

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

May 21, 2026

Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

Present: Skip Arthur, Carole Furman, Stephen Shafer, Ken Goldberg, Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Mike Harkavy, Leslie Surprenant, Bill Barr, Anna Herrod-McGrew, Evelyn LaFerriere, Kathleen Gray, Nicole Roskos, Stephanie Bassler, and unidentified Zoom attendees 'CLAUDIA's iPad (2)' and 'Martino B'

Approval of April 16, 2026 Minutes

The motion passed.

Guests Welcome

Skip Arthur introduced two guests who were attending to help the CAC with Climate Smart Communities and resiliency work. Evelyn Laferriere, from the Hudson Valley Regional Council, was introduced as someone who would assist with Climate Smart Communities work and related documentation. Anna Herod-McGrew, from Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County, was introduced as someone who would help with resiliency planning, the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool, and a Vulnerability Assessment.

CSTF

Anna Herod-McGrew gave a detailed overview of the project Cornell Cooperative Extension is funded to carry out. She explained that CCE has funding through the Hudson River Estuary Program to work with five communities in Ulster County, as well as Ulster County itself, to update the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Tool or complete a new one for communities that have not done it before. That work would then be rolled into a vulnerability assessment. She added that CCE is also working with communities in Dutchess County and with educators from several extension offices to maximize the value of the work.

Anna stated that the project is funded for the current year and would be completed by December 2026. She explained that Saugerties had completed the planning tool with Extension in 2019, so the current work would be an update rather than a full new process. Updating the tool would be useful because it needs to be refreshed every five years, and because the earlier 2019 work gives the town a strong basis to build from. She said the update would be worth six Climate Smart Communities points and is also a priority action. Beyond the points, she described the update as a valuable way for the town to look back at what it has accomplished since 2019 and identify future steps.

Anna explained that the planning tool update would ideally be completed in one large meeting with municipal officials. She specifically mentioned the town supervisor, planning, zoning, and highway departments as the kind of people who would need to answer questions about plans, resiliency efforts, zoning code, and related municipal practices. She said CCE tries to complete that in one two-hour meeting, though scheduling such a meeting can be difficult.

At the same time, CCE would prepare for the Vulnerability Assessment by distributing a public survey about perceived vulnerabilities in Saugerties. CCE educators would also collect background data, including maps, historic storm data, and other information that speaks to established or measurable vulnerabilities in the town. Anna emphasized that the survey and the data collection are complementary. The survey captures residents' perceptions of climate risks, while the background data captures measurable risk. Together, the two sources provide a fuller picture of climate vulnerability in Saugerties.

Anna said the goal would be to complete the planning tool update by early summer, assuming the municipal meeting can be scheduled. The public survey would be distributed over the summer. By August or early September, CCE would then look to schedule a vulnerability workshop or community gathering. That workshop would involve stakeholders identified by the CAC or others in the town who have strong institutional knowledge of Saugerties. Participants would review maps, county-level data, and municipal-level information and would map out vulnerabilities and important community assets. The meeting would include all participating Ulster County communities, allowing them to compare challenges, accomplishments, and vulnerabilities. It would begin at the county level and then move into breakout groups where each community would take a deeper dive into its own vulnerabilities.

Anna explained that the planning tool, vulnerability workshop results, and survey results would be compiled into a final report by December. She framed the process as three steps: first, updating the planning tool; second, conducting the vulnerability assessment; and third, eventually using that work to develop adaptation strategies and a full climate adaptation plan. The current year's work would complete the first two steps and potentially set the town up for future funding or for CCE to complete adaptation plans next year if funding is available.

Anna noted that this work would produce a "tremendous number of points." She said that while points are not the main purpose, they are a useful benefit. She said the planning tool update is worth six points, and the vulnerability assessment could be worth as many as sixteen points if it covers all climate hazards rather than only one hazard such as flooding. She added that a future Climate Adaptation Plan would be worth another sixteen points, and that the Vulnerability Assessment would complete roughly two-thirds of the groundwork for such a plan.

Skip asked Anna what role the CAC would play if CCE is doing much of the coordination, data gathering, survey work, and report writing. Anna said CCE's goal is to minimize the burden on volunteers, but that the CAC's assistance would still be important. The first major need would be connecting CCE with town officials who should participate in the planning tool update meeting.

Anna said that when CCE reaches out from the outside, municipal officials often ignore or miss the request, so it is much more effective when a local committee member helps make the connection. Having a CAC member present at the meeting would also be helpful, though not always required.

The second major role for the CAC would be to help distribute the public survey. Anna said CCE could provide flyers with QR codes, printed flyers, or printed surveys, but the CAC would know the best locations and channels for distribution to get a strong response. She emphasized that a healthy response would help ensure that the survey reflects residents' actual perceptions of climate hazards and risk.

The third major role would be identifying people to attend the vulnerability workshop. Anna said the workshop should include people who know the town well, such as business leaders, task force members, long-time residents, and people who understand both hazards and community assets. She said that in the past, CCE has sometimes struggled to get people to attend vulnerability assessment meetings, so the CAC's buy-in and outreach would matter. She suggested that ten knowledgeable residents would be a good minimum and more would be better.

Mary said she had participated in a similar process in 2019 and asked whether the CAC involvement would be similar this time. Anna said the planning tool update would be similar but less time-consuming because the first version already exists. The vulnerability assessment would require more involvement, mainly around survey distribution and participation in a half-day workshop.

Carole asked where the group could see the 2019 resiliency report, remembering that CCE had done it and that the person involved may have been Melinda. Anna confirmed that it was Melinda and said she might be able to track down the report and use its results to inform the new workshop.

Evelyn Laferriere then explained her role. She said her full job title at Hudson Valley Regional Council is Clean Energy Communities and Climate Smart Communities Coordinator where she can assist with both NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities Program and the DEC's Climate Smart Communities Program. She noted that the Clean Energy Communities Program is expected to reopen at some point soon and said she would let the group know when it does.

Evelyn said she can help the town map out which Climate Smart Communities actions it wants to pursue and develop a timeline. She noted that Saugerties' current bronze certification expires in September 2029, so the town has time to think strategically about next steps. Some actions have a longer look-back period and could be started now because their documentation will remain valid for five or ten years. Other actions should wait until closer to recertification. Evelyn said she can review documentation, make sure the town has what DEC wants to see in the application, help gather data, and help the group understand the DEC process.

She also described a partnership with Ulster County and the Ulster County Department of the Environment called Ulster County META, or Municipal Energy Technical Assistance. Through this program, Evelyn can provide more hands-on assistance with energy-related projects. She said this could include Climate Smart applications, planning documents, clean energy projects, weatherization, energy efficiency, solar, EV charging stations, grant funding, grant applications, and project management support. Because Ulster County is funding this extra assistance, Evelyn said she can provide more help to Ulster County communities than she can to communities outside the county.

Mary said the connection between Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities was very useful, especially because Saugerties has been working on a Community Climate Action Plan. Mary said the town will likely have many clean energy initiatives it wants to begin as it implements the plan. Evelyn said the action plan can be used to map priorities, determine which projects to pursue first, and identify funding opportunities that allow the town to accomplish worthwhile projects without spending too much money.

Carole connected the discussion to strategic planning and said the town needs to figure out what steps are needed to get to 2030, after which the census could help inform later work. She raised the example of the Town of Hurley's natural resource inventory. She said Hurley had taken well data and used it to help determine where development should or should not happen. Carole asked whether Evelyn and Anna could help Saugerties accomplish something similar, because it would be useful to the planning board.

Evelyn said other communities have worked with the Hudson River Estuary Program on natural resource inventories and that DEC has many resources. She said between Hudson Valley Regional Council and CCE, there may be ways to support that work. She also mentioned that the Capital District Regional Planning Commission was putting on a webinar about an NRI tool, and that once she had more information, the group could consider whether that tool might be useful for Saugerties.

Anna added that the timing of Carole's comment was good because she had spoken earlier that day with Brendan and Misha from the Ulster County Department of the Environment, who said many towns are interested in natural resource inventories. She said there may be an opportunity to bring in a speaker at an EMC roundtable to discuss the NRI tool.

Kathleen Gray raised a concern about measuring progress on greenhouse gas emissions given that more than 30,000 people have relocated to the Hudson Valley over the last three years, according to the Mid-Hudson Regional Council. She asked how population growth should be factored into emissions progress. Kathleen also noted that Saugerties' existing natural resource inventory is old and needs updating. Mary identified the date of the previous NRI as 2010.

Evelyn responded that the group could think about greenhouse gas emissions in different categories, such as government operations separately from community-wide emissions. She said

population change could be accounted for by looking at emissions on a per-capita basis, allowing for a more apples-to-apples comparison. Anna added that climate migration itself has come up in vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning. She said there is not yet a tremendous amount of data or many solutions around climate migration to the Northeast, but the region is often identified as relatively safe and climate migration has become part of the discussion.

Stephen then raised electric vehicles as a measurable element from the Community Climate Action Plan. He said the group could study the number of new charging stations and possibly use DMV vehicle registration data to identify how many electric, hybrid, and other types of vehicles are registered in Saugerties. Evelyn said she has used the state tool for registered vehicles in other communities and could help with that. She also noted that the Climate Smart Communities program includes municipal fleet inventory actions, tracking town-owned vehicles and the percentage that are electric, as well as actions related to EV charging stations. These could be used both to track progress and gain Climate Smart points.

Skip then asked whether there is capacity or funding to help the town implement the Community Climate Action Plan. He explained that the plan charges the town with designating an individual to organize implementation. Because Saugerties has limited capacity, he asked whether there is a program that can provide actual involvement, not just guidance, similar to how CCE is funded to help with the PE7 actions.

Evelyn said that in her own role she can provide guidance and limited involvement. She also said there are grant programs that could support internship positions, onsite energy managers, or staff capacity for energy-related actions. She mentioned that there may be NYSERDA-related grants that fund someone to help with implementation, and she offered to research specific examples.

Skip explained that his question came from a conversation with Stephanie Bassler about whether the Community Climate Action Plan would be passed by the Town Board. One concern was that the town is already stretched for personnel and might be reluctant to approve a plan if implementation requires staff capacity it does not have. He asked Anna whether CCE has any program that could help towns implement a CCAP. Anna said CCE's funding is usually specific and annual, so it is restricted in what it can do, though CCE does take feedback on what towns need and may be able to shape future work accordingly. For now, she said the best route would likely be grant funding.

Mary said implementation support should be a top priority because Saugerties does not have a town administrator, a staff person, or a conservation department. She said it would be deeply disappointing if the town were unable to approve the plan because there was no one to lead its implementation. Mary recalled that when the town CAC first began working on the Clean Energy Communities Program, Climate Smart Communities, Solarize Saugerties, and the Government Operations Climate Action Plan, there had been a staff person who worked with the CAC, and that support made a major difference. Evelyn said she would research grants related to

hiring someone for grant writing or administrative support and would keep this as a main priority.

The meeting then transitioned directly into the Community Climate Action Plan. Skip asked Evelyn whether she knew the process for town adoption. Specifically, he asked whether the plan required a public hearing, whether it was enough for the Town Board to pass a resolution, or whether other steps were required. Evelyn said that based on other communities, public meetings and education/outreach are common and useful, and Saugerties had already done outreach as part of the plan. As far as she knew, after a plan is passed by Town Board resolution, it needs to be made public and accessible, such as on the town website or in hard copy at the library. She said she would double-check but did not believe a separate public hearing was required beyond whatever the town's ordinary policies require for passing a resolution.

Skip said the Community Climate Action Plan was essentially complete. Evelyn had reviewed it and said it looked good and should pass muster for Climate Smart Communities approval. The next step would be to present it to the Town Board and make it public. Skip then summarized comments from Stephanie Bassler, who had joined later and whose comments had been attached to the minutes. Stephanie had raised questions about sharper metrics, more clearly defined initiatives, whether a public hearing was necessary, how implementation could be financially supported, and whether the plan's goals were aspirational rather than mandatory.

Skip asked Evelyn whether anything in the plan needed revision to make clear that the goals were aspirational and not mandates. Evelyn said she had not seen anything that made the plan seem mandatory, especially because the plan uses the language of ~~goals~~ aims. She compared it to a comprehensive plan: a document that identifies goals and direction but can be updated. She suggested that if the group wanted to make the point explicit, it could add language in the introduction saying the plan contains aspirational goals for the town and is intended to shape future steps rather than create mandatory reporting requirements.

Mary added that the group had discussed the word "goals" at length and that the plan often uses language such as "aim" rather than "goal," especially around greenhouse gas reductions and transportation. Mary agreed that putting aspirational language up front could be helpful. She then asked whether the plan could be approved now in its broader form and later become more granular during implementation. Evelyn said that made sense. She said Climate Smart Communities only requires at least one clear community goal, and the Saugerties plan contains many. More detailed steps, timelines, or appendices could be added later if the town wanted, and plan updates could themselves potentially be submitted as separate Climate Smart actions.

Skip then raised Stephanie Bassler's remaining concern: the plan says the town will designate a person to work with the CAC on implementation, but the duties of that person are not specific. Stephanie had expressed concern that the town might hesitate to sign onto an open-ended commitment without knowing what the designee's role would involve.

Mary asked whether the role should be described more specifically. Evelyn said she would need to look at examples from other communities, but many plans do not designate one specific person. Often, the local government generally commits to working on the plan, sometimes through a team effort involving the Climate Smart Task Force, CAC, town board, staff, or volunteers. Evelyn said the plan could state that once implementation begins, the CAC will work with the town board to determine responsibilities. She did not believe a specific job description was required for Climate Smart purposes, unless the Town Board itself wanted that level of specificity.

Carole explained that the language had been included because the CAC does not have anyone who can dedicate enough time to implementation. The group wanted someone to interface between the CAC and the Town Board and help move the plan forward. Mike noted that the town used to have a special projects coordinator and said this work is clearly a special project. He suggested that the CAC should at least advise the Town Board that implementation might require a paid position, perhaps not full time but enough to move the project along.

Carole and Mary identified Vernon Benjamin as the former Special Projects Coordinator. Mary emphasized that replacing such a role would not necessarily be a new hire, but rather filling a type of position the town used to have. Bill said that, speaking personally, he and Stephanie both feel the town needs such a position and that it would likely pay for itself. Kathleen said Vernon had been more involved in starting larger projects, while she had later taken on administration and grant work. She said she had suggested to Fred that hiring a staff person with benefits would be worthwhile because independent grant writers are expensive and because a staff person could learn the town's operations and administer grants more effectively. Kathleen noted that the town currently has five or six open grants, and grant administration is intense.

Mary said the group did not need to resolve the staffing question immediately. Carole said she wanted the Community Climate Action Plan adopted by the town and did not want adoption to be contingent on resolving staffing. Bill clarified that he did not mean adoption should be contingent on staffing; rather, full implementation might be contingent on staff or grant capacity. Mary noted that a volunteer might come forward, as Patty Kelly had previously done extensive volunteer work on the government facilities inventory.

Skip suggested speaking with Stephanie further on the matter Bill said he was inclined to recommend presenting the plan to the Town Board, but he would speak with Stephanie and get back to Skip. Mary asked again whether the sticking point was the job description or scope of work for the town designee. Evelyn reiterated that most communities keep such language general and that many towns and villages lack a designated sustainability or environmental staff person. Climate Smart work often proceeds through a team effort among volunteers, committees, boards, and staff.

Mike then asked whether the issue should stop the CAC from moving the plan forward to the Town Board. The group agreed it should not.

Skip asked whether a vote was needed to move the Community Climate Action Plan forward.

Skip then asked whether any advice was needed in putting the plan forward to the Town Board. Mary and Evelyn noted that there is a resolution template. Evelyn said she could send examples from other towns, and that once the Town Board is ready to vote, a resolution should be ready for them. Bill said he would support the process however he could, including the resolution.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Conversation

Skip said the CAC had been considering an overview of BESS, including its function, its ecological advantages, its role in the grid, and safety issues. Stephen had been taking a deeper dive into safety because safety appears to be the number one concern. Skip summarized Stephen's findings by saying that while descriptions of BESS fires can be horrific, the actual incidence and implications of such fires may not be as frightening as they first appear. However, Stephen was still investigating and reviewing information.

Skip also said Mike had been looking at the broader need for energy on the grid and the transition to renewable energy. He noted that Governor Hochul has recently suggested nuclear power plants, and Mike was examining whether there is any relationship or tradeoff between BESS and nuclear power. Skip also said there is information from Texas and California showing successful use of BESS, and the CAC should gather more environmental information about those systems while Stephen continues his safety review.

Stephen said Skip had summarized the status well. He said more work remains and could be accomplished over the next couple of weeks. He hoped that within a month the group could have a document ready to present to the Town Board and the public, recognizing that no document is ever truly finished. The document would address safety issues, including the probability and consequences of fires.

Bill said he had received documents about objections and environmental concerns related to BESS, possibly forwarded to the Planning Board. Skip and Stephen agreed that he should send those to Stephen, who is serving as the main researcher on the topic. Carole noted that much of the information coming from the public is also being forwarded to George Redder, the town's attorney, so the town may receive legal guidance on how to respond to some concerns.

Skip then clarified the CAC's role in relation to the SEQRA process. He said the Planning Board will determine if a SEQRA review is needed, and it is not the CAC's job to decide whether there should be a positive or negative declaration. The CAC's role would be to comment when there is an opportunity for public comment. Skip explained that the process appears to be between Part 2 and Part 3 of the EFA (environmental assessment). If the Planning Board appears to be moving toward a negative declaration, there would be a public hearing or opportunity for comment on that possibility. If the Planning Board issues a positive declaration, there does not need to be a hearing at that point because the process moves into scoping, which has its own public hearing process.

Planning Board Discussion

Carole said that for the KCE site, which is the BESS location, two town members went out with representatives connected to KCE to walk the site. The visit related to the site review process and partly the question of whether six-inch diameter trees on the site need to be included on the plans. Carole said the site has many very young trees and that, in this case, the six-inch diameter standard may not be a critical factor, especially because the town does not yet have an arborist or finalized tree ordinance guidance. Carole said the land appears to have been cleared at some point, and much of the possible BESS location is already cleared or has remained relatively open. The outlying areas have scrubby young trees.

Carole then moved to the solar project, making clear that the BESS and solar projects are separate and not dependent on each other, but the substation's location is part of why the site is attractive for both BESS and solar. Carole said the solar project is located behind or between I-87 and the substation, with solar proposed on a flatter area near the top of a slope. She said the plans can be reviewed at the town Building Department.

Stephanie asked Carole about whether there had been discussion of a combined environmental review for the solar and battery sites because they are on property owned by the same entity. Carole said there had been discussion between the two parties about potentially using the same trench or different trenches for transmission or connection lines if both projects are approved, but the projects are being evaluated separately. Stephanie clarified that she wanted to know whether the environmental impacts were being reviewed separately. Bill emphasized that the proper term is "evaluating" rather than "approving," because the Planning Board is reviewing impacts, not simply approving projects.

EMC

Carole said she had sent the group the Town of Hurley's Natural Resource Inventory. She described the Hurley NRI as an impressive and useful set of plans that the Planning Board can use. She said the water resources section stood out and that she would like Saugerties to do more work on water resource inventory, especially to inform development issues around Winston Farm.

Tree Ordinance

Nicole Roskos reported that she, Leslie, and Mary had met on Tuesday to revise the ordinance, particularly around forested and non-forested land definitions.

Nicole said the working group had taken the definition of forested land from the U.S. Forest Service and modified it slightly for Saugerties. The proposed definition was land area covering more than one acre, with trees higher than sixteen feet and canopy cover of more than ten

percent. The only substantive change from the source definition was reducing 1.2 acres to one acre for simplicity.

Nicole then explained the application requirement. Her understanding was that an application would be required to clear-cut or selectively cut trees on forested land greater than one acre. Mary asked whether it should be both an application and a permit. Nicole said she had thought the group had agreed to remove the word “permit” and use the application itself as a sort of approval document. Leslie said she thought it was an application and approval process, where the application would be stamped approved or unapproved by the town. Mary clarified that her understanding was different: for forested land greater than one acre, there should be both an application and a permit; for less than one acre, she believed an application might still be needed to track cutting.

Nicole said she had understood that no application or permit would be needed for cutting less than one acre of forested land. Mary explained her concern: if someone owns five acres and can clear less than one acre without any application or tracking, they could clear one acre repeatedly over time until the forest is gone. An application requirement, even for smaller cuts, would allow the town to track cumulative clearing. Leslie reviewed the group’s notes and said the Tuesday meeting had ended with no application or permit required for clear-cutting or selective cutting on less than one acre, except for specimen and heritage trees.

Nicole then read the proposed definition of non-forested land as land area covering less than one acre with canopy cover of less than ten percent. On non-forested land, her understanding was that no permit or application would be needed unless a heritage tree or specimen tree was involved. She said most small-acreage property owners would not need to apply to cut trees, unless the tree was heritage or specimen.

Carole asked how canopy cover is measured. Leslie said she was not entirely sure but described it as the amount of forest floor covered by tree canopy, with more than one in ten square feet shaded corresponding to more than ten percent canopy. Carole said the one-acre threshold seemed helpful because it addresses the need to protect forested lands.

Mary then returned to the issue of how the new definitions would fit with the original idea that on non-forested land, trees that are not heritage or specimen trees and are less than eighteen inches in diameter could be cut without application. Nicole explained that the eighteen-inch threshold is part of the specimen tree definition; a specimen tree is defined as over eighteen inches in diameter. Heritage trees are different because they may be culturally or community significant even if they are not eighteen inches in diameter.

Ken said the terms “forested” and “non-forested” sound like opposites, and ordinarily “non-forested” would mean everything that is not forested. If there is a third category, such as wooded

land, the term could be misleading. Mary said she had seen a category called “wooded land” in her research but had not wanted to complicate the discussion. Nicole noted that her own property is less than one acre and partly wooded, but under the proposed definition it would be considered non-forested. Ken reiterated that the term “non-forested” could confuse people because it sounds comprehensive.

Nicole noted that the ordinance already includes seasonality protections because trees cannot be cut during certain periods due to bats and other endangered species. Stephanie then raised broader legal and zoning questions. She asked what the review criteria would be once a permit application is submitted for a forested property. She wanted to know what objective standards would determine whether a permit is approved or denied. Nicole said the draft ordinance creates a tree committee, including an arborist, that would review applications and, in some cases, visit the property. The committee might approve, deny, or recommend saving certain specimen trees. Stephanie said that in her experience, specificity in review criteria is very important in zoning regulations because property owners need to understand the objective process.

Stephanie also said that if a property owner has vacant land and wants to build a house in a certain location, the ordinance should include some consideration of the property owner’s development plan and some latitude around where development can occur. She warned that a tree ordinance cannot constrain development excessively and that the tree committee will need to navigate the relationship between the resolution or ordinance and zoning law. She asked whether the Town Board, as the adopting body, could hear from the committee sooner rather than later so that the conversation is productive and does not happen only at the end of the drafting process.

Leslie said the plan was to get preliminary feedback from one or two Town Board members before sending the ordinance to the full Town Board. She specifically mentioned getting an overview from Leeanne, who has experience with prior resolutions such as wetlands. Stephanie emphasized that because the proposal concerns land use, it will likely need to relate to or become part of the zoning code. She also asked whether the draft had been reviewed relative to DEC regulations about land clearing, including seasonal restrictions triggered by certain areas of clearing.

The group closed the tree ordinance discussion with Nicole agreeing to revise the language to reflect the discussion. The direction was to focus on forested land versus all other land, clarify the greater-than-one-acre permit or fee requirement, preserve the heritage and specimen tree protections, send the revised draft to Skip, and then forward it to Leeanne for review.

Town Liaison

Bill said he and Stephanie had attended a conference at Pace University connected to the Housing Action Council and Land Use Law Center.

Bill then discussed the Drinking Water Source Protection Plan. He explained that the town has access to technical assistance through a statewide program co-led by DEC to help municipalities drinking water source protection plan. It can help the community create a stakeholder group, finalize a drinking water source protection assessment, develop goals and a vision statement, and identify actionable steps to protect drinking water sources now and in the future.

And others clarified that the plan would need to involve the village because the village is the source of much of the drinking water. Carole said the village may even need to have the lead role because it is responsible for the drinking water source. Linda asked whether there would be overlap between this work and the work she would be doing with Evelyn Laferriere. Skip and others agreed there likely would be overlap, and Linda said she could ask Evelyn about it.

Linda also noted that there are drinking water sources other than the village. Bill clarified that the Drinking Water Source Protection Plan applies only to active drinking water sources, not possible future sources such as the aquifer under Winston Farm. Carole said that had been a disappointment because some people initially thought the program could provide information about possible sources. Still, the group thought there may be synergy between this program and the broader water protection work that Anna and Evelyn may help with.

Bill then raised the Community Preservation Act, which he had learned more about at a Catskill Mountainkeeper workshop. He said it may sound as though preservation conflicts with the need for housing, but the workshop was about conservation and housing together. He explained that the Community Preservation Act was approved in 2007, and Ulster County joined through a home rule request in 2019. Under the Act, a community such as Saugerties would have to opt in, identify lands it wants to preserve, hold hearings on a community preservation project plan, and then hold a referendum.

Skip said the CAC had discussed this before. He explained that each community has develops its own plan and that the process is extremely involved. Marbletown had done it, and Skip had previously circulated information about it. The funding mechanism involves a tax on certain real estate sales over a particular amount, with the money placed in a fund later used to buy preserved land or development rights. Skip emphasized that the community would need to initially identify a roster of lands to be considered for preservation and, demonstrated by Marbletown's efforts, the entire process could take up to a dozen people and possibly several years to be up and running. It would require a very committed group.

Kathleen noted that the program is not only about buying property outright; in some cases, the community can buy development rights and place a conservation easement on the land. Skip said the program is a strong tool if there are enough dedicated people to pursue it, but it is a large undertaking.

Announcements

Kathleen alerted the group to the New York State Septic System Replacement Fund. She explained that it provides grants for eligible septic system projects, including replacing cesspools with septic systems, installing, replacing, or upgrading septic systems or components, and installing enhanced septic systems, including advanced nitrogen removal systems. Ulster County has been identified as eligible for these grants because of water bodies including the Hudson River and Esopus Creek.

Kathleen said the grants can cover fifty percent of eligible costs, or seventy-five percent of eligible costs up to \$25,000 for enhanced septic system projects. Applications go through the County, and she said homeowners should contact Dennis Doyle. She suggested posting the information on the Saugerties Climate Smart website so people can take advantage of it, especially homeowners along eligible waterways such as the Esopus Creek and Hudson River.

Linda announced that the Repair Café is coming up on June 6 and is entering its third year. It will be held at the Senior Center. She said they could still use more ushers because some volunteers are occasionally unavailable. The café is open from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., while volunteers arrive at 9:00 a.m. to reset the room, move tables and chairs, and prepare.

Adjournment

The motion carried at 7:12 p.m.

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary