

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

May 15, 2025

Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

Present: Skip Arthur, Mike Harkavy, Ken Goldberg, Mary O'Donnell, Carole Furman, Linda Armour, Leslie Surprenant, Kathleen Gray, Zach Horton, Laura Phillips, Mary McNamara

Approval of April 17, 2025 Minutes

After a small correction the April 17 minutes were accepted.

Village Development

The meeting opened with a discussion of a lot line revision in the Village of Saugerties involving a land swap between the village and a developer who is planning a 167-unit apartment complex. The swap would allow the developer to make an access road and enable the village to move its salt shed, which is reportedly out of compliance with DEC stormwater regulations. There was a public hearing, but the subject was limited to the lot line proposal. Environmental impact was not part of the official hearing, but residents expressed deep concerns over segmentation and lack of transparency.

Carole confirmed that the Town Planning Board approved its portion of the lot line revision last month without public hearing, as it seemed "simple." Mary and others questioned the legality of limiting discussion to only the lot line when it's part of a much larger project.

Laura Phillips and Kathleen Gray noted the potential presence of protected species and historical land use that may affect viability.

Ken emphasized town impact via traffic, water, and sewer, and criticized the Planning Board for ignoring these implications.

Skip pointed out that the developer's own submission to the Planning Board explicitly linked the lot line revision to the apartment development. This contradicts the segmentation argument that the Village Board was trying to use to isolate the swap from the larger project. Carole explained that segmentation is legally allowed under certain circumstances but acknowledged that the implications of this case were complex and required review.

Leslie followed by clarifying that, despite the scale of the project, it qualified as cluster development, which typically has lower environmental impact than traditional subdivision.

There was consensus that because parts of the development lie within the Town of Saugerties, the CAC has standing to advise on environmental matters including traffic, sewer, and water.

Climate Smart Task Force

Linda deferred to Mary, who had finalized a draft of the Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP). Mary explained that the CAC must now decide which members would take responsibility for the tasks outlined in the outreach plan. These tasks included making the draft available for public comment, collecting and compiling responses, and then presenting compiled comments for discussion at a future CAC meeting.

Leslie volunteered to handle tasks 1–4 and to collaborate with Ken on compiling public comments (task 8). Linda offered to help set up a dedicated Gmail account for public input. Linda agreed to email Marjorie Block. Mary offered to write the CCAP summary.

Mary also announced a meeting, to clarify the CCAP's methodology section specifically Table 1 and its technical terms, scheduled for Monday, May 19 at 3 p.m. with a member of the Ulster County Department of the Environment and two persons from ICLEI who worked on the methodology. Carole confirmed she would try to attend, as did others. Mary emphasized the need for CAC members to be conversant with the terminology.

The group clarified that Mike Campbell would post the CCAP on the town's website and Mary would post it on the Climate Smart website. Further communication and announcements would go out through a defined list of media outlets, both at the initial public comment stage and again when CAC meetings would be used for public feedback. Mary reaffirmed that the CAC's willingness to implement the outreach plan was critical to its success.

Leachate Update

Mary McNamara shared updates about a pilot program in Hurley using technology from the Canadian company StreamGo, Doug Meyer and others had attended a demonstration showing promising results using atmospheric fragmentation to isolate PFAS from landfill leachate. Samples had been sent for lab testing, with results pending. Mary emphasized the difference in regulatory status between the Hurley and Saugerties landfills, noting that Hurley had post-1996 protections, while Saugerties closed its landfill before regulations were enacted.

Skip clarified that Saugerties is also affected by PFAS contamination and its landfill is a state Superfund site, although Leslie noted that she found a 2020 document suggesting it was still being evaluated. Zach agreed to confirm the site's status. Mary McNamara stressed that some nearby private wells have been affected, with residents relying on bottled water and carbon filters provided by the DEC. She expressed concern that the CAC had not been informed or included in ongoing monitoring or remediation discussions.

The group acknowledged the potential of StreamGo pilot project if validated and discussed encouraging increased communication between Doug Meyer, Fred Costello, and the Hurley officials. Mary McNamara noted that others across the state were interested in the pilot project, and that the DEC might consider a centralized treatment facility rather than distributed systems. Zach and Mike Harkavy agreed this warranted serious follow-up, and Zach committed to pushing for increased coordination.

Linda inquired about visiting the Hurley pilot site, and Mary McNamara confirmed it was open for informal visits. Carole expressed interest in seeing it, and Mary shared the site's location. Mary also offered to send out documentation from the DEC that classified Saugerties as a Superfund site.

Zero Waste Program

Skip summarized a range of efforts and proposals to expand food waste collection. He highlighted the cost savings (\$135/ton for landfill trash vs. \$20/ton for food waste) and mentioned that Community Compost is currently collecting food waste but it is expensive at \$500–\$600/month. He proposed moving toward self-hauling waste using existing town vehicles, possibly retrofitted with tailgate lifts, to reduce costs and increase drop-off points, especially at the Village transfer station.

He also emphasized the need for public awareness campaigns, more collection buckets, and school participation. Angelina Brandt of the Resource Recovery Agency had encouraged Skip to contact the Saugerties School District, as other districts like Rondout Valley and Ellenville had implemented pre- and post-consumer composting programs. These could serve as both waste solutions and educational tools. Skip noted that local businesses like Inquiring Minds and Orpheum were already participating and hauling food waste.

Linda and Mary McNamara agreed about the importance of public outreach and PR. Mary McNamara had been in contact with the Chamber of Commerce and suggested they could help coordinate restaurant involvement. Mike Harkavy proposed outreach to the local Chamber and offered to connect with them directly. Linda brought up the possibility of including grocery stores, particularly Price Chopper, which may already be engaged in waste diversion programs.

Announcements

Leslie providing updates from the Ulster County Environmental Management Council. She reported on the significant damage that “flushable” wipes were doing to sewage treatment systems, citing a presentation from a Town of Ulster official. Leslie noted that Saugerties has little contact with its own treatment plant managers, and this could be a gap in awareness and policy. She also mentioned an upcoming October conference include the dates themed “Innovative Solutions for a Changing Environment.”

Leslie reported on the pollinator meadow project, noting plant progress and challenges such as woodchuck activity. She and Mary McNamara had visited the site, and Leslie had done extensive weeding. She was scheduled to give a tour to about fifteen members of the Lifespring learning group. The group agreed to return on Monday, May 19, to do more maintenance and prep the meadow.

Kevin reminded the group that the next meeting needed to be rescheduled, and they selected Monday, June 16, instead of the usual date.

Adjournment

The motion carried.

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary