



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council Year End Report 2012

General Information

This volunteer board is an advisory body that works to ensure the sustainable use of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment. 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 and Common Council on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; conducts public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues, such as storm water management, climate change and biodiversity; and coordinates with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 2. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 48 general council meetings and 6 special meetings, in addition to sub-committee meetings. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted and archived at <http://www.kingstoncac.org> as well as on the Kingston CAC webpage of the City of Kingston website. See <http://www.kingston-ny.gov/content/76/78/1896/default.aspx>.

2012 Council Members:

Julie Noble, Chair	JulieLNoble@Kingston-ny.gov
Elizabeth Higgins, Secretary	liz.higgin@gmail.com
Lillian Childress	speckle8@yahoo.com
Judith Deming	jcdeming@hvc.rr.com
Casey Schwarz	caseyschwarz@gmail.com
Gregg Swanzey	gswanzey@gmail.com

2012 Highlights

1) Climate Action Planning

After adopting the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge in 2009, forming the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force, and receiving NYSERDA funding to hire a Climate Analyst for Kingston, the *Kingston Climate Action Plan* was created.

The Climate Analyst was hired for a one year term in spring 2011. A small grant was written in 2011 to fund membership in ICLEI which provides tools to measure and quantify the city and community's greenhouse gas emissions. Membership and use of the ICLEI tools began in August 2011. Baseline energy data from 2010 was used in the inventory. A solid draft to the inventory and plan was completed by the end of the Climate Analysts' employment and unpaid volunteer effort.

The *City of Kingston Climate Action Plan* and 2010 Community-Wide & Local Government Operations Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory presents in detail the community and local government energy assessments and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventories that were conducted as a part of the Climate Analyst's work. The Plan presents a GHG emissions forecast and proposes GHG reduction goals. A goal of reducing energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions 20% by 2020 (20 x 20) was set. The Plan also outlines the recommended measures to achieve energy and GHG reduction goals according to six different subject areas:

- a. Energy and Renewables: Buildings and Facilities;
- b. Land Use and Transportation;
- c. Materials Management: Waste Reduction & Recycling;
- d. Sustainable Resource Management;
- e. Outreach, Education & Training; and
- f. Climate Adaptation.

Each section includes a brief introduction and overview, findings, and recommended measures.

Members of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force who assisted the Climate Analyst in writing the *Kingston Climate Action Plan* are listed in the acknowledgement page of the Plan.

The *Climate Action Plan* was put out for public comment and review for a 60-day period, during which community members were able to review the Plan, either electronically or in hard copy at a number of locations throughout the City. Comments were accepted through written submission, a Survey Monkey questionnaire, and during a Public Meeting held in June 2012.

The Kingston Common Council adopted the final *Climate Action Plan* in October 2012. Full versions of *Kingston's Climate Action Plan* as well as the Executive Summary with recommendations can be found at www.kingstoncac.org and at www.kingston-ny.gov.

At the end of 2012, the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Task Force (renamed the Climate Action Task Force), began the process of working with VHB, Inc., an engineering firm funded by NYSERDA as the Regional Coordinator for Climate Smart Communities. VHB's role is to create a

process for prioritizing the recommendations in the *Climate Action Plan*. This will be a major effort in the spring of 2013.

2) Natural Resources Inventory

Work on creating a Natural Resources Inventory continued in 2012. With an ultimate goal of creating an Open Space Plan for Kingston, the Natural Resources Inventory process began by using the data collected during the Esopus Creek Biodiversity Study conducted two years ago by the CAC. Additionally, technical assistance was made available to the Kingston CAC through Hudsonia with funding from the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program. In the summer, fall, and winter of 2012, Hudsonia staff conducted remote and on-the-ground habitat mapping of the remaining open space in Kingston. Once this data collection and mapping is completed, the next step for the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)/Open Space Committee is to compile geospatial data that is available online through Ulster County and other databases. This would create the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) for Kingston.

An NRI is a survey of the natural resources in a community, with the goal of informing the planning board, common council, and other decision makers on land use decisions. This is done by

- (1) Gathering existing digital data layers and sectioning out the data for Kingston including: surface waters, geology, flood zones, soils, agricultural lands, vegetated lands, forests, Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs), parks and recreational areas, and developed areas.
- (2) Gathering any data that is missing or not mapped.
- (3) Compiling and creating map layers that will visually demonstrate and inform decision makers in land use decisions. For example: Environmental Justice Areas, Walking/Biking Routes, Complete Streets, Watersheds, Potential Garden/Park Space, Land Use Changes, Green Infrastructure Potential, Renewable Energy Potential, Brownfield Sites.

Once all of the data is compiled and maps are created, this final NRI will help the CAC and the City of Kingston to make informed land use decisions based on the data. The next step will be for the CAC to work with planners to create recommendations for an Open Space Plan. This NRI and Open Space Plan will be an extremely valuable contribution to the Comprehensive Plan, and so work on this initiative is a high priority for the Kingston CAC in early 2013.

3) Kingston's Green Guide

In September 2011, the Kingston CAC began the task of creating a "*Green Guide for Kingston*." Using the Woodstock Environmental Commission's *Green Guide* as a template, the council began the process of creating a document and digital resource for the Kingston community. This resource was originally intended to serve as a clearinghouse of environmental services and conservation information for Kingston residents and visitors. Concerned about the usability and scope of a "*Green Guide for Kingston*", the council decided that the scope should be to outline local businesses and organizations providing services especially in the areas of landscaping, food production, resource management, and energy conservation. Work will continue on this project. The council decided that this would be valuable for new and existing Kingston residents. Once finished it will be available on the CAC website, if not also in print.

4) Tidal Rondout Waterfront Flooding Task Force (later renamed Kingston Flooding Task Force)

In the late summer of 2012, the City of Kingston was approached by a consulting team from Scenic Hudson, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and Consensus Building Institute to form a task force to begin to address the challenges Kingston faces from waterfront flooding and sea level rise.

The task force is convened by the Kingston CAC and the City of Kingston Economic Development Office, with help from the Planning Department. This core group began working with the consulting team in September 2012. Potential members of the task force were formally invited to participate by the Mayor in late October. Task force members represent waterfront stakeholders including industry, business, tourism, culture, religious, development and residential interests. The Task Force's goal is "to assess local risks and generate strategies that will help create a more vibrant, secure and prosperous waterfront in the coming decades." The work of the task force should take six months.

In early December, the Task Force held a public meeting with about 75 attendees, including residents, business owners and concerned citizens. This event was rich in information sharing among the participants, as there were 4-5 breakout sessions for focused group discussions about flooding and its ramifications. There were also presentations by Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Estuary Program, as well as a synopsis of Kingston's waterfront initiatives to date. All of the information from this meeting as well as other resources and information about this process is posted on the CAC website.

5) Planning Board 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 are slated to come before the Kingston Planning Board. The CAC considers the environmental impact of each new proposal or action that is listed on the agenda for the Planning Board meeting, which generally occurs five days after the council meets. The range 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. A CAC member attends each Planning Board meeting to be available for further comments or questions.

6) Website Launch

In May 2012, the Kingston CAC launched kingstoncac.org, with the help of local web designer, CIXdesigns. This website is designed to promote more extensive public outreach including:

- Links to other environmental agencies and organizations;
- Council member biographies, pictures and contacts;
- Documents and policy templates;
- Details about current and past initiatives, including resources and proceedings;
- Archived CAC minutes, agendas, and year end reports; and

- Sustainability resources and links.

This website is maintained on an ongoing basis to keep information relevant and up-to-date.

7) 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 municipal website, on the CAC page, as are pertinent documents that the CAC has adopted.

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.

8) Professional Development

Kingston CAC council members regularly attend meetings, workshops and conferences to further their professional development and to keep up-to-date on regionally and locally relevant environmental issues. In 2012, CAC council members participated in:

1. NYS Conference on the Environment
2. Mid Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Workshops
3. US Green Building Council presentations on LEED programs and related building, energy, landscaping, and water conservation techniques
4. Land Trust Alliance Roundtables
5. NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Workshops
6. National Development Council 3-day training
7. Revitalizing Hudson Riverfronts Workshop by Scenic Hudson and partners
8. Climate Action Planning Webinar

9) Organizational Liaisons/Appointees

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

American Solar Energy Society
City of Kingston Climate Action Task Force
City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council
City of Kingston Comprehensive Plan Committee
City of Kingston Planning Board meeting liaison
City of Kingston Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee liaison
City of Kingston Waterfront Advisory Council
Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
Healthy Kingston for Kids Project and Garden Committee

Kingston Land Trust and Rail Trail Committee
Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force
Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan Committee
New York Council on Non-profits
NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
NYS Association of Environmental Management Councils
NYS Climate Smart Communities Certification Committee
Ulster County Development Corporation
Ulster County Environmental Management Council
Ulster County Planning Board
Ulster County Public Transportation Task Force (UCPD)
Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee
Ulster County Transportation Council

10) Organizational Membership

The Kingston CAC is proud to be a member of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions. **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. 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, and projects; conservation information; and highlighted environmental events.

NYSACC provides:

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