

2024 Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council Annual Report

Annual Report to the Mayor & Common Council for the calendar year ending December 31, 2024.

This document was prepared for the Peekskill Mayor and Common Council as required by the City Code Chapter 24, outlining the activities and accomplishments of the Conservation Advisory Council's (CAC) activities for 2024.

2024 CAC Composition

CAC Members:

1) Janine Melillo (Chair through 8/2026), 2) Lise Prown (Vice Chair), 3) Unseated (Secretary), 4) Kay Barthelmes, stepped down 8/2024, 5) Ian Berger, 6) Deborah Bliss (as of 6/2024), 7) Carmen D'Angelo, 8) Dana Freedenthal (as of 7/2024), 8) Courtney M. Williams, 9) Elaine Caccama (Chair through 7/2024).

City Liaison: Councilman Dwight Douglas (6-12/2024); Councilwoman Kathleen Talbot (1-5/2024)

Sustainability Coordinator: Emma Kaminski (Center for Economic and Environmental Partnership/CEEP)

ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

1) 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. An RFP was put out in September of 2024 and proposals received in October of 2024. The Eocene Environmental Group was awarded the contract on the recommendation of the Planning Department and CAC and the approval of the CC. As of December 2nd, the contract is in the process of being finalized and a Kick-off Call involving city staff and supporting CAC members is scheduled for the second week of December. The tree inventory will provide information for the planning, design, planting, maintenance, and removal of community trees. The primary goal is to increase the tree canopy in Peekskill, particularly in the downtown area, to mitigate climate change, reduce the heat island effect, and beautify the city streets and urban parks.

2) TREE CITY USA DESIGNATION – Third Year

In March 2023, the city was awarded Tree City USA designation by the Arbor Day Foundation, community forestry programs. In 2024, the work continued in order to maintain the Tree City USA designation by meeting the four core standards of sound urban forestry management by protecting our tree canopy according to the city's tree ordinance, maintaining a tree department, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban

forestry, and celebrating Arbor Day. Throughout the year, members of the CAC were engaged in decision-making about tree preservation on City-owned land. On November 12, 2024, members of the CAC met with Chris Gross of the DPW, Peter Erwin of the Planning Department, and Chappy Manzer, a private citizen who donates trees and labor to the city's treescape, to determine sites for the planting of forty trees in accordance with the third core standard of the designation.

3) CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITY (CSC) & CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING INSTITUTE (CAPI)

In accordance with Peekskill's Bronze status as a Climate Smart Community, and its goal of achieving Silver level status, the City Planner, Sustainability Coordinator, and CAC members, have been actively developing and implementing the GOCAP Government Organization Climate Action Plan. The City has participated in monthly CAPI and CAPI Adapt Cohort meetings, with the final two meetings being held on December 12, 2024 and January 16, 2025. Significant progress has been made, including presenting the Climate Action Plan to key stakeholders, conducting community outreach via a survey designed to engage members of the community most at-risk to climate change, presenting a draft plan to the City Council, and the adoption of the City of Peekskill Government Operations Climate Action Plan. The final step will be finalizing the Climate Action Plan Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Chapter and submitting it for adoption by the City Council. The Planning Department worked closely with CEEP Consultants, and the support of the CAC, to apply for an EPA Community Change Grant for projects outlined in the Government Operations Climate Action Plan. This grant would provide substantial resources for the City's emissions mitigation and weather disaster response preparedness. The application for the Community Change Grant was submitted in November and the City awaits notification of the award decision.

4) DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM (DWSP2)

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

5) CAC ADVISEMENT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

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

6) MARIE INSERRA ENVIRONMENTAL FILM SERIES

On March 26th, the CAC hosted a virtual environmental film event on the topic of deep sea mineral harvesting and sustainable use of water resources through the film, *Deep Rising*. The panel discussion focused on the current condition of the Hudson River through guest speakers from Scenic Hudson, the Hudson River Fishermens'

Association, and Clearwater. This event led to the City Council adopting the ***Resolution to Urge EPA to Adopt a Not Protective Determination in its Third Five-Year Review Concerning the Hudson River PCB Cleanup***, and the submission of a CAC email to the EPA in support of the same.

7) EXPANSION OF FOOD SCRAPS DROP OFF PROGRAM

In 2024, the CAC continued to partner with the city to raise awareness of the city's food scrap program. The CAC updated information about the program on the city's website to include the advantages of industrial composting over home composting, partnering with the city's PR firm to produce a video to inform the public of the program. The CAC also partnered with Peekskill100/CURE100 to offer tours of the CRP/SSM facility in Cortlandt to educate citizens about the composting process. From July through November, the CAC worked with the BID to advertise and offer a Downtown/Walk-up Farmers Market Drop-off site. On November 25th, members of the Common Council and the CAC met with the DPW and CRP to discuss establishing a permanent food scrap toter shelter to the left of the entrance to the DPW yard on Lower South Street. This facility will offer the city's residents an attractive, clean, 24/7 accessible location with new informational signage and appropriate oversight in the coming year.



8) TEACHER'S PARK ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION

Members of the CAC continue to work with the Westchester Land Trust and Hudson Highlands Land Trust to restore the acquired property at 1410 Crompond Road to a safe, accessible, panoramic green space that Peekskillians can enjoy. With the support of CEEP staff, grant options have been identified and will be sought out to provide the resources needed to restore this park.

9) CAC LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letters of Support	Organization	Date	Type of Letter
Grant for Planning			CAC provided letter of support
<i>Resolution to Urge EPA to Adopt a Not Protective Determination in its Third Five-Year Review Concerning the Hudson River PCB Cleanup</i>			CAC provided letter of support & City resolution was drafted on CAC request

10) Outreach, Training & Education

a. Outreach

Outreach Event	Location	Date	Notes
Parks Cleanup and Arbor Day Celebration - CAC Presentation and Tabling	Peekskill Riverfront	4/20/2024	CAC Chair presentation, Tree Planting, Con Edison Sapling Giveaway and CAC tabling
CAC Tabling for Earth Day	Peekskill High School Earth Day Celebration	4/22/2024	CAC attend PHS event
Food Scraps Presentation to the BID	Business Improvement District (BID) Meeting	4/2/2024	
NRI Discussion with High School	Peekskill High School – STEM class	5/20/2024	
CAPI Survey Outreach and Food Scraps Presentation	Business Improvement District (BID) Meeting Senior Center	5/22/2024 6/04/2024	
CAC Tabling for Food Scraps Education	Farmers Market	6/08/2024 6/15/2024 6/22/2024 6/29/2024 7/06/2024 7/13/2024 7/20/2024 7/27/2024	Tabled at the Farmers Market for 8 weekend in June and July to advocate and educate on the benefits and home collection to successfully do Food Scraps Recycling
CAC Liaison with Other City Committees	Various	Ongoing	CAC members regularly attended monthly meetings hosted by Parks Board, Planning Commission, BID and Senior Center/Nutrition

CAC and CURE100 Collaboration on Food Scraps		As of 5/2024	CAC and CURE100 collaborated on Food Scraps in the Farmers Market
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
DEC Awards Tree Luncheon	NYS DEC	3/28/2024	Kathie Talbot, Councilwoman and Elaine Caccoma, CAC Chair represented Peekskill at the awards and networking event at SUNY New Paltz.
CRP/SMM Tours of the Industrial Composting Facility	Peekskill100/CURE100	6/29/24 10/18/24	Jan Melillo, CAC Chair, Courtney Williams and Carmen D'Angelo, CAC Members, collaborated in planning and promoting the events, and attended.