

## **Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) Annual Report**

### **Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2020**

The following document was prepared for the Peekskill Mayor and Common Council as required by the City Code as it pertains to the CAC's activities for the year ending on December 31, 2020. For more detailed information, please refer to appended copies of the CAC's monthly meeting minutes,

#### **2020 CAC COMPOSITION**

Members of Peekskill's CAC: Kay Barthelmes, Chair; Elaine Caccoma, Vice Chair; Lise Prown; Marie Inserra, Mario Sansotta, Chris Barrett, Elaine Caccoma, Sharon Amy Wiggins and Courtney M. Williams. Terms expire for all members on different dates in 2020, except Melillo in 2021.

Elaine Caccoma was elected the new Vice Chair. Jan Melillo was welcomed to the Council in December 2019.

Jesica Youngblood, City Planner – Dept. of Planning & Department, was our regular City liaison and recording secretary.

#### **ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

##### **Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)**

The CAC, on behalf of the City of Peekskill, embarked on an initiative in late 2018 through 2019 to investigate the feasibility of developing a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) for the City of Peekskill. In 2019, to help fund the professional services consultant needed for the NRI, the group set their sights on a \$10,000 matching fund grant from Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Grant. Additionally, a CAC member (Lise Prown) volunteered her time to complete a GIS mapping course by Pace University, enabling her in the future to create the approximately 20 GIS maps needed for the NRI.

By way of discovery, the CAC members met with several NRI experienced organizations and professional services consultants to better understand the scope and requirements of the NRI and to begin to plan the project. These contacts included: (1) JN Land Trust Services (Jim Nordgren, 6/13/2019); (2) Hudson

Highland Land Trust (Michelle Smith and Karen Doyle, 5/31/2019); (3) Strong Outcomes LLC (Karen Strong, 6/18/2019); (4) Greenspan Inc (Ted Fink, 7/24/2019) and (5) Hudson River Valley Greenway Grant (Dan Jeanson, Grant Director, 8/6/2019).

Subsequently starting in the summer, a small CAC work group with the help of our city planner liaison completed the necessary grant application and after two rounds received the grant on December 11, 2019 however. Once the grant is accepted by the city, the CAC will kick-off a 2-year project to complete the Peekskill NRI.

### **NYS DRI Funding**

Guided by the consultants, the process continued with a second public meeting and three local planning committee meetings. The final DRI plan was produced in April 2020. The group was encouraged to put projects into the proposal that added up to \$15 million because NY State will review all proposals and fund the ones that they feel is the most beneficial for the financial enhancement of the city. Kay Barthelmes, CAC Chair, was in attendance for all meetings along with 18 other stakeholders.

### **Pollinators Pathway Program**

Peekskill residents, Jack Cook and John Vargo, presented their ideas about establishing a “Pollinators Pathway.” This would be a series of milkweed and other flowering shrubs along the 2.7 miles of Peekskill Riverfront Park to provide habitat for the endangered Monarch Butterfly and other important pollinators. Some wild milkweed plants are already established there. The volunteer organization will partner with the Peekskill Garden Club. A pledge to sign the National Wildlife Federation Pledge which commits to saving the monarch butterfly from extinction.

### **Letter of Support**

Peekskill Walks requested a letter of support for an AARP Livability Grant application for the design and greening of the newly created pocket park on Esther Street.

### **Other Outreach, Training, and Education**

3/5/2020 Westchester County Clean Energy Summit: “Implications of NYS climate Law & Scalable Solutions, Pace Energy & Climate Center

3/9/2020 Met with PHS Environmental Club advisors

4/19/2020 Earthshot 2030: “Commit to Climate Action,” Fox Lane High School, Bedford, NY

6/15/2020 Scarsdale’s Food Scraps Recycling Site Visit

7/8/2020 Met with Beacon’s Composting Committee

7/14/2020 Webinar “Community Solar,” NYSERDA/Sustainable Westchester

## **Goals 2021**

- Continue to work with the city to adopt a tree ordinance.
- Engage a consultant to complete the NRI with the support of the matching grant from Greenway.
- Work with the BID to require vendors to use compostable materials at all the city-sponsored events.
- Explore developing a food scraps/composting drop-off program.
- Continue Environmental Film Series
- Liaison to Parks Advisory Board and PHS Environmental Club.
- Advise City Council on new development projects.
- Attend Planning Commission meetings to keep abreast of new development projects in the city and advise.