



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council  
[www.kingston-ny.gov/KingstonCAC](http://www.kingston-ny.gov/KingstonCAC)

## 2020 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 6:00pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 1 (currently meeting virtually under COVID restrictions). The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 136 general council meetings and 13 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.

### **2020 Council Members (two year terms):**

Julie Noble, Chair	1/2/2009-12/31/22	7 <sup>th</sup> term
Elizabeth (Betta) Broad	12/11/14-12/31/19	3rd term
Lorraine Farina	1/1/16-12/31/21	3rd term
Emilie Hauser, Vice-Chair	1/1/13-12/31/22	5th term
Kevin McEvoy, Secretary	8/21/13-12/31/22	5th term
Sebastian Pillitteri	1/2/19-12/31/20	1 <sup>st</sup> term
Casey Schwarz	1/2/11-6/20	5 <sup>th</sup> term

## **2020 Highlights**

### ***Open Space Plan***

Since May 2011, a CAC sub-committee has been in the process of working with the City in developing a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) and subsequently an Open Space Plan for the City of Kingston. An NRI is a survey of the natural resources in a community, with the goal of informing the planning board, Common Council and decision makers on land use decisions. In 2020, the City of Kingston completed and the Common Council adopted, as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan, an Open Space Plan for the City of Kingston. Building upon the foundation of the Natural Resources Inventory, the Open Space Plan will guide the city towards sustainable land use and natural resource protection. Behan Planning and Design was the consultant who crafted the Open Space Plan with the City and the CAC. The final plan, vision, and all maps can be found at [www.kingston-ny.gov/nri](http://www.kingston-ny.gov/nri). Through 2020, the CAC also worked on evaluating the advancement of a Community Preservation Plan and also reviewed and began discussion on the consideration of the CAC becoming a Conservation Board, under NYS General Municipal Code 239y. 2020 saw many Open Space advancements including the acquisition and preservation of 508 acres of land along the Hudson River by Scenic Hudson as well as the preservation of 5.7 acres of upland area at 60 Wilbur Avenue by the Kingston Land Trust.

### ***Wood Burning/Air Quality Sub-Committee***

In 2016, the Kingston CAC began a focused look into air quality concerns, particularly with a focus on localized residential wood burning in Kingston. This initiative advanced through 2020. In 2020, the subcommittee of the CAC worked on development of the mission and goals for the initiative. The webpage on the CAC website was expanded upon to communicate about the dangers of wood smoke as well as vehicle idling. Most notably, in 2020, a partnership was formed with the Center for the Study of Land, Air and Water at Bard College and the Kingston Air Quality Initiative (KAQI) was formed. This collaboration began the work of monitoring Kingston air quality by collecting data from sources, both indoor and outdoor, around the city. The monitoring efforts focus on fine particulate matter. The subcommittee continued to work with the Kingston Fire Department on enforcing air pollution code and on educating residents about the serious health and environmental effects of air pollution. Funds were sought to support the installation of additional air quality monitors in collaboration with Bard. At the end of 2020, work was being done to develop a strategic plan for working directly with citizens to report and address instances of air pollution in the city.

### ***Street Tree and Canopy Cover***

In 2020, a street tree and canopy cover initiative was started to address, among other things, city operations regarding street trees, communications with the community regarding trees, and understanding and communicating the value of trees. The Kingston CAC worked with the Reinmann Lab at the CUNY Advanced Science Research Center to develop a data set of land surface temperature data for the City (see [www.kingston-ny.gov/nri](http://www.kingston-ny.gov/nri)). Additionally, a liaison was established between the CAC and the Kingston Tree Commission to enhance communication about the city's tree canopy. A meeting of city departments was convened in January, with the assistance of the CAC, to review and understand the current city code, policies and procedures regarding street trees; to discuss current and future projects where trees would be impacted, and to develop a cohesive plan for addressing tree cover citywide moving forward.

## ***Esopus Creek Blue Trail***

Members of the CAC participated in a collaborative effort, with other local groups and Alderman Don Tallerman to convene a stakeholder group to advance the work to create a Blue Trail on the Esopus Creek. This work included understanding the current conditions, creating a plan for opening up the creek for kayaking/canoeing, and increasing access and awareness of the Creek across municipalities.

## ***Open Streets Initiative***

The CAC discussed and followed the policies and procedures of the city regarding the use of streets for pedestrian access, particularly in Uptown Kingston. Strategies were discussed for expanding the use of streets for places of gathering, eating, etc. With COVID, some of these strategies became practices, increasing the use of streets as public spaces. A letter outlining the CAC's advocacy for an open streets initiative was sent to the Mayor.

