

# **Saugerties Conservation Advisory Commission**

January 15, 2026

Zoom Video Conferencing

## **MINUTES**

Present: Skip Arthur, Carole Furman, Stephen Shafer, Mary O'Donnell, Elizabeth Shafer, Mike Harkavy, Mary McNamara, Jenny Flavin, Ann Peters, Bill Barr

### **Approval of November 20, 2025 Minutes**

Approved.

### **Confirmation of Officers**

Skip addressed the formal structure of the CAC, noting that the Town had appointed him chair but that the Commission should confirm leadership internally. He was nominated and unanimously approved to continue as Chair. Mike was nominated and approved as Vice Chair. Kevin Freeman agreed to continue serving as Secretary.

### **CSTF - CCAP Update**

Mary provided a substantial update on the Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP). She explained that several key revisions had been made since the November draft discussion. First, the emissions reduction target year shifted from 2030 to 2035 due to feasibility concerns. A secondary benchmark year of 2040 was added to align with census data for updated population-based emissions inventories. Second, the baseline year for emissions measurement changed from 2010 to 2022, reflecting the availability of a current greenhouse gas inventory.

In the transportation sector, Mary detailed a major methodological shift developed by Stephen. Rather than attempting to reduce total transportation emissions (approximately 137,000 metric tons), the plan would focus on emissions from Saugerties-based vehicles since the Town lacks control over through traffic, highways, trains, and buses. Approximately 21,000 metric tons of emissions are attributed to locally controlled vehicles. The proposal calls for a 30% reduction in these emissions by 2035 and an additional 20% reduction by 2040. Ann Peters asked clarifying questions about whether this referred to municipal vehicles or resident-owned vehicles, and Mary clarified that it includes resident and local business vehicles.

Strategies discussed included promoting electric vehicles, reducing idling, encouraging participation in renewable energy programs, and expanding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Mary McNamara, a member of the Saugerties Transportation Advisory Committee, noted a

recent application for a side path to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety and emphasized coordination among committees.

In the industrial sector, the reduction goal remains 10% by 2035, now extended with an additional 10% by 2040. In the residential sector, the plan maintains a 30% reduction target by 2035 and an additional 20% by 2040, citing prior success in reducing emissions between 2010 and 2022 through solar and heat pump initiatives.

Mary acknowledged public comments received on the draft plan, including comments from Bill Barr and others, and committed to circulating compiled responses for review before finalizing revisions.

### **Winston Farm Memo to Town Board**

Skip provided a draft memo from CAC to the Town Board and explained that the memo reiterates CAC positions related to open space allocation and water supply thresholds. Specifically, it references LaBella Associates' finding of 220 gallons per minute available from the aquifer but recommends that only half that amount be considered as a threshold for sustainable use, pending confirmation from DEC or other NYS water quality guidelines. Stephen clarified that the 110 gallons per minute figure represents a threshold for environmental review, not a CAC-imposed limit. Mary McNamara raised additional concerns regarding public ownership of water supply and wastewater impacts on the Beaver Kill and aquifer. The memo was approved for submission once the DEC/DOH citation is added.

### **Zero Waste Implementation Plan**

Skip introduced discussion of the Ulster County Zero Waste Implementation Plan, originally passed in 2019 but stalled in committee. With the anticipated closure of the Seneca Meadows landfill and mounting pressure to address food waste diversion, Skip expressed urgency in activating the plan before alternative technical disposal methods are adopted. Ann Peters reported that she is newly assigned to the relevant legislative committee (Energy, Environment and Sustainability) and will follow up with Committee Chair Chris Hewitt and others. Discussion included coordination of the county Zero Waste Implementation Plan with UCRRA (Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency) and Marc Rider's proposed plans, as well as methane concerns raised by Elizabeth. There was also renewed discussion of local food waste collection initiatives and composting capacity challenges experienced by the Zero Waste program at the Hudson Valley Garlic Festival.

### **Battery Energy Storage System**

Skip provided an overview of grid-scale battery storage, emphasizing its role in stabilizing the grid and facilitating renewable energy transmission. He acknowledged community concerns about fire risk and noted the importance of accurate, updated information. Several members referenced Jeff Seidman's presentations and the Warwick BESS fire, which was widely publicized but that equipment functioned according to containment design standards.

Bill Barr reported that Town Board member and Fire Chief Mike Ivino is was organizing a public educational event on BESS scheduled for February 5. (\* there was confusion on this point as Key Capture was hosting an event Feb 5<sup>th</sup>, Ivino's event was eventually scheduled for Feb 11<sup>th</sup>). Carole noted a NYSERDA informational webinar scheduled for January 21. Members discussed the need for comprehensive workshops including firefighters, environmental experts, and NYSERDA representatives to foster dialogue that might limit polarized comments to the Town Board. Mike stressed the importance of considering zoning implications and avoiding premature moratoriums. Stephen stated he would attend the January 21 Town Board meeting as a private citizen to oppose a potential moratorium while advocating for informed decision-making.

Discussion also covered site considerations, including proximity to substations and industrial zones, as the proposed Key Capture Energy project near the Central Hudson transmission station in the area of the former KTB plant behind Stewart's. Carole referenced New York City's successful BESS installations and training protocols for fire departments.

Ann Peters observed that legislative perspectives are divided at the county level and that clear educational framing will be critical. Jenny Flavin offered to circulate academic research on environmental impacts of energy storage. Mary McNamara encouraged understanding opposition concerns and suggested collaboration between CAC and Climate Smart Communities in educational outreach.

### **Announcements**

Bill Barr was announced as the new Town Board liaison to CAC and with commitments to share further information about upcoming BESS workshops and zero waste developments.

### **Adjournment**

The motion carried at 6:05 p.m.

*Prepared by: Kevin Freeman, Secretary*