

Kay Barthelmes, Chair
Jeff Miller
Michael T. Shank
John Drake
Leigh Draper



Dorothy Leslie
Lise Prown
Courtney M. Williams
Vanessa Agudelo

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Annual Report

Report to the Mayor and Common Council for 2016 Calendar Year

OVERVIEW

The following document was prepared for Peekskill's Mayor and Common Council as required by the City Code and pertains to CAC's activities for the year ending on December 31, 2016. For more detailed information, please refer to copies of CAC's monthly meeting minutes, which are attached and submitted as part of this report.

The Common Council passed a resolution on November 28, 2016 to change the Peekskill City Code, Chapter 24: Conservation Advisory Council to "expand the membership of the CAC from seven to nine members." By December 31, 2016 the CAC retained full membership.

2016 CAC COMPOSITION

Members of Peekskill's CAC include: Kay Barthelmes, chair, Jeff Miller, vice chair, Leigh Draper, Dorothy Leslie, John Drake, and Lise Prown. Appointed members as of Nov. 14, 2016 include Vanessa Agudelo, Courtney M. Williams, and Michael Shank. Terms expire for Miller and Draper in 2017, while Barthelmes, Drake, Agudelo, Williams, Leslie and Shank expire in 2018.

The City provides one Planning Department staff member as liaison to the Conservation Advisory Council.

A liaison from the Parks Advisory Board often attends meetings due to overlapping areas of concern with the Conservation Advisory Council, and their input was invaluable during such discussions.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Continued to Develop Open Space and Wetlands Inventories

Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping data, the CAC has identified and generated a database for all wetlands, open space and vacant parcels citywide. The database contains various attributes, including ownership, development potential and existing environmental features (steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, etc.) for each individual parcel. The database links to a corresponding map that enables a comprehensive view of the city's environmental resources in unprecedented ways. Council members are now prioritizing lots and developing a format for making field verification more efficient.

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 space and wetlands. It will also contain advanced mapping capabilities that can be incorporated into the city's future planning efforts.

2. Supported Council's Position on River Anchorages

The U.S. Coast Guard proposed, along with Maritime Association of the Port of New York/New Jersey Tug & Barge Committee's (T&BC), expanded anchorage sites in the Hudson River. The permanent docking stations would be located along the Hudson River from Yonkers to Kingston. The CAC joined the Mayor and Common Council against this proposal by submitting a letter to the federal government explaining why these anchorages should not be approved.

3. Continued Research, Restoration and Maintenance at 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.

4. Waterfront Cherry Tree Planting

The CAC provided alternative recommendations to the City for the waterfront planting proposal.

5. Rain Garden Video

As part of CAC's ongoing educational outreach to residents, three members shared a variety of backyard projects that resulted in maximizing rainfall runoff within the resident's property to avoid adding runoff to city storm drains. (Video in progress)

6. Lake Mitchell Video

In partnership with the Parks Board, the CAC documented through video how the city is maintaining Lake Mitchell in Depew Park as part of an innovative, integrated water management process. The goal is to use natural methods as opposed to chemical treatments and prevent the growth of algae. The video went live in September 2016.

7. Annual Citywide Clean-up of City Parks

On Saturday, April 23, 2016 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.

8. Scenic Vista at 1410 Crompond Road

As an ongoing initiative, the CAC reviewed tax maps, aerial photos and historical information about 1410 Crompond Road, which is listed for sale, for the possibility of turning this vacant lot into a scenic vista of Peekskill. The CAC met with Scenic Hudson at the site to discuss possible approaches for securing the property. Parks Board member Guy Lowe also attended this site visit. The CAC sought support of the idea from The Rotary Club of Peekskill and Peekskill Garden Club. The Rotary Club responded but is not able to participate at this time.

9. Liaison to Charles Point Trail Committee

As the city continues to expand its walking path from Riverfront Green south to Buchanan, the CAC is a participant in the Charles Point Trail Committee, which seeks to move this project forward, secure buy-in from local businesses, and establish the walking path per state requirements.

OTHER OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING

- 2/6 – Eaglefest in Peekskill at Riverfront Green Park
- 2/6 – Attended Scenic Hudson Urban CAC’s Meeting, Beacon, NY
- 4/15 – Southern Waterfront Trail Opening Ceremony
- 4/26 – Attended Teatown ELLA information session about replacing culverts to facilitate animal migration
- 6/8 – Charles Point Trail site walk for development
- 9/21 - Attended Urban Forestry Conference “Streets and Sidewalks” at SUNY Orange – Newburgh Campus, Newburgh, NY
- 8/6 – Began filming of Rain Garden, part 1
- 8/15 – Completed filming at Lake Mitchell
- 9/15 – Lake Mitchell video posted
- 9/21 – Attended Urban Forestry Conference “Streets and Sidewalks,” SUNY Orange-Newburgh Campus, Newburgh, NY
- 9/28 – Attended NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program Launch at SUNY Orange – Newburgh Campus, Newburgh, NY
- 10/15 – Continued filming of Rain Garden, part 2
- 11/7 – Toured Peekskill’s Pump House and Sewer facility with David Rambo, Water and Sewer Superintendent, and Councilwoman Talbot
- 11/29 – Fleishman Pier Dock conceptual engineering overview
- 12/13 – Collaboration with DPW on tree pruning initiative
- 12/15 – Attended Westchester County Program on Benefits of Street Trees, Westchester County Center, White Plains, NY

OBJECTIVES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2017

- Continue to develop Open Space and Wetlands inventory as mandated in Chapter 24 of the City Code.
- Explore a variety of possibilities in order to establish Peekskill as a NYSERDA Clean Energy Community.
- Create a street tree inventory through urban forestry grant.
- Monitor and maintain site maintenance of MacGregory Brook by working with the Department of Public Works
- Participate in the annual Clean-up of City parks.
- Sponsor a public education outreach program on a conservation issue.
- Advise Common Council on conservation issues and development impact as they arise throughout the year.
- Research native plants initiative.
- Aid in stormwater best management practices, e.g. dry-weather inspections for City outfalls.
- Participate in Solarize Westchester's 2017 campaign as volunteer outlet for solar energy education.