

Kingston Conservation Advisory Council Year End Report 2009

General Info

This volunteer board is an advisory body that will work to ensure the sustainable use of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment. The City of Kingston is one of only 12 cities in New York State that have a Conservation Council and is now one of 16 other Ulster County Conservation Councils. The Kingston CAC was created under Resolution 180 of 2008, in November, 2008.

This board, consisting of Kingston residents, with its advisory capacity, will advise the Planning Board and Common Council on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; will conduct public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues, such as storm water management, recycling and biodiversity; and coordinate with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council began holding monthly meetings in February 2009. Since its inception, the CAC has held 11 general council meetings and 4 special meetings. This board meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 2. The meetings are open to the general public.

Current Commissioners:

Julie Noble, Chair	JulieLNoble@Kingston-ny.gov
Allison Taylor, Secretary	ataylor603@yahoo.com
Judith Deming	jcdeming@earthlink.net
Elizabeth Higgins	emh56@cornell.edu
Sidney Hymes	sjhymes@gmail.com
Felipa Gaudet	felipagaudet@hotmail.com
Valeria Gheorghiu	valerialexia@gmail.com
Gregg Swanzey	gswanzey@gmail.com

Accomplishments

The Kingston CAC has focused on a number of issues in its first year:

1) Collaboration

The CAC has made it a priority to meet with other environmental leaders, professionals and citizens in the Hudson Valley to learn about local concerns and initiatives. Included:

- a) Sustainable Hudson Valley
- b) Department of the Environment
- c) Ulster County Environmental Management Council

2) Hudsonia Biodiversity Assessment Report

Three commissioners of the Kingston CAC participated in a 10 month Hudsonia Biodiversity Assessment Program. This program involved intensive habitat mapping of a section of Kingston and the Town of Ulster to identify habitats of conservation concern. The results of this program are a written report and large detailed habitat map that will be made available to the public and to the Planning Board and Common Council for use. The techniques and skills learned in this training will be shared with the entire CAC and will be utilized to continue mapping the remainder of Kingston's habitats in 2010. This information will be utilized in advising the Planning Board regarding developments in critical environmental areas.

3) Planning Board review

Kingston CAC commissioners have been regularly attending the Kingston Planning Board monthly meetings on a rotating basis to stay abreast of local proposals and items of interest in Kingston. In 2010, the CAC will be developing recommendation guidelines regarding environmental issues that will be presented to the Planning Board when applicable.

4) Supporting Local Initiatives

The Kingston CAC is committed to supporting local environmental efforts, including Bike Friendly Kingston, an initiative of Sustainable Hudson Valley to compile a map of bikeable roads in Kingston. The Kingston CAC participated in the planning, which is still ongoing.

5) Attending relevant meetings

Several CAC commissioners hold positions on local environmentally related boards, and all regularly attend meetings of interest to local issues including:

- a. Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- b. Ulster County Trails Advisory Council
- c. Regional CAC workshops
- d. Hudsonia trainings
- e. Kingston Planning Board meetings

6) Council Administrative Matters

The Kingston CAC, in its first year, has been working to get in order some administrative matters, meeting with City staff to get logistics of the board in order, including:

- a. Meeting with Corp Council, Comptroller, Laws and Rules Committee
- b. Rules and Procedures development
- c. Resolution to be made into Local Law

7) Review and Advise on Local Legislation

The Kingston CAC has initiated in some cases and has been directed to in other cases to review changes to local governmental policies. The CAC commissioners research other local municipalities' processes and best practices, incorporate scientific support and environmentally sound decisions to make educated recommendations to the City. Such matters the CAC has worked on in 2009 included:

- a. Pay As You Throw Waste Reduction Policy
- b. Animal Legislation Review
- c. Pesticide Initiative for Kingston

8) Public Outreach

It is very important to the Kingston CAC to maintain a transparent and open relationship with the citizens of Kingston regarding environmental happenings in Kingston. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted in a timely manner on the City of Kingston municipal website, on the CAC page, as are pertinent documents that the CAC has adopted.

Additionally, to reach a more broad audience, the CAC has begun the process of establishing a separate website for a more extensive public outreach including links to other environmental agencies and organizations, commissioners biographies, documents and policy templates, for example.

9) Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge

The most significant accomplishment of the Kingston CAC in 2009 was the adoption of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge. This document, a locally adapted, marriage of two documents: the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Smart Communities Pledge and the Local Government Green Jobs Pledge. This effort, initiated by local environmental advocates and prepared by the Kingston CAC, with help from the Kingston Corporation Council and Laws and Rules Committee, pledges the city of Kingston to a more sustainable future. This pledge was adopted by the Common Council as Resolution 181 of 2009.

The CAC is now actively working on the formation of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Taskforce, the body that will be charged with implementation of the pledge. This group will involve local environmental professionals, local citizens, non-profit organizations and governmental representatives, under the advisory of the Kingston CAC. This taskforce will address such issues as Recycling and Solid Waste, Energy Demand Reduction, Renewable Energies, Community Land Use Planning, Planning for Climate Change and Green Innovation.

Commitment to and implementation of this important document has proven that Kingston, like 45 other municipalities statewide, has put environmental stewardship and responsibility as a priority, both to decrease our municipal carbon footprint, and to save money in the process for a more sustainable Kingston.