

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

September 17, 2026

Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

Present: Skip Arthur, Kevin Freeman, Carole Furman, Mary O'Donnell, Stephen Shafer, Elizabeth Shafer, Mike Harkavy, Leslie Surprenant, and Bill Barr.

Approval of August 20, 2026 Minutes

Stephen had several comments about the previous meeting minutes.

Skip confirmed that he had not called for a moratorium; rather, he had written a letter to the editor criticizing the Village for calling for a moratorium. The letter represented his personal opinion and did not claim to represent any position taken by CAC. Kevin revised the language accordingly so that the minutes would state that Skip had written a letter criticizing the Village for calling for a moratorium.

Stephen then raised a numerical correction concerning a statistic attributed to Skip regarding the incidence of BESS fires. The previous minutes recorded a figure of 0.06 percent. Stephen said the correct figure was 0.6 percent. Bill clarified that this meant six-tenths of one percent. Skip said that 0.6 percent was what he had intended to say.

The minutes were approved as corrected.

CSTF

Resiliency Tool and Climate Vulnerability Assessment

Skip reported that he had contacted Lindsey for an update on the Climate Smart Communities resiliency tool and vulnerability assessment. Lindsey had been invited to attend the meeting but had not responded and was not present.

Skip noted that Linda was on vacation but was working with Evelyn from the Hudson Valley Regional Council on updating an earlier Climate Smart Communities action involving a greenhouse gas inventory for municipal government operations.

Mary clarified that this work concerned the greenhouse gas inventory for Town government facilities and operations, not the community-wide greenhouse gas inventory. She explained that there had been some confusion because the community inventory had been referenced several times in earlier discussions and even appeared incorrectly in a prior version of the minutes. Mary had participated in a Zoom meeting with Evelyn and Linda specifically to make sure that Evelyn understood that Saugerties already had a Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

Following that discussion, Mary understood that Linda and Evelyn would proceed with an updated inventory for Town government facilities. Members discussed the age of the previous government inventory and the need to update Climate Smart Communities actions whose certification periods were expiring. Carole said she would be willing to assist Linda and Evelyn because she had previously worked with Mary on the earlier inventory.

Bill reported that a countywide climate vulnerability workshop was scheduled for September 30. He explained that the workshop would bring together the results of municipal surveys conducted throughout Ulster County and consider what could be synthesized from those responses.

Get There Green Week

Mary reported on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's "Get There Green" scheduled for September 20–27.

Mary explained that DEC was encouraging communities and individuals to participate in a week of climate action by using more sustainable forms of transportation whenever possible. Examples included walking, bicycling, public transportation, carpooling, electric vehicles, or other alternatives to driving alone in a fossil-fuel-powered vehicle.

Mary had adapted the state material for Saugerties by adding information about the community's greenhouse gas emissions. She stated that transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Saugerties and cited approximately 137,673 metric tons from transportation. Carole added that transportation represented approximately 55 percent of Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Mary also incorporated information about the relationship between transportation choices, personal carbon footprints, public health, and air quality.

Mary asked the CAC to support posting a locally adapted Get There Green announcement on the Town website.

Carole moved that the CAC participate in the initiative and support posting the material. Elizabeth Shafer seconded the motion. Following discussion, the motion passed.

Battery Energy Storage System

The Commission discussed a recent public presentation on battery energy storage systems given by Greg Galluccio, who Skip Arthur described as having worked for Underwriters Laboratories for approximately 21 years.

Skip said Galluccio gave a strong explanation of how battery storage interacts with the electrical grid and used effective visual materials to explain grid operations. Skip emphasized that Galluccio had presented himself as neutral and had not spoken specifically for KCE or about the proposed Saugerties project. Instead, his presentation addressed how battery energy storage works generally.

Stephen thanked Melissa Everett for organizing the program and said she and her team deserved most of the credit for putting the event together. He described Galluccio as articulate.

Skip noted that Galluccio had indicated that he would be willing to give the presentation elsewhere and suggested that he could be a useful educational resource for future public discussions.

Mike highlighted Galluccio's discussion of peaker power plants. He said the presentation described peaker plants as facilities that operate relatively few days per year but are maintained so that they can be used during periods of very high electrical demand or potential grid shortages. Mike argued that the CAC should pay attention to both the pollution and cost associated with maintaining peaker plants that may operate only intermittently.