## ***USGS Stream Gage***

The CAC worked with Gary Wall of the USGS on an effort to understand: the status, history, use and value of the Rondout Creek's decommissioned USGS stream gage, to understand the cost of operations and maintenance, and to convene local organizations or agencies, who would benefit from it being replaced. The USGS Stream Gage system exists to measure the level of the river which can then serve as a planning tool, a flood warning tool, a tool to use for mapping and structural design, commercial shipping uses, and data collection and scientific research and for recreational uses, among other things.

## ***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 2020, CAC members participated in the following professional development opportunities pertaining to the waterfront:

- a) Sea Level Rise Implementation Learning Group (Flood Resiliency Network: Kingston, Piermont, Catskill, Stony Point) meetings
- b) Climate Adaptive Design, Kingston Point Beach
- c) Rondout Riverport Shoreline Stabilization
- d) Quarry Waters planning (Scenic Hudson site proposed for NYS Park)

## ***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 2020, several site proposals were reviewed by the CAC including:

- a) Kingstonian Review
- b) Hutton Brickyards Review

### ***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. There were no formal letters of support submitted by the Kingston CAC in 2020.

### ***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 2020, the Kingston CAC participated in the following reviews:

- a) NYNJ Harbor and Tributaries Storm Surge Barriers Review
- b) Hudson River Barge Anchorage Proposal Review
- c) Green Amendment Review and letter of Commitment
- d) NYS Stream Protection Act Review and letter of advocacy
- e) Zoning Code Update Review
- f) City of Kingston Sidewalk Code Review, Task Force Participation, Ongoing input

### ***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. Further, all CAC communications are shared with the Common Council CAC Liaison, which, in 2020 was Alderperson Michele Hirsch. Alderperson Hirsch attended several monthly meetings thus maintaining the line of communication to the Common Council.

## ***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 are strictly informational. In 2020, the Kingston CAC hosted the following special presentations or guests:

- a) Gary Wall, USGS, Rondout Creek Stream Gage
- b) Ted Griese, Karine Duteil, Barbara Scott, Jared Williams, Victor and Zura Capelli, Future Fruit

## ***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 2020, CAC council members participated in:

- a) From UC Davis Air Sensor International Conference series:
  - 1. "Mapping Hyperlocal Air Pollution to Drive Clean Air Policies"
  - 2. "Measuring Public Opinion and Knowledge of Air Pollution to Develop Community-Specific Strategies"
  - 3. "Air Quality Data Analysis: Life After R2"
  - 4. Data is Policy: "Presentation as Aesthetics and Public Infrastructure"
- b) From the Environmental Law Institute:
  - 1. "Remarkable Cities and the Fight for Climate Change"
  - 2. "The Role of Citizen Science in Compliance and Enforcement Programs"
- c) NYSDEC HRNERR Sustainable Shorelines Resilient Hudson River Shoreline Designs Webinar
- d) NYS DEC Environmental Update Meeting
- e) Flood Resilience Network
- f) NYSDEC HRNERR, Office of Climate Change and NYNJHEP: US Climate Alliance: Prioritizing NYS Coastal Wetlands for Resilience and Blue Carbon Wednesday, October 7, 2020
- g) NYSDEC HRNERR: Research in the Reserve: Studying Ecosystems of the Tidal Hudson, March 11, 2020
- h) Hudson River Watershed Alliance Conference
- i) Land Trust Alliance Annual Rally Conference

Contributor: (Emilie)

- a) New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. (2020). Using Natural Resilience Measures to Reduce Risk of Flooding and Erosion in New York State.  
[https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/crranaturalmeasuresgndc.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/crranaturalmeasuresgndc.pdf)
- b) WSP USA. Flood Resilience Handbook for Public Access Sites Along the Hudson River from Troy to Yonkers. Prepared for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and NEIWPC. To be published in 2021

## ***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) Kingston Land Trust (including Greenline, Land Use, Housing committees)
- c) Climate Smart Kingston Commission
- d) Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
- e) NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
- f) Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee liaison
- g) Kingston Planning Board liaison
- h) Heritage Area Commission
- i) Friends of Historic Kingston
- j) Hudson River Environmental Society
- k) Complete Streets Advisory Council
- l) Kingston Preservation, Inc.
- m) Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission
- n) Grow Well Kingston
- o) Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee
- p) Code Reform Advocates liaison (advocates for the Zoning Task Force recommendations)