



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council  
[www.kingstoncac.org](http://www.kingstoncac.org)

## 2014 Annual Report

### General Background

This volunteer board is an advisory body that works to ensure the conservation of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment while fostering unified action on environmental matters. The City of Kingston is one of 16 other Ulster County Conservation Councils. The Kingston CAC was created under Resolution 180 of 2008, in November, 2008.

This advisory board, consisting of Kingston residents, advises the Planning Board, Common Council, and Mayor on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; conducts public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues; and coordinates with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 1. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 67 general council meetings and 9 special meetings, in addition to sub-committee meetings. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted and archived on the Kingston CAC webpage of the City of Kingston website.

### 2014 Council Members (two year terms):

Julie Noble, Chair	1/2/2009-12/31/14	3 <sup>rd</sup> term
Diane Bonavita	1/1/13-12/31/14	1 <sup>st</sup> term
Emilie Hauser	1/1/13-12/31/14	1 <sup>st</sup> term
Susan Hereth	2/6/14-12/31/15	1 <sup>st</sup> term (early resignation 10/7/14)
Lynn Johnson	2/6/14-12/31/15	1 <sup>st</sup> term
Kevin McEvoy	8/21/13-12/31/14	1 <sup>st</sup> term
Casey Schwarz	2/28/11-12/31/14	2 <sup>nd</sup> term
Gregg Swanzey	1/2/2009-12/31/14	3 <sup>rd</sup> term
Arthur Zaczekwicz	2/6/14-12/31/15	1 <sup>st</sup> term (early resignation 9/19/14)

## 2014 Highlights

### 1) Climate Action Planning

Since 2009, the Kingston CAC has been integral in local Climate Action initiatives, with the adoption of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge in 2009, the formation of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force, and the creation of the Kingston Climate Action Plan in 2012. The Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force is now Climate Smart Kingston and is tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan. From its inception, Climate Smart Kingston was convened by the Kingston CAC. Climate Smart Kingston convenes about 6 times per year to strategize, plan, and implement the goals of Kingston's Climate Action Plan.

In the fall of 2014, the participants of Climate Smart Kingston, along with the Mayor decided that this group and the city would be well-served by a transition from a task force under the CAC to a stand alone advisory committee under the appointment of the Mayor. The Common Council agreed, resolving so in Resolution #120 of 2014 and now a new 11-member committee called the Climate Smart Kingston Commission will be established to prioritize energy and sustainability initiatives particularly as outlined in Kingston's Climate Action Plan, to engage community stakeholders and act as a resource to support climate smart decisions. Committee members will be appointed in early 2015. Once this process is finalized, this Commission will be convened by Julie Noble, Environmental Educator, Climate Smart Community Coordinator, and CAC Chair for the City of Kingston, and will establish a formal meeting schedule, vision and mission and goals.

In 2014, Climate Smart Kingston worked a lot on prioritization and how to focus the many recommendations of the Climate Action Plan into workable actions. The group decided on 8 major Priority Projects to work on in 2014.

	Priority Project	Major Partner	Progress in 2014
1	Renewable Energy Strategy	Sustainable Hudson Valley	<p>NYSERDA has funded Sustainable Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountainkeeper to manage "Solarize Hudson Valley", of which Kingston will be part of a community cohort. This program will engage community leaders and consumers with workshops and speaker training, solar group purchasing campaigns, renewable energy workforce development. The Solarize Kingston Campaign will commence in spring 2015.</p> <p>Scoping for solar permitting began at the end of 2014.</p>
2	Energy Advocates Program (previously Energy	RUPCO	Energy Advocate Training took place, to train advocates to go out to engage the community in energy reduction initiatives, identify champions in the community, promote home energy audits

	Ambassador Program)		<p>and retrofits, and share CSK initiatives.</p> <p>Energy Advocates tabled regularly at the Kingston Farmer's Market</p> <p>A live Home Energy Audit was hosted.</p> <p>An Energy Advocate Outreach Event was held at Outdated Café.</p> <p>A 10% Challenge was established. The 10% Challenge is a call to make 100 homes more energy Efficient. Step 1: Out of the 9,844 households in the city, we need 984 of these to receive a FREE or reduced cost whole house energy assessment. Step 2: Out of those 984 assessments, make 100 of them into safer, more comfortable, and more energy efficient homes. <b>Final goal: 984 audits, and 100 retrofits</b></p> <p><b>By the numbers (by end of 2014):</b>  Total number of residents in the program: 157  Number Energy Assessments Approved: 152  Number of Assessments completed: 91  ork approved – completed: 17</p>
3	Energy Upgrade in Government		<p>Climate Smart Kingston members reviewed the 2007 City of Kingston Wendell Flex Tech Energy Study as well as the City of Kingston Capital Improvement Plan, while keeping in communication with the city on energy priorities within government.</p> <p>High priority was ranked as upgrading City Hall windows, coupled with improved air sealing for the building.</p> <p>LED lighting upgrades for both City Street Lights and Outdoor Lighting were scoped.</p>
4	Comprehensive Plan Language Integration		<p>Commission members, including Julie Noble as a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee member, participated in the full planning and</p>

			review process, actively and successfully integrating sustainability, energy and climate concerns and themes into the new Comprehensive Plan. This Plan will likely be adopted by the Common Council in mid-2015.
5	Climate Action Tracking System		CSK Chair Julie Noble participated in three Energy Tracking Webinars, including Portfolio Manager, a free web-based tracking system. A Portfolio Manager account was established for the city and work to build the profile commenced in the end of 2014.
6	Marketing Strategy		<p>Communications strategies were scoped out including outreach, public engagement and relations, CSK promotion and marketing, long term messaging and Facebook administration.</p> <p>The Climate Smart Kingston web presence was scaled up on the City's newly launched website. See <a href="http://www.kingston-ny.gov/ClimateSmartKingston">www.kingston-ny.gov/ClimateSmartKingston</a></p> <p>A Cool City Cafe was hosted, which convened local community members and organizations interested in sustainability issues and solutions for Kingston. Key strategies that were taken from that event included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Ulster Savings Bike”/”Citi-Bike” Type bike share program, have bikes at Trailways, Library</li> <li>• Speak at gatherings</li> <li>• Promote Energy Advocates, continue strong, especially at housing complexes</li> <li>• Have CSK as a clearinghouse for sustainability</li> <li>• Use whimsical messaging in communications and outreach</li> <li>• Utilize contests and incentives to engage the community in sustainability efforts</li> <li>• Host a “Go Green Kingston/Sustainability Festival” in Kingston</li> <li>• Promote recycling implementation and enforcement especially with institutions</li> <li>• Encourage and promote institutional</li> </ul>

			Climate Smart Pledges and recognize those that have pledged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make energy efficiency improvements to the windows in City Hall</li> </ul>
7	Broadway Corridor Streetscape Collaboration	Economic Development Office	Climate Smart Kingston was kept abreast of developments within the Economic Development Office by regular updates. In 2014, there were no major inputs from Climate Smart Kingston into this project.
8	Sewage Treatment Plant Energy Reduction Design Collaboration	Economic Development Office	Climate Smart Kingston was kept abreast of developments within the Economic Development Office by regular updates. In 2014, there were no major inputs from Climate Smart Kingston into this project.

### Kingston Named “Certified Bronze Climate Smart Community”, One of Only Two in NYS



The City of Kingston is a Climate Smart Community, along with hundreds of others throughout the state. In the spring and summer of 2013, Kingston participated in the Climate Smart Communities Certification Program Pilot. As one of 8 communities throughout the state participating, Kingston was able to conduct a self-guided evaluation of our local climate actions as a means towards measuring and ranking Kingston's efforts towards sustainability among our peer communities. The CSC Certification Program is designed to support municipal efforts to meet economic, social and environmental challenges posed by climate change. Six CSCs achieved certification during the pilot of the certification: the City of Watervliet, Albany County; the City of Albany, Albany County; the Town of Cortlandt, Westchester County; Orange County; the Village of Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County; and the **City of Kingston**. A ranking of Bronze demonstrates Kingston's commitment to and leadership in the area of sustainability.

See what Kingston has achieved, with collaborative efforts of Climate Smart Kingston and City government: [Kingston Community Sustainability Profile](#).

## 2) Natural Resources Inventory

With an ultimate goal of creating an Open Space Plan for Kingston, the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) process continued in 2014.

### Habitat Summary

In 2014, at the request of the CAC, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources created a Habitat Summary for Kingston. This is an overview of significant ecological systems present in our community. This summary was completed to provide information for land use planning and decision making to aide the Kingston CAC as well as decision makers in the City. It identifies significant ecosystems in the city, including streams, forests, wetlands, shoreline habitats, and other natural areas with important biological values. This summary was completed

based only on existing information available to the DEC and its partners, and, therefore is not considered a complete inventory.

This summary includes complementary text, maps, and tables. There are eight habitat maps for the City of Kingston:

Regional Context of Kingston, NY  
Major Ecological Features in Kingston, NY  
Streams and Watersheds in Kingston, NY  
Wetlands in Kingston, NY  
Large Forests ( $\geq 200$  acres) in Kingston, NY  
Hudson River Shoreline Habitat in Kingston, NY  
Hudson River Shoreline Type in Kingston, NY  
Shoreline Habitat at Mouth of Rondout Creek in Kingston, NY

Also included is a list of known species and habitats of conservation concern that have been recorded for Kingston:

State Rare Plants, Animals, and Ecosystems in Kingston, NY  
Significant Birds in Kingston, NY

General conservation measures for protecting natural areas and wildlife are also provided.

The completed Habitat Summary as well as the Significant Habitats Map created by Hudsonia in 2013 were presented in a public presentation in the spring of 2014.

The CAC shared the information developed and compiled for the NRI with the Comprehensive Plan Committee and consultants for review for integration into the Kingston 2025 Comprehensive Plan. This information was also all posted online on the city's new website at [www.kingston-ny.gov/nri](http://www.kingston-ny.gov/nri) and a joint meeting with the Planning Board and Department was set up for early 2015 to share the data and engage the Planners in the process. By the end of 2014, plans were also being set into place to establish an internship position for a SUNY New Paltz student to complete a semester of work directly with the Kingston CAC jointly with the Parks and Recreation Department to execute a large amount of the work to complete the mapping, composition and interpretation of the Natural Resources Inventory.

### **3) Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force**

The Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force was appointed by Mayor Shayne Gallo in the fall of 2012, and was charged with evaluating the present and future vulnerability to flooding, storm surge and sea-level rise along the Rondout-Hudson waterfront. This group was asked to recommend strategies for a resilient waterfront and convened from December 2012 through August 2013. The group produced a final report [Planning for Rising Waters: Final Report of the City of Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Taskforce](#) but the Task Force culminated with the production of the report. The Kingston CAC has continued to play a role in continuing the efforts of this Task Force, in collaboration with the City's Economic Development Office. In 2014, CAC members participated in the following professional development opportunities pertaining to the waterfront:

- DEC Adaptation Planning: Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force Webinar
- FEMA National Flood Insurance Program Webinar
- Intro to Community Rating System Webinar

Additionally, in the spring, two CAC members also co-presented the results and process of this Task Force to a group of Floodplain Managers at the Hudson River Maritime Museum. Also, the results and process from the Task Force were presented as a Case Study at the NYS Conference on the Environment in Binghamton in October.

#### **4) Planning Board and Department Review**

Kingston CAC members regularly attend the Kingston Planning Board monthly meetings to stay abreast of local proposals and items of interest in Kingston. Additionally, beginning in the Fall of 2012, the Kingston CAC began the informal process of general reviews of proposed developments that came before the Kingston Planning Board. This process includes a general review of each new proposal or action that comes before the Planning Board, for environmental impact. The scope of review has included concerns such as storm water runoff, habitat conservation, open space preservation, walkability and bikeability, and in-fill development. Concerns and recommendations are submitted to the Planning Department, for review by the Planning Board, in advance of the Planning Board meeting and a CAC member attends each Planning Board meeting to be available for further comments or questions.

In 2014, three formal recommendations were submitted to the Planning Board, from the CAC, as a review of the following proposals:

- 1) Hudson Landing Promenade Phase 1 Improvement Plan
- 2) Input to Comprehensive Plan 2025
- 3) 472-498 First Avenue Site Plan Review Input

#### **5) Letters of Support for Municipal Initiatives**

The Kingston CAC values the work of the municipal staff in regards to relevant environmental issues and often provides letters of support to municipal applications for funding directed toward environmental initiatives. In 2014, the Kingston CAC supported through formal letters the following grant applications:

- a) Parks and Recreation: US EPA Environmental Education Grant; *City was unsuccessful*
- b) Parks and Recreation: NYS OPRHP Park Development Grant; *City subsequently was awarded \$304,354*
- c) Climate Smart Kingston: Resolution to formalize; *Adopted June 3, 2014*

#### **6) CAC Budget**

In 2014, the CAC received a budget line item in the City's 2014 municipal budget, of \$500. This is the first time the Kingston CAC has received access to funding through the municipal budget. This budget was approved and was housed under the Planning Department for 2014. In 2014, a portion of this budget was used to pay for the web hosting and domain name for [www.kingstoncac.org](http://www.kingstoncac.org).

## **7) Environmental Reviews**

Frequently, the Kingston CAC will receive formal requests from either a community member, city staff, the legislative body or the executive body to review, research or weigh in on local environmental issues. The CAC then independently decides what action to take on each proposal. In 2014, the Kingston CAC participated in the following reviews:

- a) Urban Agriculture Zoning Project Review
- b) Niagara Bottling Proposal
- c) NYS Draft Open Space Conservation Plan Review
- d) Pilgrim Pipeline Proposal Review
- e) Kingston 2025 Comprehensive Plan Review

## **8) Outreach/Engagement**

It is very important to the Kingston CAC to maintain a transparent and open relationship with the citizens of Kingston regarding environmental happenings in Kingston. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted in a timely manner on the City of Kingston website's CAC page, as are pertinent documents that the CAC has adopted, resource links and tools used for projects and initiatives.

Additionally, a member of the Kingston CAC attends each Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee meeting of the Common Council in order to keep the city government abreast of Kingston CAC initiatives as well as to maintain an open line of communication with decision makers.

Furthermore, the Kingston CAC as a body hosts or participates in events, seminars, workshops, and public programs throughout the year to engage the community with relevant environmental issues. In 2014, the CAC hosted:

- a) Judith Hansen, Superintendent Kingston Water Department: Niagara Water Bottling Public Meeting
- b) Laura Heady and Gretchen Stevens: Habitat Summary and Mapping Public Presentation

## **9) Special Guests/Presentations**

The Kingston CAC often hosts organizations or individuals to monthly meetings for relevant topic based presentations. These may either be pertinent to ongoing CAC initiatives or for strictly informational. In 2014, the Kingston CAC hosted the following special presentations:

- a) Gretchen Stevens, Director, and Leah Ceperley, Biologist, Biodiversity Resources Center, Hudsonia Ltd.: Habitat Mapping
- b) Jennifer Schwartz-Berky- Urban Agriculture Committee: Presentation of Zoning Project Draft Recommendations
- c) Laura Heady, Hudson River Estuary Program, Kingston Habitat Summary Update
- d) Natural Resources Inventory, Scoping Roundtable: Nava Tabak (Rosendale), Amanda LaValle (UC Dept of Envi), Kristen Schara (Hurley), Dave Yozzo (Hurley), Laura Heady (DEC), Matthew Akin (SUNY New Paltz NRI Intern)

## 10) Professional Development

Kingston CAC members regularly attend meetings, workshops and conferences to further their professional development and to keep up to date on currently, relevant environmental issues regionally and locally. In 2014, CAC council members participated in:

- a) NYS Conference on the Environment
- b) DEC Adaptation Planning: Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force Webinar
- c) FEMA National Flood Insurance Program Webinar
- d) Placemaking in a Changing Climate Workshop
- e) Intro to Community Rating System Webinar
- f) DEC HREP Action Agenda Resiliency Stakeholders Meeting
- g) Energy Advocate event: Outdated Café
- h) NY Sun PV Trainers Network Webinar
- i) Portfolio Manager 101 Webinar
- j) Portfolio Manager 201 Webinar
- k) Climate Smart Communities and CCE Webinar
- l) NYS Streamlined Solar Permit Webinar
- m) EPA Tracking Sustainability Projects Webinar
- n) Bringing Back Broadway Workshop
- o) DEC Climate Change Office: LED Street lighting Webinar
- p) Restoration of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) in the Hudson Estuary
- q) Restore America's Estuaries 7th National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration
- r) Applying the Findings of the Hudson River Sustainable Shorelines Project
- s) Hudson River Environmental Society Symposium: Watershed Influences in a Changed World
- t) Teaching the Hudson Valley 2014 Summer Institute: Farms and Food in the Hudson Valley
- u) Technology in Planning and Environmental Analysis, Training sponsored by Ulster County Planning
- v) Articles written: Energy Conservation and Sustainability Steps at the Kingston Library, [http://www.nyla.org/max/userfiles/uploads/JLAMS\\_14\\_15V11N1.pdf](http://www.nyla.org/max/userfiles/uploads/JLAMS_14_15V11N1.pdf) (P. 6)

## 11) Organizational Liaisons/Appointees

Kingston CAC council members hold positions on local environmentally related boards, and regularly acted as liaisons to:

- a) Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- b) Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee
- c) Ulster County Transportation Council
- d) Kingston Land Trust Rail Trail Committee and Land Use Committee
- e) City of Kingston Comprehensive Plan Committee
- f) City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council
- g) Climate Smart Kingston
- h) Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
- i) NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
- j) American Solar Energy Society
- k) Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee liaison

- l) Kingston Planning Board liaison
- m) Kingston Library Committee
- n) Ulster County Planning Board
- o) Waterfront Advisory Council
- p) Heritage Area Commission
- q) Hudson River Environmental Society
- r) Friends of Historic Kingston
- s) Kingston Urban Agriculture Committee
- t) Hudson River Environmental Society Executive Board
- u) Ulster County Human Rights Commission
- v) Teaching the Hudson Valley Advisory Board
- w) YMCA Farm Project Advisory Board

## 12) Organizational Membership

The Kingston CAC is proud to be a member of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions, since 2010. **The New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC)** was formed in 1971 to coordinate and support the work of municipal conservation commissions, conservation advisory councils and conservation boards and to stimulate the formation of additional commissions throughout the state.

In partnership with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC), NYSACC hosts an annual Conference on the Environment, which a member of the Kingston CAC attends each year. The location of this Conference varies regionally throughout the State. A newsletter, *NYSACC News*, is published three times a year. It includes conservation commission activities, initiatives, projects, conservation information, and highlighted environmental events.

### **NYSACC provides:**

- Networking
- Newsletter
- Annual Conference
- Scholarships
- Awards
- Website
- Current Environmental Information