

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

November 21, 2024 Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

5:00 pm Start

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

Approval of October 17, 2024 Minutes

The minutes were reviewed and approved.

CSTF Report

Mary emphasized leveraging the County's prepared inventory to complete the Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP). She highlighted the need to align with the New York State Climate Act but recommended avoiding strict adoption of the State's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals (40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050).

Skip supported Mary, noting the State's broader powers compared to the town. He stressed that the goals should remain aspirational rather than prescriptive to avoid creating unattainable expectations.

Elizabeth pointed out that overly ambitious goals could discourage support from the town board or the public.

There was discussion about transportation emissions, debating the apparent increase in transportation-related emissions, which rose from 45% of the total in 2010 to 59% in 2022. Carole and Kathleen suggested this might be linked to population changes, particularly an influx of residents post-COVID.

The complexity of accurately tracking local data was acknowledged, with suggestions to use population-based approximations provided by the County.

Mary proposed aligning with State goals while focusing on local strategies like promoting electric vehicle (EV) adoption, encouraging municipal EV purchases and the installation of EV charging stations and advocating for more pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure.

Elizabeth raised the idea of engaging schools to adopt EV buses, which prompted discussions about jurisdictional boundaries and collaboration strategies. Linda suggested broad language, such as "encourage use of EVs across public and private sectors," to avoid singling out specific entities like schools.

The committee discussed preserving forested lands as carbon sinks. A contentious topic was the inclusion of language mandating doubling forested areas to meet climate goals. Elizabeth referenced expert advice that doubling forested areas was necessary, but others, including Linda and Skip, felt that using terms like "substantial and sustainable growth" was more realistic and actionable. There was a consensus to avoid rigid targets and instead highlight the public benefits of forest preservation.

Skip and Mike expressed concern about placing too much responsibility on the Climate Smart Task Force (CSTF) for plan implementation. It was agreed that the Town of Saugerties should take the lead, with the CSTF acting as a supportive body for outreach and community engagement.

Kathleen suggested discussing this leadership structure with town officials like Supervisor Fred Costello to clarify roles and expectations.

Carole noted that the Town is requiring new developments to include EV charging infrastructure. The group considered increasing the minimum requirements as EV adoption grows.

Kathleen proposed exploring grant opportunities to encourage land conservation and sustainable development practices.

Mary will revise the CCAP draft to define the town's leadership role in implementation, [to](#) modify language around forest conservation to remove specific mandates, to support programs to adopt zero-emissions vehicle technologies for busses and trucks, and to partner with Ulster County, regional and local groups, school district, and Chamber of Commerce to promote electric vehicle fleets.

The group will seek input from town leadership and community stakeholders to refine goals and strategies.

Mary noted that the future of the CEC program is unknown if it will be eliminated or restructured.

Pollinator Meadow Report

Leslie reported that approximately 20% of the meadow needed reseeding, requiring volunteer assistance to remove tarps and lay seeds.

Action items included recruiting volunteers for tarp removal and seeding and coordinating with the town to borrow equipment like rollers.

There was conversation about financial clarity and budget discrepancies. Skip highlighted confusion over CAC's budget and grant funds. Diane (Town Tax Collector) provided inconsistent figures regarding remaining funds. Kathleen volunteered to investigate the discrepancies with Diane to differentiate CAC funds from grant-related finances.

Leslie reported that she received an invoice from Greg Chorvas (Parks and Buildings) itemizing labor for sod stripping, culvert installation and snow fence installation and removal (\$3255.24) as well as in-kind equipment (\$2160.88). The project grant did not require in-kind; however, in-kind labor at \$1881.12 and equipment at \$2222.82 was provided in the grant budget to bolster the application. The grant budget has \$1200 in funds for labor that have been committed to Parks and Buildings staff. She will contact Greg to discuss what can be covered under the grant.

Mary suggested involving Zach to address financial accountability.

Skip and Elizabeth discussed initiatives on plastic pollution. Elizabeth proposed educational programs about microplastics' impact on health and the environment, possibly hosted at the local library. Skip highlighted the success of the zero-waste initiative at the Garlic Festival and suggested expanding it to other town events.

Discussion of Steven's Deforest/CO2 Comments on DGEIS

Regarding the Winston Farm Development, Skip commended Steven for drafting detailed comments on deforestation concerns related to the Winston Farm project. He emphasized using Steven's structured comments as a model for future public commentary on development projects

Elizabeth noted Adriana's suggestion to present questions as bullet points for clarity.

Town Liaison Report

Zach was not present.

Planning Board Report

Carole reported on two development projects:

A 50-unit mixed-use housing development on Route 9W and a project near Namaste and Dunkin' Donuts on Stevens Court.

She highlighted zoning considerations, including EV infrastructure requirements.

Announcements

Steven expressed interest in joining the CAC. Mary and Skip discussed the process for applying, recommending a formal request to the Town Supervisor with support from the CAC.

Adjournment

Mike moved with Skip seconding.

Adjournment at 7:05 pm

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary

