

Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission

November 20, 2025

Zoom Video Conferencing

MINUTES

Present: Skip Arthur, Carole Furman, Stephen Shafer, Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Mike Harkavy, Linda Armour, Ken Goldberg, Bill Barr

Approval of October 16, 2025 Minutes

Stephen corrected the spelling of Gaetana Ciarlante's name. The minutes were then accepted.

CCAP Report

Skip asked what the committee's next steps on the CCAP would be in light of what appeared to be a sense that state-level ambition was shifting, and the CAC needed to decide what to do with its own targets and commitments. Mary reminded everyone that earlier CAC reductions had been modeled on aligning with New York State's goals, such as the 30% by 2030 reductions, but she had recently received an email from Eleanor Terrell emphasizing that municipalities should choose what is appropriate for their own circumstances rather than simply mirror state goals. Mary said she would hand the number-crunching portion to Stephen and then synthesize the group's decisions into a revised draft to circulate.

The CCAP conversation continued on what the committee could do to actually influence, and how to phrase commitments without overpromising. In the residential sector, the group converged on an "aim" rather than a hard "goal." Mary asked whether the committee consensus was 10% or 15% by 2035, and following discussion, Mary summarized the decision as 15% by 2035 and then asked if 20% by 2040 made sense. The group agreed. Elizabeth noted that residential is an area where the town has more control than transportation. The group acknowledged the political and legal obstacles to electrification strategies. The discussion about stringent codes that could possibly include avoiding new natural gas hookups, but that municipalities attempting this have often faced lawsuits.

Open Space: Reiterate Definition to Town

The next agenda item was the committee's continuing work on open space definitions and protections, especially because of public commentary by Fred in the *Overlook Times*. Skip explained that Fred had characterized things like communal areas, dog parks, and sledding hills as "open space," and that this framing alarmed several CAC members because it could dilute a more ecologically/legally meaningful definition and potentially become an loophole for developers. Skip described writing to Fred multiple times, having conversations with him, and

sending comparisons between Fred's reference map (page 190 of the DGEIS) and the CAC's own mapping and comment language. Skip said Fred seemed to be moving toward a "two levels of open space" concept, where critical spaces mattered most, but recreational communal spaces might still be counted. Skip's concern was that this reframing wasn't how the CAC had intended to define open space in its comments.

Carole suggested that the CAC should define open space by explaining its purpose and importance, for example, forests and ecological function, so that recreational amenities like dog parks naturally fall outside the definition. Skip agreed they had tried to do that already, but the conversation sharpened around the need to re-state the definition clearly to the incoming town board so the baseline is unambiguous. Skip and others emphasized that fenced recreational spaces (dog parks, playgrounds, golf courses) fail important criteria because fencing blocks wildlife movement and because those uses don't protect the functions the CAC was prioritizing such as carbon/greenhouse gas values, and groundwater recharge.

Paul Rubin Nov.19th Hydrology Presentation Report

The committee discussed Paul Rubin's presentation at the prior night's Town Board meeting. Skip summarized Rubin's two recurring emphasis points as (1) fair/reasonable use of water and (2) the value of the water to the community, framing these as policy questions as much as technical ones. Skip reported that he spoke with Adriana about these matters. Adriana characterized some of Rubin's framing as policy decisions that are not "measurable" in the way flow and drawdown are, while noting that Rubin also raised measurable issues like drought, draw, and recharge. Skip repeatedly highlighted what the CAC cared about most in the overlap between open space and water: the idea that the recharge area is in the forested area, which reinforces the CAC's argument that protecting forested open space is directly tied to protecting water supply.

There followed a careful, sometimes skeptical internal conversation about what "reasonable use" means in gallons per minute, and how Rubin arrived at specific numbers. Stephen proposed that the CAC might consider making a recommendation around reasonable use, and he anchored his own thinking in Rubin's written work: he said Rubin had argued supply should be twice demand, and Stephen used that ratio to propose 110 gallons per minute as a reasonable use figure (with 220 as the supply reference point). Stephen questioned the 26 gallons per minute calculation, though he also said he was borrowing Rubin's demand/supply logic even while disagreeing with Rubin's acreage-based method for producing 26.

William Barr explained the 26 gallon estimate as a proportional calculation, by treating the site acreage as a fraction of a broader aquifer and scaling the withdrawal accordingly. Mike and Stephen pushed back on what that logic implies: Mike argued that the 26 number implicitly assumes the rest of the aquifer will be under development, which he questioned based on what he

knows of the geography. Stephen said that if the right to water is assigned by acreage ratio, then ownership of an entire aquifer would imply entitlement to 100% of its water. Skip questioned Rubin's reliance on the acreage logic.

Carole said that not understanding how recharge is measured makes it hard to evaluate recommendations. Skip responded by describing the basic structure of the LaBella 35-day pumping test: water was drawn for 35 days while multiple test wells were monitored, the system reached a plateau, then pumping stopped and recharge was observed over about 31 days back toward original levels. Skip said Rubin himself had described the testing as unusually complete for its length, and in that sense very good" But Skip questioned the recharge phase. If it occurred after draw stopped and nobody was using water, that isn't a real-life condition, because in reality, people keep drawing water during recovery periods, so you wouldn't get a clean 31-day recharge the same way.

The discussion included the subject of drought risk and what the tests do, and do not, demonstrate about future availability. Skip and Elizabeth emphasized that Rubin had shown drought charts and argued the tests were done in non-drought conditions, meaning the results should temper confidence and encourage vigilance rather than an assumption that 220 is available indefinitely. Mike added that Rubin also talked about the village potentially needing another storage tank to buffer drought impacts, and Skip noted that while this may be wise, it is not directly the CAC's scope. The drought framing looped back to the procedural question of whether drought considerations, and water data generally, might justify a supplemental EIS or later supplemental review if the final EIS is deficient.

The meeting took time to question how SEQRA works with a Generic EIS (GEIS) and what protections still exist after a findings statement. Skip recounted Adriana's guidance that studies are not complete enough to support conclusions in a findings statement would trigger supplemental review later, and gave an example where site-specific analysis would be required at later stages. He also said Adriana sees a common public misconception that a GEIS is a "free pass," and he referenced the idea that post-findings supplements are typical because generic review inherently anticipates later, project-specific review. The CAC should not assume everything will be approved immediately once zoning/PDD steps happen, and that other stages will still require scrutiny.

Elizabeth expressed discomfort with language she'd encountered—specifically that supplemental review "may be considered"—and said she would have preferred stronger "must" language. Skip answered that "may" reflects that certain conditions have to occur to trigger the supplemental process; it's not automatic in every case. Mary grounded the committee back in what they themselves had previously agreed: the CAC would wait to see the final EIS, evaluate whether it is sufficient or inadequate, especially relative to Rubin's drought and recharge concerns, and

then decide whether to recommend a supplemental. Skip said that he personally does not have the hydrology expertise to judge adequacy and would rely on the town's consultants, including Adriana and H2M, to make that determination.

Community Solar

Skip gave an update on Community Solar. He said Joule had asked the CAC to promote Community Solar again. Skip said he had questioned Joule's push but felt NextAmp was a good option, and Mary said she followed up with Fred about whether CAC involvement was needed; Fred's response was to let it go for now.

Announcements

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to reconvene in January, with references to needing to plan a presentation on open space for the new town board

Adjournment

The motion carried at 6:55 p.m.

Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary