Kingston Conservation Advisory Council
Monthly Meeting, City Hall Conference Room 1
Minutes
Date: January 9, 2014 6:30pm

Board Members
Julie Noble (Chair)
Diane Bonavita
Emilie Hauser
Kevin McEvoy
Casey Schwarz
Gregg Swanzey

Guests:
Leah Ceperley
Susan Hereth
Lynn Johnson
Gretchen Stevens
Arthur Zaczkiewicz

I. Welcome Guests and Public Comment
Call to Order: 6:30 pm. No public comment was made by the guests.

II. Modifications to the Agenda
No modifications to the agenda were made.

III. Review and Approval December 2013 Meeting Minutes
Upon motion made by Gregg and seconded by Casey, the minutes to the December 9, 2013 meeting were approved.

IV. Special Presentation

Introduction to Special Presentation
Julie discussed Natural Resource Inventory /Open Space Index/ Conservation Open Areas Inventory with respect to the requirements of NYS General Municipal Law Section 239-y under which the CAC can be designated a conservation board, the need for consistent CAC attendance at the planning board so as to be able to review planning matters within CAC purview and scope and a discussion with Kyla Haber sometime ago concerning Habitat Assessment Guidelines and more recent discussion with planning regarding the comprehensive plan.

6:40-7:40pm Gretchen Stevens, Director, and Leah Ceperley, Biologist, Biodiversity Resources Center, Hudsonia Ltd.
Gretchen gave an overview of Habitat Assessment Guidelines (HAG), including model guidelines developed by Hudsonia. She led a discussion about adapting models for Kingston giving several reasons to have HAG including ensuring that sufficient information is gathered to address biological and water resource concerns, helping planning applicants design projects to minimize or avoid sensitive areas while hastening, smoothing and streamlining the planning process as a collaborative process with the applicant from project inception. Discussion continued with Gretchen mentioning HAG consistency with new SEQRA Environmental Assessment Forms (EAF) forms and used the Kingston habitat Map prepared for the Kingston Natural Resource Inventory-Open Space Index-Conservation Open Areas Inventory as an example to show the three largest habitat-open space areas in Kingston, (a) the Esopus Creek Corridor and adjacent flats, (b) the Delaware Forest-Hasbrouck Park-Hudson waterfront and (c) the Fly Mountain-Wilbur vicinity. Arthur asked a question regarding available public documents concerning open space and natural resources to which Julie and Gretchen replied by discussing the Esopus Creek Biodiversity documents. Emilie replied with a brief discussion concerning the Natural Resource Inventory-Open Space Index- Conservation Open Areas Inventory and a submission to the planning dept. on 12/4/13: *Preliminary Review of Open Space and Natural Resources for the City of Kingston, NY*. Gretchen continued indicating that there may be no need for legislation to make the HAG a part of the planning process and, in response to Julie's question about adoption of HAG by other communities and planning boards, reviewed HAG efforts in Milan NY, New Paltz NY, and Town of Cortland in Westchester County.

Leah then provided HAG documents from 11-4-2013 Kingston HAG seminar at the CCE offices which Kevin attended. Gretchen then reviewed the HAG step by step. A copy of the Guidelines for Habitat Assessment reviewed is attached as Appendix "A" to these minutes.

The presentation concluded with brief discussions regarding the following: (1) how to apply the HAG to Kingston, (2) habitat areas which could be added in Kingston such as submerged aquatic vegetation beds; (3) the short form EAF for SEQRA; (4) stream habitat areas and connectivity; (5) urban area habitat green corridors which could be a connector or stepping stones between larger areas; and (6) connectivity to areas outside Kingston such as Flatbush Ridge in Town of Ulster connecting to Delaware forest; Fly Mt. Area to Binnewater Lake area in Town of Ulster & Rosendale with mention that OSI and Hudsonia are reviewing the Binnewater Lake region.

V. Old Business

a. Hudson Landing Promenade Project Review: Julie submitted the document to planning early in January.

b. Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)/Open Space Index/ Conservation Open Areas Inventory: Emilie began the discussion concerning the index and inventory coordination among those working on the project, funding possibilities for continued work; and map layers provided by Hudsonia Laura Heady providing a summary of habitats (map and description). Rosendale NRI is one example of format. NRI is expected to be expanded to include other aspects with a view towards open space inventory; Kevin and Emilie discussed Jennifer Schwartz-Berky's work intended to provide an enhanced NRI and add a brief open space planning aspect to the document so as to provide open space planning intent for the comprehensive plan and to meets the standards under GML Section 239-y for Open Space Index/ Conservation Open Areas Inventory as goals. Regarding GIS mapping, Gregg has the data provided by the County and discussed base maps and necessary layers. With regards to the comprehensive plan, no date has been set for an upcoming meeting with planning staff to discuss the inclusion of CAC initiatives and the July 2013 community presentations into the plan.

VI. New Business

a. CAC Applicant Meet and Greet, Q & A

The new prospective CAC applicants each discussed their interests and experience in the community and the CAC while Julie mentioned to the applicants various CAC initiatives and Climate Smart Kingston and Emilie mentioned the possibility of joint waterfront site visits with the Heritage Area Commission. Susan Hereth discussed her application and work with Scenic Hudson and in the community; Arthur Zaczkiewicz discussed his application, work as a social worker using nature therapy and work on other projects such as a paperless journalism office while describing his desire to connect people to the earth as a theme; Lynn Johnson discussed her experience running for Ward 9 council member and her work in computer network administration. No motions were made and no resolutions presented regarding any applicants.

b. 2014 CAC Budget planning was discussed briefly with Gregg mentioning that CSX Foundation has a community program for which the Kingston area may be eligible however no motions were made and no resolutions were presented.

c. A brief discussion concerning Live Well Kingston on January 23, 2014 evolving from a CCE initiative with partners in the health community did not result in any motions made or resolutions presented.

VII. Adjournment: _8:44_____pm

Next meeting: Thursday, February 6, 2014

APPENDIX "A": HUDSONIA HABITAT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES DRAFT 11-2-2013

Hudsonia created this template for Habitat Assessment Guidelines to assist municipal planning boards in their reviews of land development projects. By obtaining specific information about biological and water resources from the land-use applicant early in the application process, the planning board and land-use applicant can better understand potential impacts on sensitive resources and better design the project to minimize those impacts.

Guidelines for Habitat Assessment

(a model)

Hudsonia Ltd., November 2013

These Guidelines are designed especially for use by applicants who are presenting proposed land development projects to the local planning board or other reviewing agency.

The planning board recommends that an applicant conduct the habitat assessment prior to developing any detailed design or drawing for their project.

The purposes of a habitat assessment are 1) to provide information that will help the applicant, the planning board, and other reviewers and decision-makers adequately assess the biological and water resource features of the site, 2) to help the applicant design the development project in ways that minimize and mitigate potential impacts of the project on important sensitive areas, 3) to help the applicant avoid costly reworking of the project design, and 4) to streamline the environmental review.

A habitat assessment must be carried out by biologists familiar with habitats and biota of the region, and the life history needs of species of conservation concern. The field assessments described below may be carried out at any time of year as long as field conditions (e.g., deep snow, flooding, ice, recent fire) do not obscure the features necessary for identifying habitats.

The findings are to be submitted in a brief written report using the following outline. The annotations in the outline constitute the Habitat Assessment Guidelines recommended by the planning board.

Habitat Assessment Report -- Basic Components

1. **Executive Summary.**
   A brief (e.g., one paragraph) summary description of the site, the features of conservation concern, the proposed project, potential impacts on biological and water resources, and proposed mitigation.

2. **General Site Description.**
   Describe the general characteristics of the site—the topography, bedrock geology, soils, vegetation cover types, surface water drainage, water bodies, and elevations.

3. **New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) Data.**
   Discuss the results of an inquiry to the NYNHP about records of rare species and rare natural communities on and near the site. Append the inquiry letter, map, and the NYNHP response.

4. **Habitats or Ecological Communities.**
   Describe the habitats or ecological communities on and near the site, using classifications in the *Draft Ecological Communities of New York State* (Edinger et al. 2002), the *Biodiversity Assessment Manual for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor* (Stevens and Kiviat 2001), or other standard reference relevant to this region. Include intermittent and perennial streams, lakes, and ponds, as well as all upland and wetland communities or habitats. Offsite areas may be assessed using topographic maps, soils maps, aerial photographs, and other remote sensing resources.

   For each habitat or community, list the dominant trees, shrubs, herbs, and mention any species that are unusual or may be indicative of special habitat conditions. Comprehensive plant lists are not required.

Include general assessments of habitat quality, to the extent possible given the seasonal or other field conditions at survey time. Measures of quality may include, but are not limited to:

- age (e.g., of forests),
- age or size of trees,
- size of habitat area (e.g., for forests or meadows),
- connectivity with other habitat areas, including streams,
- abundance of downwood, standing snags, bedrock outcrops, loose rocks, organic debris, and other microhabitat features,
- levels of human disturbance (e.g., from recent or historic logging, ATV use, foot traffic),
- presence and abundance of non-native or invasive species,
- diversity of native plant species (a qualitative assessment is adequate),
- observable indicators of surface water,
- (for streams, ponds, wetlands) water depths, clarity/turbidity, substrates, flow at survey time, entrenchment, condition of streambanks, etc.; describe intermittent as well as perennial streams, and
- presence and quality of vegetated buffer zones adjacent to streams, wetlands, other aquatic habitats, and other sensitive habitat areas.

Explain the timing, duration, and limitations of the field surveys, and make recommendations for further surveys at other seasons or in other conditions if needed for an adequate assessment.

5. **Connectivity.**
Describe the connectivity and barriers between significant habitat areas, including streams, on and off the site. Barriers include roads, driveways, pavement, curbs, walls, buildings, culverts, dams, and other features that might impede the movement of small and large animals through and between habitats.

6. **Map.**
Provide a map of the site and vicinity, illustrating habitats, watercourses (both perennial and intermittent streams, including those not identified on USGS topographic maps), existing developed features (e.g., roads, driveways, structures), and proposed new features. A sketch map drawn with reasonable care is sufficient; it need not be an engineer's or surveyor's drawing at this stage.

7. **Species of Conservation Concern.**
Considering the habitats present on and near the site, list and discuss the plants and animals of conservation concern that do or may use the site and nearby areas, and may be affected by the proposed project. Consider data from the New York Natural Heritage Program, the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas and the New York State Herp Atlas to help determine likely or potential occurrence on the site, but do not limit your assessment to those sources.

For the purposes of this assessment, "species of conservation concern" include the following, at a minimum:
-- those listed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) as Endangered, Threatened, Rare, or Special Concern;

-- those listed by NYSDEC as New York State Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) (www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9406.html);

-- those listed by the New York Natural Heritage Program as S1, S2, or S3; and

-- birds listed by Audubon New York as Hudson River Valley Priority Species (ny.audubon.org/hudson-river-valley-conservation).

Consider habitat uses for breeding/nesting, nursery, foraging, seasonal migration, and overwintering habitat, as appropriate, for the species of concern. In some situations the discussion can treat groups of organisms (e.g., "forest interior breeding birds" or "fish of coldwater streams" or "spring ephemeral wildlflowers"), and need not discuss each species separately.

8. **Potential Impacts.**
   Describe the proposed development project, and assess the potential impacts of the proposed project on biological and water resources. Consider the effects of habitat loss, fragmentation, and other degradation, the edge effects of human activities, the effects of impervious surfaces, increased runoff of surface water, and contamination of surface water or groundwater.

9. **Potential Mitigation.**
   Discuss preliminary site design, engineering, infrastructure features, or other measures that could be employed to mitigate any adverse effects of the proposed project on biological or water resources. Because this assessment is carried out at an early stage of planning, this discussion is expected to be fairly general, and need not be accompanied by engineer's drawings.

10. **References Cited.**