

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council - Meeting Notes

Date: 11/20/2025

Attendees: Kimberly Easlick, Deborah Bliss, Lise Prown, Sarah Aparicio, Dana Freedenthal, Courtney M. Williams, Jannelle Koszarek, Nicole Pianalto, Kay Barthelmes, Janine Melillo

1. Recruitment strategies

- **Update:** At tabling events, interested community members signed up for more information on CAC. A scout leader also expressed interest in nature-related activities. There is a need for more people to fill roles in CAC, as well as a broader list of volunteers who can help without taking full CAC responsibilities.
- **Future ideas:**
 - **Mycoblitz:** Family friendly event where participants document fungi species using an identification app to see what's growing locally.
 - **HOA outreach:** Plan to contact HOA presidents or representatives to attend their meetings and give composting presentations. This could support both recruitment and promotion of initiatives.
- **Next steps:**
 - Jan to follow up with sign-ups from past tabling events.
 - Keep scout leader informed of relevant opportunities.
 - Create a document where volunteers can join subgroups on specific interests.
 - Check with Elaine about whether an archived contact list exists. If not, one should be created.
 - Jan to clarify procedures for social media, especially what actions to take when hosting events and after events.
 - Courtney to send admin access to Jan for social media.
 - Lise to share login to Instagram.
 - Lise to add recruitment form to link tree.

2. Planning and priorities

- **Summary:** In December, the group needs to set focus areas and priorities for 2026 as part of strategic planning. The website also needs a rewrite as the current site is outdated and includes responsibilities the group doesn't actually have.

- **Next steps:**
 - Contact Jan if anyone already worked on updates.
 - Kay will consult Elaine on what content should be added or removed, then bring the changes back to the CAC in December for input and approval. Then, we will coordinate with Stephanie to implement changes.
 - Kay will report back at the next meeting.

3. City meeting coverage

- **Summary:** Goal is to have representation at every Monday city meeting using a rotation system. Jan will review agendas and coordinate with whoever is scheduled. Lise thought attending every meeting may be too much and suggests attending only when comments are needed. Deb suggested creating a sign-up sheet for Monday meetings. No next steps were agreed on.

4. Tree board

- **Update:** The Tree Board has been approved, with the Planning Department taking the lead. First meeting expected in January 2026 (Jannelle noted it's on the agenda for Friday's meeting with Planning to schedule the first Tree Board meeting.) Lise will serve on the board as the CAC representative. No next steps were discussed.

5. Mayor's Monarch Pledge

- **Update:** Residential signs are available. CEEP may have funds for additional ones. Additionally, the Mayor was unaware that the riverfront milkweed garden is not being maintained.
- **Next steps:**
 - Members with milkweed or pollinator gardens who are willing to appear on the community map and display a sign should notify Jan.
 - Jan has milkweed seeds for anyone who needs them or knows someone who does.
 - Jan will schedule a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the riverfront garden.

6. Climate Smart Communities (CSC)

- **Summary:** Jannelle and Kim are preparing the January submission; they don't expect to reach Silver yet but aim to be next January. The January submission brings feedback, with a chance to strengthen supporting documentation before a May review. Some initiatives (e.g., heat pump grant) take multiple years and cannot earn points until completion. Jan requested a presentation

to guide how the CAC should prioritize 2026 initiatives that support CSC goals. The presentation may also be used for recruitment and outreach.

- **Next step:** Jannelle and Kim to present during the January or February meeting.

7. City-Wendel Partnership

- **Summary:** The city is partnering with Wendel for a feasibility study of the library/court building (90-day turnaround), pending grant award. The study will include an energy, heating, and wastewater audit aimed at reducing GHG emissions and creating a strategic plan. CEEP would then apply for grants to implement recommendations, which would contribute to CSC points. No next steps were discussed.

8. Tree City Application

- **Update:** CEEP is in the process of completing application.
- **Next step:** Members should send rough estimates of their volunteer hours (e.g., Tree Board work, Saturday Academy) to Kim. No dates are needed.

9. Community environmental concerns

- **Update:** Holtec is appealing the Save the Hudson bill, and New York State is opposing the challenge. The latest pipeline update suggests no expansion in New York, though increased gas flows are possible if neighboring states expand their infrastructure. The county continues to delay its waste study on the incinerator until after the budget, and there will be an opportunity to advocate at the County Budget meeting (see upcoming opportunities).

10. Depew Park

- **Update:** Progress on the lake cleaning grant is stalled pending sample results.

11. Waterfront development

- **Update:** Dana, Lise, Jannelle, and Kim met with Peter Erwin to discuss waterfront development and city-owned Water Street properties.
 - **Next step:** Jannelle will help organize informational sessions on topics such as solar, climate resilience, geothermal, and flood-risk mapping.

12. Updates on past events

- **Teachers Park:** Work is moving forward.
 - **Next step:** Kay will prepare a photo document for council approval.
- **Ester Place tabling:** Deb and Dana talked with many residents and handed out candy and seeds. Received sign-ups for more information on CAC.

- **Saturday Academy:** Several people signed up for more information.

13. Upcoming opportunities

From Hell Strip to Slice of Heaven Garden Walk - November 23rd at 1pm

In collaboration with Peekskill100. Ingrid and Jan will host a garden walk showcasing pollinator and native gardens, and discussing winter seed planting.

New York State Urban Forestry Council, Free Webinar - December 17th at 12pm

Presentation will cover core arboriculture principles to guide effective tree care at every stage of a tree's life. For example, specifies selection and proper planting to lifelong pruning and knowing when removal is necessary. [Click here to register.](#)

Second Public Forum on 2026 County Budget - December 3rd at 7pm

[Click here for more details.](#)