clean trash off the sidewalks of their neighborhood. To assist them in their work, the CAC gave each a yellow safety vest, a picker-upper device, garbage bags and disposable gloves. The event was videotaped and posted on our Facebook page.

### **Resolution Feedback**

CAC prepared two resolutions for review by the Corporation Counsel, Mayor, and Common Council. The first resolution draft asked Governor Cuomo to release all information related to current and future risks of the Algonquin pipeline and its relationship with Indian Point Power Plant. A risk assessment study had been conducted but was not made available to the public. The second resolution draft requested the U. S. Corps of Engineers offer an extension of the scoping comment period with additional public information and scoping meetings for the NY/NJ Harbor Tributaries Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Scenic Vista at 1410 Crompond Road**

As an ongoing initiative, the CAC continued to consider the possibility of turning this vacant lot into a scenic vista for Peekskill. The CAC received word from Westchester Land Trust (WLT) through its President Lori Ensinger, that their land committee made a recommendation to their board to set aside \$35,000 for its purchase. This money would be used as an offer for the 0.83-acre parcel on Crompond Road. The CAC met with Richard Leins, Peekskill's City Manager and WLT's Lori Ensinger in Peekskill when it looked like the property was going to become available. Even though this did not work out, the CAC will continue to stay actively involved monitoring the development of this property as a scenic vista and in communication with the WLT. Ultimately, the CAC will make a recommendation to the Council regarding a viable option for usage of this property. To date the CAC has explored possibilities with the city, as well as interested organizations in Peekskill.

### **Grant Application**

Prepared the grant application for a City-wide tree inventory CAC members re-applied for a grant to conduct a tree inventory through 2017 Urban and Community Forestry Council funding along with the NYS DEC in the City of Peekskill. George Profous from the DEC provided insight into denial of last year's submitted grant. Peekskill placed 40/140 submission. Profous thought that city is in good position to resubmit a successful application for this year with minimal tweaking. The meeting was held in City Hall, with attendees Miller, Barthelmes, Mary Foster, Vanessa Agudelo, and Jesica Youngblood. A city walk was held after the meeting.

The project is a comprehensive, GIS based street tree and park tree inventory in the City of Peekskill, which will include a tree risk assessment based on the ISA Best Management Practices and an invasive insect and other pest and disease detection survey by incorporating the USDA Forest Service early pest detection protocol (IPED) at the time of data collection. An educational component regarding invasive insects and other pests is important to include with a tree inventory. Considering the recently discovered oak wilt in New York State and other invasive pests such as EAB, the inventory will be developed and maintained in order to implement an ongoing urban forest health monitoring and early pest detection program. Although funding was not received, the CAC intends to reapply when funds become available in 2019.

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

1/10/18 Riverkeeper Panel at SEICU Headquarters  
1/25/18 Indian Point Community Unity Task Force Meeting  
2/3/18 Bedford 2020, Climate Action Summit Fox Lane High School  
2/10/18 Eaglefest in Peekskill at Riverfront Park  
2//15/17 Geothermal Heating Workshop, Peekskill  
3/1/18 Lower Hudson Valley Water Summit, Pace University  
4/12/18, 9/20/18 Indian Point Closure Task Force Meeting  
4/25/18 Indian Point Re-use Study, Buchanan  
4/27/18 Indian Point Forum, Hastings  
6/21/18 NRC Meeting  
7/11/18 NY-NJ Harbor & Tributaries Feasibility Study Presentation  
9/1/18 CAC submitted request for minimal project funding  
9/28/18 Zero Emissions Summit on Citizens' Role in Mitigating Climate, New York, NY  
10/19/18 Attended Vassar College "Influencing Public Policy" presentation by CAC Chair, Cornwall, NY  
12/12/18 Confronting Climate Change, White Plains, NY nited for IPSEC, SAPE and Resist Spectra) meetings: Jan.7, Feb.4, Mar 4, April 8, May 6, July 1, Oct. 7

## **Objectives for calendar year 2019**

- 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.