

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council

Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2013

As required by the City Code, this annual report summarizes the actions of the Conservation Advisory Council for 2013. For more detailed information, please refer to copies of calendar year 2013 minutes, which are attached to, and made part of, this report.

Composition of CAC in 2013

Members of the Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council are: Carol Capobianco, Chair; Pat Reber, Vice Chair; Kay Barthelmes, Corresponding Secretary; Leigh Draper; Dorothy Leslie; and Jeff Miller. Chris Gomez was a member for part of the year, but did not reapply when his term expired and instead joined the City's Planning Board. Jeff Miller was reappointed in 2013. Terms for all others expire in 2014.

Kevin Kain, Peekskill Planning Department, who replaced Jeremy Doxsee this year, attends meetings as the City liaison and Recording Secretary.

CAC meetings included the members of the Parks Advisory Board—Laura Perkins, Dominic Perruccio, and Jeanne Romeau—as they continue to fill the seats on their board. Many areas of concern overlap with CAC, and their input was valuable in our discussions.

Activities and Achievements

Continued to Develop Open Space and Wetlands Inventories

Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping data, the CAC has identified and generated a database for all wetlands, open space, and vacant parcels citywide, as mandated in Chapter 24 of the City Code. The database contains various attributes, including ownership, development potential, and existing environmental features (steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, etc.), for each individual parcel and shows all wetlands. The database links to a corresponding map that enables a comprehensive view of the City's environmental resources in unprecedented ways, bringing together information from several existing databases. Council members have prioritized areas and are writing summaries of featured sites.

Once completed, the inventory will serve as the foundation to prioritize and recommend appropriate use of the areas, including preservation and protection of the City's critical vacant lands, open space, and wetlands. It will also contain advanced mapping capabilities that can be incorporated into the City's future planning efforts.

Researched Steep Slope Law

Reviewed and assessed 20 municipal steep slope ordinances in New York as compared with Peekskill's ordinance as the first step in assessing environmental ordinances needed to protect the natural resources of the City. The goal is to create a draft for City review that will strengthen the effectiveness of Peekskill's ordinance.

Monitored and Maintained Restoration Site of MacGregory Brook

We continued to maintain the restoration site on the south bank of MacGregory Brook between the railroad tracks and the Hudson River while the young plants, installed in October 2011, are still getting established. We checked on the health and needs of the plants periodically, and weeded occasionally. On November 2, 2013, we installed 25 additional trees and shrubs, provided by the NYS DEC's Trees for Tribs program, to replace some of the plantings that did not survive.

Participated in Annual Citywide Clean-up of City Parks, April 27

Sponsored a Public Education Outreach Program

To raise public awareness of environmental issues as they impact Peekskill, the CAC began an initiative to provide residents with important information through an insert in their water bills. CAC members met with Ed Kuhns of the Water Department to discuss the project and learn about Peekskill's drinking water. The first flyer focuses on where Peekskill's water comes from, with an illustration and text. The reverse side is translated into Spanish. The flyer was sent with the end-of-the year water bill. Other topics such as stormwater will be featured in future inserts.

Advised Common Council on Conservation Issues

As issues arise throughout the year, the CAC advises the common council on development impacts. This year the CAC advised the Council, via letter dated June 26 and a meeting with the Mayor on July 11, that a more suitable location rather than Peekskill Landing be identified for the National Maritime Historical Society's proposed museum.

Also, at the request of the Mayor, CAC members followed up on her concerns about trees needing pruning at the library and Monument Park. They made site visits and wrote a letter, dated July 7, regarding their opinions about the issues and advised that a qualified arborist should be consulted.

Other Outreach, Training, and Education

- February 9: Parks Board members provided support (and hot chocolate) at Eagle Fest
- March 14: Karla Raimundi of Clearwater attended CAC meeting to discuss an EPA Environmental Justice Peekskill Urban Watershed Initiative grant they received.
- March 23: CAC supported the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour by providing the City with an announcement that was posted on the public access channel urging residents of Peekskill to turn off all lights at 8:30 p.m. for one hour.
- May 2: Attended Energize NY Camp
- May 6: Met with City staff and owner of 649 Main Street at his request for a site visit to review trees targeted for removal and development plans.
- May 30: Participated in Hemlock Research Project, Lasdon Arboretum.
- June 15: Attended lecture *Importance of Native Plants for Biodiversity*, by Doug Tallamy, Ph.D., Teatown Reservation, Ossining
- June 21: Attended seminar *Storm Water Management in an Urban Landscape*, Staatsburg, sponsored by NYS DEC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hudson Valley Regional Council.

- June 25: Met with representative from NYS DEC Trees for Tribs on site at MacGregory Brook to inventory and measure the plantings installed in October 2011.
- July 11: Mayor Foster attended CAC meeting to discuss Maritime Museum proposal.
- July 11: Heather Flournoy of Energize NY attended CAC meeting to provide update of the program.
- August 8: Guy Lowe, candidate for the Parks Board, attended CAC meeting.
- August 15: Participated at the Energize NY information table at Field Library
- September 23: CAC and Parks Board members met with City planning and parks department staff to discuss mountain biking in Depew Park.
- October 30: Parks Board member attended groundbreaking for Peekskill Landing.
- November 21: Participated at the Energize NY information table at Field Library.
- December 16: Presented to a Common Council work session the CAC's work to date on the Open Space and Wetlands Inventory, including the capabilities of the GIS map and database.

Objectives for calendar year 2014

Fill vacancy on the Conservation Advisory Council.

Continue to develop Open Space and Wetlands inventory as mandated in Chapter 24 of the City Code.

Draft Steep Slope Law as the first step in assessing environmental ordinances needed to protect the natural resources of the City.

Monitor and maintain restoration site of MacGregory Brook while the young plants are still getting established.

Participate in the annual cleanup of City parks.

Sponsor a public education outreach program on a conservation issue.

Advise Common Council on conservation issues and development impact as they arise throughout the year.

Research native plants initiative.