

## **Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council**

Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended  
December 31, 2014

As required by the City Code, this annual report summarizes the actions of the Conservation Advisory Council for 2014. For more detailed information, please refer to copies of calendar year 2014 minutes, which are attached to, and made part of, this report. Note that the February 13 meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.

### **Composition of CAC in 2014**

Members of the Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) are: Carol Capobianco, Chair; Kay Barthelmes, Vice Chair; John Drake, Leigh Draper; Dorothy Leslie; Jeff Miller, and Lise Prown. John Drake and Lise Prown joined in September, filling vacancies left by Chris Gomez, who is now on the City's Planning Board, and the sudden passing in March of beloved Vice Chair Pat Reber. Pat greatly contributed to the CAC and the City, and she is greatly missed. A memorial plaque and/or tree and/or bench for Pat are being considered for the MacGregory Brook restoration site, a project she initiated, found support for, and managed.

Kevin Kain, City Planner, attended meetings as the City liaison and Recording Secretary through October, when he departed the City staff. Michael Welti, Director of Planning and Development, is temporarily filling in as liaison until Kevin's position is filled.

As of January, the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) convened on its own for the first time and no longer sat in as part of CAC meetings. However, the PAB Chair, Dominic Perruccio, attends most CAC meetings to keep both commissions abreast of common matters of interest.

### **Activities and Achievements**

#### **Continued to Develop Open Space and Wetlands Inventories**

The CAC continues work on its GIS map, database, and narrative. The database links to a corresponding map that enables a comprehensive view of the City's environmental resources in unprecedented ways, bringing together information from several existing databases. CAC members have prioritized areas and are writing summaries of featured sites.

Once completed, the Open Space and Wetlands inventory will serve as the foundation to prioritize and recommend appropriate use of the areas, including preservation and protection of 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.

The CAC is monitoring the status of vacant properties on the list that are slated for development or sale. One such site is 1410 Crompond Road that is on the market. In March, the CAC wrote a letter to the Common Council in support of the City's own recommendation (in 2008) to preserve this site and its stunning views of Peekskill. As well, at the request of the Planning Board, the CAC provided comments on a proposed project on a vacant parcel with steep slopes at 409 Ringgold Street.

### **Continued Researching Steep Slope Law**

The CAC continued to review municipal steep slope ordinances in New York as compared with Peekskill's ordinance as the first step in assessing environmental ordinances needed to protect the natural resources of the City. The goal is to create a draft for City review that will strengthen the effectiveness of Peekskill's ordinance. We tabled this goal with the realization that it would be best created during the process to update the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Monitored and Maintained Restoration Site of MacGregory Brook**

CAC members continued to maintain the restoration site on the south bank of MacGregory Brook between the railroad tracks and the Hudson River while the young plants, installed October 2011, are getting established. This year, portions of the site were cordoned off due to construction of Peekskill Landing. When possible, we checked on the health and needs of the plants, including a group weeding effort on June 21. However, the need for volunteer weeding has somewhat diminished, because the City DPW staff has been periodically maintaining the site, as it is part of Riverfront Green Park.

### **Participated in Annual Citywide Cleanup of City Parks, April 26**

#### **Sponsored a Public Education Outreach Program**

To raise public awareness of environmental issues as they impact Peekskill, the CAC continued an initiative to educate residents about the City's natural resources and how to protect them through an insert in their water bills. The initiative began in late 2013 with the distribution of a flyer about Peekskill's drinking water in the December/January water bills. Publication of the next flyer was delayed until funding could be worked out. In December 2014, the second informational flyer, on stormwater, was published and mailed. Both flyers also included Spanish translation and original artwork. This Water Quality Education Outreach earned the CAC and the City recognition from Westchester County for a commendation through its Soil and Water Conservation Achievement Awards.

#### **Advised Common Council on Conservation Issues**

As issues arise throughout the year, the CAC advises the Common Council on development impacts. This year the CAC was asked by Council members for information about green building codes and also for a summary of the CAC's work for the City's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary journal.

As mentioned above, the CAC sent a letter to the Mayor and Common Council regarding preservation of 1410 Crompond Road, endorsing the recommendation of the City's 2008 study and urging the City to take action to preserve this overlook now that the opportunity is present. We also sent a letter in support of the City's resolution concerning the Spectra Algonquin Pipeline.

#### **Research native plants initiative.**

This goal was tabled for 2014 and will be renewed as an objective for 2015.

## Other Outreach, Training, and Education

- January 9: New Mayor Frank Catalina stopped in to CAC meeting to introduce himself and discuss general goals and opportunities.
- February 8: Attended EagleFest at Riverfront Green.
- February 9: Reported to Mayor/City Manager the public's interest for expanded EagleFest.
- February 27: Attended Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance (ELLA) roundtable.
- March 3: Sent letter to Mayor and Common Council advising a more suitable location for proposed Maritime Museum.
- March 13: Susan Cockburn of Clearwater attended CAC meeting to discuss the Peekskill Urban Watershed Initiative grant, received from EPA.
- April 6: Sent letter (dated 3/13/14) to Mayor and Common Council regarding preservation of 1410 Crompond Road, endorsing the recommendation of City's 2008 study and urging the City to take action to preserve this overlook now that the opportunity is present.
- April 10: Clearwater representatives Manna Jo Greene, Susan Cockburn, and Mark Guzowski attended CAC meeting to discuss Peekskill Urban Watershed Initiative grant.
- April 17: Attended Clearwater grant public forum.
- April 26: Participated in annual citywide cleanup of city parks.
- June 21: Weeded the MacGregory Brook restoration plantings.
- July 2: Sent thank you to DPW for maintenance work on MacGregory Brook plantings.
- July 16: Provided comments on a proposed project on a vacant parcel with steep slopes at 409 Ringgold Street, at the request of the Planning Board.
- July 23: Provided a summary of the CAC's work for the City's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary journal.
- August 13: Attended Clearwater's Peekskill Urban Watershed Council meeting.
- August 14: City resident Jean Walsh attended CAC meeting to discuss the Algonquin Incremental Market pipeline project.
- September 12: Attended ribbon cutting for new park at Peekskill Landing.
- September 19 and 21: Met with City staff (9/19) and a certified arborist (9/21) to review trees marked for removal—with intent to preserve them—in Riverfront Green South construction.
- September 22: Advocated for public access to Peekskill Landing park during festivals.
- September 24: Attended Clearwater's Peekskill Urban Watershed Council meeting.
- October 7: Attended presentation *Birds of the Hudson Valley* by Saw Mill River Audubon Executive Director Anne Swaim, hosted by Peekskill Garden Club.
- October 15: Attended groundbreaking for Riverfront Green South renovation.
- October 17: Attended DEC Re-Leaf workshop on municipal tree inventories.
- November 7: Attended Lincoln Depot Museum groundbreaking ceremony.
- November 25 and December 29: Stuffed educational flyers into water bill envelopes.
- November 30: Sent letter to Mayor and Common Council in support of its Algonquin pipeline resolution and its request for full-party status on its application.
- December 2: Applied for NYS Urban Forestry Council grant.
- December 11: Earned recognition in the form of a commendation for Water Quality Education Outreach (informational flyers) from Westchester County through its Soil and Water Conservation Achievement Awards. Attended ceremony at County Center to receive award from Deputy County Executive and County Executive Chief of Staff.

## **Objectives for calendar year 2015**

Continue to develop Open Space and Wetlands inventory as mandated in Chapter 24 of the City Code.

Monitor restoration site of MacGregory Brook while the young plants are still getting established and confirm its maintenance by DPW.

Participate in the annual cleanup of City parks.

Research conducting a tree inventory for the City.

Research native plants initiative.

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.