

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission January 16, 2025
Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

Present: Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Ken Goldberg, Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth and Steven Shafer, Carole Furman, Linda Armour, Mary McNamara, Kathleen Gray, Nicole Roskos, Zach Horton

Approval of November 21, 2024 Minutes

The minutes approval was tabled.

CAC Organization

The meeting opened with a review of the roles of the chair, vice-chair, secretary and task force coordinator for the year.

Skip was reappointed Chair, receiving unanimous approval.

Linda was nominated by Skip, with Mary O'Donnell seconding, to be the new Climate Smart Task Force Coordinator. She was confirmed unanimously. Skip praised Linda's dedication and encouraged members to provide her with support by proactively sharing updates rather than requiring her to chase information.

Mike was elected Vice Chair, preferring the title over "Co-Chair" and agreeing to lead meetings in Skip's absence.

Kevin Freeman continued as Secretary tasked with managing minutes and Zoom sessions for which he receives a stipend of \$20/hour.

Stephen Shafer, introduced by his wife Elizabeth Shafer, officially joined the CAC. Stephen's prior work on the Winston Farm project and his analytical approach to environmental issues were commended.

Mary O'Donnell was given the title of Chairperson Emerita for her dedication to the committee's work and will be listed on the Town website as such.

Climate Smart Task Force

Mary O'Donnell and Linda collaborated on revising the coordinator's responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the coordinator are:

- Update the CAC on task force activities;
- Coordinate the work of the task force members;
- Coordinate with CAC Chair;
- Prepare task force correspondence;
- Inform the Town Board of task force work via Town Board Liaison;
- Consult with Hudson Valley Regional Council Coordinator as needed;
- Work on NYS climate-related programs such as the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program;
- Collect and post documentation on the CSC Portal;
- Partner with Ulster County on climate-related initiatives and programs as needed.

Elizabeth raised a clarification about the coordinator's role in tracking task force progress, with Mary O'Donnell explaining that members should report progress to Linda to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on her.

The updated duties were unanimously adopted.

Mary O'Donnell shared that the draft CCAP received positive feedback from Eleanor Peck, the Hudson Valley Regional Council coordinator, but highlighted a recommendation to include an outreach component.

The outreach plan would involve posting the CCAP draft online for public comments and hosting at least one public-facing event or workshop, which could be virtual or in-person.

Carole noted that disadvantaged groups often face higher energy costs due to poor housing or are more vulnerable to flooding. She offered to research local data. Kathleen shared that some areas in Saugerties, like Glasco, are listed as disadvantaged under state guidelines. Zach and Mike added that defining "disadvantaged" requires combining environmental and socioeconomic factors.

Skip emphasized that the CAC's role should be advisory, focusing on drafting the CCAP and gathering public input, while the town board would handle implementation.

Mary O'Donnell suggested dividing outreach tasks among team members to reduce the burden, including involving external stakeholders like the Chamber of Commerce and the school district.

Skip raised ongoing concerns about inconsistencies in CAC and grant budget reports provided by the town tax collector, Diane Friedmann. The reported amounts fluctuated without clear explanations, creating confusion about the remaining funds. Kathleen volunteered to meet with Diane to clarify these issues and report back to the CAC.

Landfill Leachate Management

Skip attended a webinar by the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers Leachate Collaborative, which highlighted the PFAS (forever chemicals) issue in landfill leachate being sent to wastewater treatment plants. From the Saugerties landfill it is going to the Glasco WWTP., which discharges into the Hudson River.

Wastewater treatment plants are not equipped to filter out PFAS, meaning these chemicals are released into the river, affecting communities downstream.

The DEC has yet to establish regulations to address this issue, leaving towns without clear guidance on handling leachate properly.

Rebecca Martin, a Kingston-based advocate, encouraged municipalities to pass resolutions urging the DEC to expedite rulemaking on leachate treatment. Zach agreed that the issue was urgent and proposed that Saugerties draft a resolution to support the DEC in implementing regulations.

Mike raised concerns about potential cost burdens on Saugerties, asking whether funding would be available for testing and treatment. Skip noted that while the DEC had not yet provided funding details, advocacy efforts could help unlock state resources and grants.

Town Board Liaison Report

Skip Arthur raised concerns about Saugerties Farms LLC using the Climate Smart Task Force logo without permission in an August 14th board meeting PowerPoint presentation and in a December mailer, which Skip addressed with a letter to the editor in response.

Town Board members Fred Costello and Mike Ivino had a conversation with one of the developers, who assured them that they wouldn't misuse the logo again. Zach felt the response was weak, arguing that this could happen again as development ramps up.

Mary O'Donnell proposed that the CAC request a written assurance from the developers that the logo would not be used again. Zach agreed to follow up with the town board to secure this written commitment.

Mary O'Donnell asked about the timeline for the developers to respond to requested revisions on the DGEIS. Zach confirmed there is no official deadline, allowing developers to delay indefinitely. Mary O'Donnell and Mike raised concerns that no meetings had taken place between town planners and developers to resolve outstanding issues. Carole questioned whether private discussions between town officials and developers had occurred without public knowledge. Zach responded that no quorum-based meetings had taken place but acknowledged that informal discussions could happen.

Zach shared that there were rumors that Saugerties Farms LLC might sell the property, which could be why they were stalling. Mary O'Donnell requested clarity on who the LLC members were, and Zach agreed to research it.

Zach confirmed that the town board is aligned with the village on the new drinking water source protection plan. He is waiting on responses from other Town Board members but believes they will move forward soon.

EMC Report

Leslie wrote that she was unsure if she could attend the next meeting. Rebecca Martin relayed that they were going to have discussions about the Landfill Leachate situation, because Kingston and several other communities are involved.

Planning Board Report

Carole provided updates on current development projects reviewed by the Planning Board.

50-Unit Mixed-Use Development is proposed on Route 9W. The project includes new commercial or residential units.

Discussion focused on ensuring compliance with zoning regulations and EV infrastructure requirements.

Zach confirmed that zoning amendments typically require public hearings, and the CAC should clarify whether these policies are officially part of the town's zoning code.

Announcements

Mary O'Donnell drafted a press release about the \$100,000 NYSERDA grant for electric vehicles. Kathleen confirmed that the parks department had received its vehicle, resolving a previous delay due to an unexpected charger fee. Zach and Kathleen clarified that NYSERDA must approve the press release before public announcement. Mary O'Donnell asked Zach to confirm whether the town had sent the press release to NYSERDA.

Skip provided a brief update on the Pollinator Meadow. The grant was closed out, and the final report was filed. \$1,200, not \$3,200, went to the Parks Department, as outlined in the grant. Due to cold weather, full uncovering and reseeding will be postponed until fall.

Skip introduced the idea of a Community Preservation Fund (CPF), which allows towns to raise money to preserve open spaces through a one-time fee on home sales. He said Red Hook, Warwick, New Paltz, and Marbletown have already established CPFs. Mike and Linda suggested

exploring a referendum to preserve Winston Farm using CPF funds. Skip encouraged members to research CPFs further and consider presenting the idea to the town board.

Linda announced the next Repair Café on February 1st at the Senior Center. Organizations participating include the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency and Citizens Concerned About Plastic Pollution. The event flyer is posted on the town website and Facebook page.

Adjournment

Approved unanimously at 7:03 pm

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary