

Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council

Report to the Mayor and Common Council for Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2011

As required by the City Code, this annual report summarizes the actions of the Conservation Advisory Council for 2011. For more detailed information, please refer to copies of calendar year 2011 minutes, which are attached to, and made part of, this report.

In July Peekskill's Common Council repealed the ordinance titled "Conservation and Parks Advisory Council" and adopted a new Chapter 24 of the City Code, establishing the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC).

CAC members helped to write this new ordinance, working over several months with City officials to draft wording and gain approvals.

Composition of CAC in 2011

Due to the new ordinance that established the CAC, all six current members were appointed in 2011. The first four—Kay Barthelmes, Carol Capobianco, Dot Leslie, and Pat Reber—were appointed to one-year terms. Chris Gomez and Jeff Miller were appointed to two-year terms, which will be the length of terms for all new members going forward.

Carol Capobianco was appointed Chair by the Common Council in July. In September, the CAC elected its other officers: Pat Reber, Vice-Chair, and Kay Barthelmes, Corresponding Secretary.

Because of the establishment of the group as a Conservation Advisory Council, former City liaisons Joyce Cuccia, Parks Department Director, and Vicki Matthews, Senior Office Assistant of the Parks Department who was the Council's Recording Secretary, no longer attend meetings.

Jeremy Doxsee, a Planner in Peekskill's Planning Department, now attends as the City liaison and Recording Secretary.

Achievements and Activities

Created and Adopted By-Laws

The purpose was to outline the rules and procedures for conduct of business of the CAC not already defined in the ordinance.

Rebuilding Council Membership

Members reached out to several potential parties and groups throughout the year in attempts to fill the vacancies on the Council. Two of the three vacancies have been filled with one seat remaining.

Began Researching/Restoring MacGregory Brook

Completed a cleanup and planting project along a section of MacGregory Brook where it meets the Hudson River at Riverfront Green. Material support came from ELLA (Environmental Leadership Learning Alliance, based at Teatown Reservation), through funding from the Westchester Community Foundation, and the NY State DEC's "Trees for Tribs" program. Over 70 volunteers assisted in the several streamside clean-ups over the year, with support from the City of Peekskill, and volunteers from Pepsico, the Youth Bureau, AmeriCorps and numerous members of the Community. The planting of over 100 native shrubs and trees occurred on October 1. See attached report for details.

Started to Develop an Open Space Inventory

Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping data, the council has identified and generated a database for all wetlands, open space, and vacant parcels city-wide. The database contains various attributes, including ownership, development potential, and existing environmental features (steep slopes, wetlands, etc.) for each individual parcel. Council members will conduct fieldwork to "ground truth" the database and finalize attribute data in early 2012.

Once completed, the inventory will serve as the foundation to prioritize and recommend implementation strategies to preserve and protect 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.

Assisted in city-wide spring clean-up of City parks (April 16)

Outreach, Training, and Education

- Began education process regarding energy conservation and the Northern Westchester Energy Action Consortium.
- Dave Klotzle, City Naturalist, attended CAC meeting (February 17) to provide background and information on conservation issues in Peekskill.
- Toured Fort Hill Park under guidance of Gene Panczenko (June 11)
- Attended area conferences/workshops/seminars:
 - January 29: Bedford 2020 Environmental Action Day
 - March 18: Westchester County Conservation Cafe, *Is Your Pond on Life Support?*
 - March 31: Comprehensive Urban Planning
 - April 28: SEQRA
 - May 21: Finding Opportunity in the Climate Crisis
 - June 2: Comite Latino
 - June 9: Open Space Planning
 - June 21: Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance (ELLA) Steering Committee
 - September 8: NWEAC
 - September 17: *How Does Your Community Measure Up? Evaluating Environmental Regulations in the Hudson Hills & Highlands*
 - November 29: Peekskill Youth Bureau/Clearwater Environmental Justice Inventory and Summit brainstorming meeting

Objectives for calendar year 2012

- Fill vacancy on CAC.
- Continue to develop Open Space and Wetlands inventories.
- Continue research, maintenance, and restoration of MacGregory Brook.
- Explore ways to educate public on conservation issues such as developing content for the CAC pages on the City's website and facilitating and supporting efforts at energy efficiency and sustainability.
- Participate in the annual clean-up of City parks.
- Explore possibility of establishing a scenic vista park at site along Crompton Road on the east side of City.