Skip said he had spoken with a person who had worked at the Danskammer plant and had been told that it could take approximately 18 hours to bring such a plant online. Skip emphasized that this was information from one individual rather than a verified figure and said the CAC should investigate it further. Carole agreed that the startup issue warranted additional factual investigation because a long startup period would require operators to anticipate peak demand well in advance. Mike also recalled Galluccio raising the possibility of new nuclear generation as an alternative source of electricity and asking attendees whether they would prefer a nuclear plant in Saugerties to a BESS installation. Mike said no one at the presentation raised a hand. He also recalled discussion about the cost and lengthy development periods associated with new nuclear plants.

Bill reported on comments made during the previous night's Town Board meeting. He said several members of the public spoke against BESS and that some comments included claims he considered inaccurate, including assertions that there was no energy shortage and that households could meet all their power needs simply by installing individual solar panels.

Bill said Stephen and Nicole Roskos subsequently spoke and responded to several of the claims made by BESS opponents. He said Nicole had attended the recent educational workshop and referred to information from that event.

Bill said he welcomed the additional factual discussion because members of the public attending Town Board meetings could otherwise receive the impression that opposition to BESS was universal. He also expressed concern about Town Board public-comment sessions being used to circulate misinformation.

Bill discussed a conversation with Jeff Seidman about fire risks involving internal-combustion vehicles and electric vehicles. Bill said Seidman had cited data suggesting that internal-combustion vehicles were substantially more likely to catch fire than electric vehicles when measured on a per-mile-driven basis.

Skip recalled that Galluccio had also presented vehicle-fire statistics in the form of a quiz comparing hybrid, gasoline, and fully electric vehicles. Skip remembered Galluccio presenting hybrids as having the highest fire incidence, gasoline vehicles next, and fully electric vehicles the lowest on the basis being discussed.

Skip discussed a letter by an Orange County hazardous-materials official who had experience responding to a BESS fire in Warwick. Skip described the letter as an important public-education document and said he had contacted Hudson Valley One to explore whether it could be circulated more broadly.

Stephen suggested placing the letter on the Town's BESS information webpage. Skip and Bill supported that idea.

Bill suggested that a short introduction could explain the author's professional background and experience responding to the Warwick BESS incident. Members recalled the author saying that, based on his experience, he considered responding to a BESS fire less hazardous than responding to some conventional structural fires.

Mike suggested contacting the author directly about submitting the piece to Hudson Valley One. Skip agreed that this was a possibility, although he wanted first to hear whether the newspaper would republish something that had already appeared elsewhere.

Carole raised concerns she had heard from Mike Tiano, a Planning Board member and firefighter. She said some of his questions appeared to reflect concern about whether local fire departments were adequately equipped and trained for a BESS incident.

Carole said that firefighter-to-firefighter communication could be useful because concerns about specialized equipment, protective suits, hazardous materials, and other emergency-response issues might be better addressed by firefighters with direct experience.

Skip responded that Mike Ivino had spoken publicly and strongly about local preparedness and had said that local firefighters were prepared. Skip also cited Randy Ricks as another fire-service representative who had publicly expressed confidence in local preparedness. Skip said both had issued statements and that firefighters had offered opportunities for people to attend meetings and ask questions.

Bill said he had traveled with Mike Tiano and Randy Ricks to Buffalo to look at a BESS installation.

DEC Landfill Leachate Rulemaking

Skip raised a New York State DEC rulemaking issue involving landfill leachate.

He said the rule under consideration appeared to exempt closed landfills from some requirements. Riverkeeper and Riverwatch had objected to such an exemption. Skip had previously circulated information on the issue.

The matter had subsequently been taken up by Town Supervisor Fred Costello and the Town Board. Skip said Fred had sent a letter to DEC objecting to the exclusion of closed landfills and arguing that the state should provide funding for costs imposed on municipalities because many towns could not afford major remediation or compliance costs on their own.

Skip proposed that the CAC formally commend Fred Costello and the Town Board for taking the position.

Carole moved that the CAC do so.

Skip asked whether the members agreed that Fred Costello, the Town Board, and Bill should be commended for the Town's response. Members expressed agreement.

Environmental Management Council Report

Carole reported on the annual Environmental Management Council meeting in Rosendale. She said representatives from several municipalities gave presentations about their environmental programs. The presentation she found most interesting came from Woodstock and involved a stream study, apparently concerning the Saw Kill. The project examined stream stability, erosion, water quality, and related conditions. Carole suggested that a similar type of analysis could potentially be useful for streams in Saugerties.

Stephen asked whether Carole had presented on the pollinator meadow. Carole clarified that her presentation had concerned the Community Climate Action Plan. She said attendees were interested in Saugerties' work and that she focused particularly on transportation.

Mary asked whether Carole had mentioned a \$100,000 grant received by the Town to acquire two all-electric vehicles. Carole thought it might have appeared on a presentation slide or in material she submitted but did not believe she had emphasized it verbally.

Planning Board Report

Carole reported that the Planning Board had several active matters, although not all were directly related to the CAC.

Carole described a proposal associated with Baldor Specialty Foods involving a site near Route 32 and Malden Turnpike. The proposal involved tractor-trailers arriving during approximately 3:00–6:00 a.m., transferring products for distribution among approximately 30 smaller trucks serving restaurants.

Carole said neighboring residents had raised concerns about early-morning noise.

The review provided an opportunity to learn more about sound analysis and mitigation. Carole discussed broadband or alternative backup alarms that create a less penetrating sound than conventional backup alarms. She said the experience made her think more closely about how sound impacts associated with a BESS installation might be evaluated.

Carole reported that KCE had continued providing additional technical information concerning its BESS proposal. She said the Town had hired a company called Code Red to review the technical information with expertise beyond that of the Town's regular consultants.

Skip asked for clarification about who had retained the firm because he considered the question of independence important. Carole confirmed that the Town, rather than KCE, had hired the consultant.

Bill added that KCE would ultimately be responsible for paying the consulting cost. Skip said it was important to make the arrangement clear so that members of the public did not incorrectly conclude that KCE itself had selected and hired the reviewer.

Carole also described a proposed contractor-storage development on Kings Highway South. The proposal involved approximately six buildings arranged to provide contractors with combinations of office and storage space. She mentioned the project as another Planning Board matter of potential general interest.

Pollinator Meadow

Leslie reported that the pollinator meadow required substantial attention, particularly because of a serious Mugwort infestation.

Leslie said she had not been able to work extensively on the meadow during the year and that Mugwort was approaching seed production. She also said an area that had been covered with a large tarp needed to be uncovered and reseeded.

Leslie emphasized that Mugwort is exceptionally difficult to control. Cutting can stimulate spreading, and digging can also encourage regrowth because pieces of the root system remain in the soil.

The group discussed scheduling work at the meadow. September 24 was discussed and agreed upon, with 10:00 a.m. emerging as the preferred starting time. Skip and Leslie agreed that the immediate challenge was both cutting the Mugwort and finding a practical way to contain and dispose of the large volume of vegetation.

Tree Ordinance

Skip reported that Nicole could not attend the meeting but was organizing a Zoom meeting concerning the draft tree ordinance.

The proposed discussion would hopefully include Leeanne, Sean Weaver, Adriana, relevant Town department representatives, and others who could help determine how the draft ordinance could be integrated with existing Town law and what revisions might make it more workable.

Skip explained that earlier comments from Sean and Adriana had not rejected the tree-preservation concept but had identified potential conflicts or overlaps with existing Town law. The ordinance therefore needed to be examined both from a technical/legal standpoint and from the standpoint of eventual public acceptance.

Mary said representatives of the Planning Board should be included because tree-preservation requirements would affect Planning Board reviews. Because Adriana had suggested that tree preservation might be more appropriately incorporated into the Zoning Law rather than enacted as a separate ordinance, Mary also suggested involving a representative of the Zoning Board.

Announcements

Repair Café

Skip announced, on Linda's behalf, that the next Repair Café would be held October 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Senior Center. He described it as a consistently popular community event.

SolarAPP+ Permitting Platform

Mary reported receiving information from former task-force member Steve Wehr about SolarAPP+, a web-based platform intended to streamline permitting residential solar installations.

Mary explained that the platform would primarily affect the work of the Building Department by automating and standardizing parts of the solar-permitting process. She said the organization offering the platform was nonprofit and that there would be no cost to the Town to implement it.

Mary originally considered proposing that the CAC ask the Town to investigate SolarAPP+. However, after speaking with Sean, she learned that the Town was already examining the platform and was interested in it. Therefore, she presented the information principally as an update rather than asking for a new CAC recommendation.

Mary said the platform appeared particularly relevant to rooftop solar and smaller ground-mounted systems on individual properties rather than large utility-scale solar fields.

Balcony Solar Act

Stephen raised the pending New York State Balcony Solar Act. He said he and Elizabeth had been considering whether the CAC could prepare a letter for the Town Board asking the Governor to sign the legislation.

Bill supported the idea. He noted that the Town had previously joined another municipality in signing a related communication, although he did not believe the previous letter had gone directly to the Governor.

Stephen and Elizabeth indicated they would work on draft language.

Mary suggested that the CAC might also contact the local State Senator and Assemblymember to determine whether they could assist in encouraging action on the legislation.

The CAC left the matter with the understanding that the procedural status of the legislation should be clarified and that outreach regarding the bill would continue.

Adjournment

Carole moved to adjourn. Elizabeth seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote at 6:40

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary