

2023 Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council Annual Report

Report to the Mayor & Common Council for calendar year ending December 31, 2023.

The following document was prepared for the Peekskill Mayor and Common Council as required by the City Code Chapter 24 pertaining to the Conservation Advisory Council's (CAC) activities for 2023.

2023 CAC Composition

CAC Members:

- 1) Elaine Caccoma (Chairperson), 2) Lise Prown (Vice Chair), 3) Janine Melillo (Secretary),
4) Kay Barthelmes, 5) Ian Berger, 6) Carmen D'Angelo, 7) Marie Inserra (Jan-July),
8) Courtney M. Williams.

City Liaison: Councilwoman Kathleen Talbot

Sustainability Coordinator: Jamie MacDonald (Jan-Oct) and Emma Kaminski (Oct-Dec)
(Center for Economic and Environmental Partnership/CEEP)

ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

1) NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY (NRI)

The NRI report and website were completed in early 2023. MJ Engineering along with the Planning Department and the CAC conducted a NRI public information session on February 7, 2023. The NRI was adopted by the Common Council on April 10, 2023. It serves as an important resource to assist stakeholders such as city officials, developers, and residents in making informed and environmentally responsible land use decisions. There is also interest from the city school district to use the NRI information with their students.

2) TREE INVENTORY AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

On June 14, 2023, the CAC applied for a Tree Inventory and Management Plan grant through the Urban and Community Forestry Program. On December 22, 2023, the city was awarded a grant in the amount of \$75,000. The grant will allow the city to hire a consultant to conduct a city-wide tree inventory of street trees and urban park trees. The purpose of the tree inventory is to provide information for the planning, design, planting, maintenance, and removal of community trees. The end goal is to increase the tree canopy in Peekskill, particularly in the downtown area, to help mitigate climate change, heat island effect, and help beautify the city streets and urban parks.

3) TREE CITY USA DESIGNATION

In March 2023, the city was awarded Tree City USA designation by the Arbor Day Foundation, community forestry programs. Last year, the city with the help of the CAC, met the four core standards of sound urban forestry management by having a community tree ordinance, maintaining a tree department, spending at least \$2 per

capita on urban forestry, and celebrating Arbor Day.

4) BRONZE CERTIFIED CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITY (CSC) & CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING INSTITUTE (CAPI)

In October 2023, the City of Peekskill was one of the 23 newly certified Climate Smart Communities announced in New York State. This award represents the culmination of many years of actions taken by the city and the CAC to promote sustainability, reduce waste, save energy, and increase zero-emission transportation options. Because CSC Bronze certification points also work in partnership with the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program, those points pushed Peekskill over the threshold to qualify for a \$10,000 points-based CEC grant.

Along with the City Planner and the Sustainability Coordinator, the CAC also worked on the CAPI Government Operations Greenhouse (GHG) Inventory completed in October. The group is currently working on the CAPI Climate Action Plan for Peekskill.

5) DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM (DWSP2)

On March 13, 2023, Peekskill's DWSP2 report was approved by New York State. The CAC is continuing to serve as a stakeholder on the management team charged with implementing the plan to protect the sources of our drinking water.

6) CAC ADVISEMENT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The CAC continues to be an active environmental voice for the community regarding development projects.

- **1130 Frost Lane** -The CAC highlighted concerns with this project including: 1) building on steep slopes; 2) need to protect the adjacent Campfield Reservoir and water treatment plant; 3) support of a cluster development vs single family homes; 4) recommendation to preserve open space by establishing a Conservation Easement for a portion of the site.

7) MARIE INSERRA ENVIRONMENTAL FILM SERIES

CAC members hosted a series of environmental films on timely topics.

Events included:

- **'Gather'** – March 29, 2023
Panelists included: Stephanie Morningstar, Twila Cassadore, Tracy Hyter-Suffern
- **"Radioactive - The Women of Three Mile Island"** – October 4, 2023
The event was held in honor of our deceased CAC member Marie Inserra and the event was renamed for Marie.

8) FOOD SCRAPS DROP OFF PROGRAM

On May 5, 2023, the CAC worked with the Director of DPW on a soft launch of the first food scraps drop off site in Peekskill at the DPW garage on Lower South Street. CAC members were on site for the first day to help direct people and answer questions. As part of the launch, an informational handout was also developed by the CAC in both English and Spanish and the city offered supplies of kitchen bins and compostable bags for sale in City Hall. It is the goal of the CAC to continue to partner with the city to

further expand the food scraps program in the new year.

9) CAC LETTERS OF SUPPORT

| Letters of Support | Organization | Date | Type of Letter |
|--|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Planting Westchester: Growing Tree Canopy | US Forestry Services | 7/6/2023 | CAC provided letter of support |
| Hudson River Estuary Grants Program for Local Stewardship Planning, Nutrient Analysis in Peekskill Hollow Brook | NYS DEC | 7/6/2023 | CAC provided letter of support |
| Peekskill 2023 LWRP application | New York Department of State | 7/25/2023 | CAC provided letter of support |

10) Outreach, Training & Education

a. Outreach

| Outreach Event | Location | Date | Notes |
|---|--|-------------|---|
| CAC Tabling | Peekskill High School Earth Day Celebration | 4/21/2023 | CAC attend PHS event |
| Conservation Easement Discussion | Meeting with Westchester Land Trust in Peekskill | 5/23/2023 | CAC attend the meeting |
| CAC Tabling | Peekskill's Farmers Market | 6/24/2023 | CAC engaged visitors and handed out Recycling Brochure and Water Source materials |
| NRI Presentation to Cortlandt CAC | Cortlandt Town Hall | 11/09/2023 | Discuss NRI development process with neighboring CAC |
| CAC Liaison with Other City Committees | Various | Ongoing | CAC members regularly attended monthly meetings hosted by Parks Board and Planning Commission |
| Peekskill CAC Facebook site | Online | Ongoing | CAC maintains a Facebook site for pertinent information, announcements, and events |

b. Training & Education

| Event Title | Sponsoring Organization | Date | CAC Role |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| The Power of Trees | Bedford 2030 | 3/25/2023 | CAC attended - Bedford, NY |
| ReLeaf: "Extreme Urban Heat: What It Is, Why It Matters and How Trees Can Help Mitigate the Crisis" | NYS DEC | 6/09/2023 | CAC attended - Yonkers, NY |