

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

July 18, 2024 Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

CLIMATE SMART TASK FORCE 5:00 pm Start

Present: Mary O'Donnell, Mike Harkavy, Ken Goldberg, Skip Arthur, Elizabeth Shafer, Kathleen Gray, Carole Furman, Leslie Surprenant, Caidence Nigro, Linda Armour

Approval of June 20, 2024 Minutes

Mary moved, Mike seconded. The motion passed.

CEC Update

Mary reported on a webinar she attended to get feedback from communities regarding the CEC program. There was the expectation that the CEC was being eliminated, but it turned out that NYSERDA was reducing the funding for the 2026 – 2030 budget. The stakeholders were representatives from towns, cities and counties. Attendees fully supported continuing to provide 100% grant amounts, not grants that require a 50% match. Another priority agreed upon was the importance of a coordinator, especially considering reduced funding. The third area to consider was what actions reduced the greatest amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

Caidence Nigro joined the meeting and introduced herself as an intern in the Ulster County Department of Environment, specifically studying actions and projects that could qualify for CSC credits.

Mary said that the webinar was broken down into working groups for each of the stakeholders with her in the town section. It was agreed that towns are key resources in CEC involvement since they know their communities and what is possible or not to enact. It was also asked of the group what obstacles communities encountered. Mary noted that a town, such as Saugerties, doesn't have access to resources and personnel, especially when it comes to documentation. Another barrier was the expiration of actions and qualifications for earning points.

There are presently around 900 communities involved in the CEC program now. The idea to provide larger grants to fewer communities was discussed.

She said there would be a document forthcoming about the webinar and it will need to be parsed at that time to get a sense of the program moving forward. It is understood that the CEC will be funded at a lesser amount from 2026 until 2030.

Skip asked if the CEC and CSC were going to be combined. Mary said the webinar was strictly a feedback session and nothing was decided. She said perhaps the coordinator might have further insights.

Grant Update

Kathleen said she had submitted the \$100,000 grant for the two electric light-duty trucks for the town. Since it was pre-approved, she expected a response within a month. There still needs to be an accounting of the vehicles being retired and definition of where and how the new Light-duty trucks will be deployed.

There was discussion on how difficult it has historically been obtaining information as the fleets are maintained by different departments. There was discussion about a Central Hudson program for fleet inventory. Kathleen agreed to investigate the program and report back.

Mike commented that if there is documentation missing from the departments, especially concerning grant money, perhaps the Supervisor should be involved to expedite the process. It was agreed that this was a good option. Mary pointed out that there was a community on the webinar that had a dedicated intern for the purpose of obtaining documentation.

Mary returned to the CEC topic to point out a few outstanding issues which could be addressed at the next meeting, especially since the Town is 500 points short of the \$125,000 grant threshold. One issue was a look into the community campaign, focused on heating and cooling. It would be necessary for the Town Board to issue a resolution on the subject. She has a resolution for community solar which could be updated for heating and cooling as well as a scoping document. Incentives and potential rebates need to be researched. Vendors could be contacted as well as checking with other organizations, such as Sustainable Hudson Valley, to see what could be incorporated into a public event. It was agreed that this would be a subject for the August meeting.

CEC Update

Mary gave a CSC report in Rob's absence, explaining that Saugerties has 189 points with another 5 pending for code enforcement training. She noted that three actions were deemed expired: The Renewable Energy Study and the Natural Resource Inventory and Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Additionally, there were 8 items that needed revisions for lack of documentation. These included interior and outdoor lighting, the solid waste audit, zoning for protection of natural areas, culverts and dams and a performance report on actions to reduce greenhouse gases. Skip asked about recycling and Mary responded that Rob should establish the requirements with the help of Eleanor, the coordinator.

Leslie said that the Natural Resource Inventory done by the County could satisfy the local requirement. Ulster County is also completing a community greenhouse gas initiative granular to the municipal level which might also qualify for the points. Mary said that the Hudson Valley

Regional Council had excellent resources, including a template for a Community GHG Inventory. She said that the CAC didn't have the resources in the past to populate it with data.

Pollinator Meadow Update

Leslie recounted the report she sent to members including the adoption of a QR code to the signage. She said that the rain garden at the Senior Center might be a project for integration with the pollinator meadow initiative. Leslie would like to see a program at the library or other public-facing events to promote the meadow. She and Skip will work on building and installing a corner fence. A dedication ceremony was discussed, perhaps in the spring.

Drinking Water Source Protection

Skip said that the Town Board was very receptive to the letter he sent them. He said that they will coordinate with the Village since they are responsible for the municipal supply. There was consideration for an 18-month program to include the DEC and Health Department that the Board agreed to. Mike, Carole and Ken all volunteered to participate in the program.

EMC Report

Leslie attended a June 26 meeting and reported on the County-wide Greenhouse Gas emission inventory project. There was also discussion of a Community Climate Action Plan. There should be a draft plan to discuss in the fall with the final draft expected over the winter.

As part of a Lower Esopus Watershed Plan, the EMC would like municipalities to write letters of support. She said the CAC should ask the Town Board to get involved.

The Ulster County Recycling Oversight Committee was looking into a central facility to reduce the amount of industrial refuse from the waste stream.

Mary said that, concerning the Lower Esopus Watershed Plan, the CAC should study it and involve Mary McNamara. Then the CAC could draft the letter for the Town Board's approval.

Announcements

Mary mentioned the Tiffin Project with a session at the library on July 22nd from 6 to 8 pm.

She also said that the additional Repair Café would qualify for 4 additional points under CSC.

Adjournment

Carole moved and Leslie seconded. Motion passed.

Adjournment at 6:26 pm

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary