



Kingston Conservation Advisory Council
www.kingston-ny.gov/KingstonCAC

2023 Annual Report

General Background

This volunteer board is an advisory body that works to ensure the conservation of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment while fostering unified action on environmental matters. The City of Kingston is one of 16 other Ulster County Conservation Councils. The Kingston CAC was created under Resolution 180 of 2008, in November 2008.

This advisory board, consisting of Kingston residents, advises the Planning Board, Common Council, and Mayor on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; conducts public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues; and coordinates with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm¹ in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 1. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 167 general council meetings and 14 special meetings, in addition to sub-committee meetings. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted and archived on the Kingston CAC webpage www.kingston-ny.gov/kingstoncac .

2023 Council Members (two-year terms)

Helen Atkinson	10/19/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Anita Collins	10/19/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Briana Gary	10/1/22-10/31/24	1 st term
Theodore (Ted) Griese	9/17/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Emilie Hauser, Chair	1/1/13-12/31/24	6th term
Kevin McEvoy, Secretary	8/21/13-12/31/24	6th term

¹ Annually the CAC will set the time and day of month during the January meeting for the next 12 months.

2023 Highlights

Open Space Plan

Since May 2011, a CAC sub-committee has been in the process of working with the City in developing a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) and subsequently an Open Space Plan for the City of Kingston. An NRI is a survey of the natural resources in a community, with the goal of informing the planning board, Common Council, and decision makers on land use decisions. In 2020, the City of Kingston completed, and the Common Council adopted, as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan, an Open Space Plan for the City of Kingston. The final plan, vision, and all maps can be found at www.kingston-ny.gov/nri. Through 2023, the CAC actively participated in and supported the City's work on advancing the Community Preservation Plan, along with the Kingston Land Trust.

Wood Burning/Air Quality Sub-Committee

In 2016, the Kingston CAC began a focused look into air quality concerns, particularly with a focus on localized residential wood burning in Kingston. This Kingston Air Quality Initiative (KAQI) advanced through 2023, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Land, Air and Water at Bard College. This collaboration continued the work of monitoring Kingston air quality by collecting data from sources, both indoor and outdoor, around the city, focusing on fine particulate matter. In 2022, a web portal with live data from the Air Quality Monitor atop the Andy Murphy Midtown Neighborhood Center was launched to share the data with the community. Additionally, in 2022, the CAC supported the City of Kingston's anti-idling legislation which goes beyond the State legislation and establishes a time limit on idling for all vehicles citywide; this legislation became effective January 1, 2022. Additional work of the subcommittee in 2023 included advocacy for local air quality improvements, in particular through one direct action: 1) research of the impacts of and development of policy around gas-powered leaf blowers in Kingston.

Kingston Forward- City wide Rezoning

Representatives from the CAC participated directly in the advancement of the Kingston Forward-Citywide Rezoning initiative in 2023. This work, which spanned the course of 2021 and continued into 2023, included working directly with consultants Dover, Kohl & Partners to provide NRI, sea level rise, open space and historic data and advising on environmental priorities as related to zoning and open space. CAC members sent collective comments on draft and final versions of the plans and were in regular contact with the consultants and project manager on the advancement as well as the implementation. The code was adopted on August 2, 2023.

Street Tree and Canopy Cover

In 2020, a street tree and canopy cover initiative was started to address, among other things, city operations regarding street trees, communications with the community regarding trees, and understanding and communicating the value of trees. A liaison was established between the CAC and the Kingston Tree Commission to enhance communication about the city's tree canopy. In 2023, the CAC served as a committed liaison to the Tree Commission, attending monthly

meetings and collaborating on advancing the work of the Tree Commission and City. The CAC directly supported the initiatives of the Tree Commission.

Tidal Waterfront Flooding Task Force

The Kingston Waterfront Flooding Task Force was appointed by Mayor Shayne Gallo in the fall of 2012 and was charged with evaluating the present and future vulnerability to flooding, storm surge and sea-level rise along the Rondout-Hudson waterfront. This group was asked to recommend strategies for a resilient waterfront and convened from December 2012 through August 2013. The group produced a final report [Planning for Rising Waters: Final Report of the City of Kingston Tidal Waterfront Flooding Taskforce](#) but the Task Force culminated with the production of the report. The Kingston CAC has continued to play a role in continuing the efforts of this Task Force. In 2023, CAC members participated in Flood Resiliency Network meetings and workshops as collaborators and for professional development opportunities pertaining to the waterfront.

Updated Kingston CAC Rules and Procedures

Since its inception, the Kingston CAC has operated under Council-approved Rules and Procedures. In 2023, the Kingston CAC reviewed and updated those Rules and Procedures to better reflect the current operations.

Planning Board and Department Review

Kingston CAC members regularly attend the Kingston Planning Board monthly meetings to stay abreast of local proposals and items of interest in Kingston. Additionally, beginning in the fall of 2012, the Kingston CAC began the informal process of general reviews of proposed developments that came before the Kingston Planning Board. This process includes a general review of each new proposal or action that comes before the Planning Board, for environmental impact. The scope of review has included concerns such as storm water runoff, habitat conservation, open space preservation, walkability and bikeability, and in-fill development. Concerns and recommendations are submitted to the Planning Department, for review by the Planning Board, in advance of the Planning Board meeting and CAC members are available for further comments or questions from Planning Dept. In 2023, there were no specific site proposals reviewed by the CAC.

Letters of Support for Municipal Initiatives

The Kingston CAC values the work of the municipal staff in regard to relevant environmental issues and often provides letters of support to municipal applications for funding directed toward environmental initiatives. Though the CAC regularly submits letters of support, in 2023, the following letters of support were submitted to the City by the CAC:

- a) USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forest Grant for City Forester Position (awarded)
- b) NYS DOS EPF Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Grant for Kingston Point Wetland Restoration and Kayak Dock Project (awarded)
- c) NYS DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant for Kingston Organics Program Phase 2 Implementation (pending)

City Plan Review/Support

A new initiative, starting in 2021 for the CAC, was to take a more proactive approach to reviewing and advising on City plans and projects within the scope of the CAC. Actions included reviewing designs, plans, and proposals and/or provide support to City projects. In 2023, the CAC helped the City advance projects including:

- a) Safe and Accessible Flatbush and Foxhall
- b) Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan
- c) LULA/Pace University Resiliency Assessment
- d) Community Preservation Plan
- e) Community Choice Aggregation Program
- f) Non-toxic Landscape Management Plan
- g) Kingston Point Park Improvements Phase 2
- h) Kingston Organics Phase 1
- i) RAISE

Environmental Reviews

Frequently, the Kingston CAC will receive formal requests from either a community member, City staff, the legislative body or the executive body to review, research or weigh in on local environmental issues. The CAC then independently decides what action to take on each proposal. In 2023, the Kingston CAC participated in the following reviews:

- a) NY NJ Harbor and Tributaries Focus Area Feasibility Study review
- b) Neurotoxic neonic pesticides and the Birds and the Bees Protection Act
- c) Burying overhead utilities in Kingston
- d) Gas Powered Leaf Blowers/Noise Ordinance
- e) Native Plantings/Pollinator Gardens
- f) Legislation about Helium Balloon release
- g) Wetland Preservation
- h) Hudson River Barge Anchorages
- i) Hudson River PCB Superfund Site 5 Year Review
- j) Lower Esopus Watershed Management Plan
- k) Reuse Innovation Center Feasibility Study (Ulster County)

Outreach/Engagement

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 website's CAC page, as are pertinent documents that the CAC has adopted, resource links and tools used for projects and initiatives.

Additionally, a member of the Kingston CAC attends each Public Safety/General Government Committee meeting of the Common Council in order to keep the city government abreast of Kingston CAC initiatives as well as to maintain an open line of communication with decision

makers. Further, all CAC communications are shared with the Common Council CAC Liaison, which, in 2023 was Alderperson Michele Hirsch.

Special Guests/Presentations

The Kingston CAC often hosts organizations or individuals to monthly meetings for relevant topic-based presentations. These may either be pertinent to ongoing CAC initiatives or are strictly informational. In 2023, the Kingston CAC hosted the following special presentations or guests:

- a) Pace Land Use Law Center, Resiliency Plan for LWRP, Stakeholder input
- b) Melissa Iachetta presented Scenic Hudson's HOW TO SOLAR NOW Solar Mapping Tool Tutorial

Professional Development

Kingston CAC members regularly attend meetings, workshops and conferences to further professional development and to keep up to date on currently, relevant environmental issues regionally and locally. In 2023, CAC council members participated in:

Conferences and Workshops

- a) NYSACC Conference on the Environment
- b) Ulster County Environmental Management Council Annual Roundtable
- c) Flood Resilience Network Lunch and Learn Quarterly Meetings
- d) NYNJHATS Army Corps Storm Surge Barriers meetings and updates
- e) Land Trust Alliance Meetings
- f) Hudson River Watershed Alliance Conference -October
- g) PACE Land Use Leadership Alliance meeting- April
- h) Hudson River Watershed Alliance Breakfast Webinars
- i) Hudson River Environmental Society Symposium: Landscape Tradeoffs as New York Transitions to Renewable Energy – April
- j) Sustainable Hudson Valley: Climate Action Conference – Acceleration Through Coordination- March
- k) Cary Institute Webinar: Douglas Tallamy on Nature's Best Hope. October
- l) HREP: Webinar Protecting Wetlands and Streams in Your Community- November.

Organizational Liaisons/Appointees

Kingston CAC council members hold positions on local environmentally related boards, and regularly acted as liaisons to:

- a) Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- b) Kingston Land Trust (Managing Director; Greenline, Land Use, Housing committees)
- c) Climate Smart Kingston Commission
- d) NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
- e) Public Safety/General Government Committee liaison
- f) Kingston Planning Board liaison
- g) Heritage Area Commission

- h) Friends of Historic Kingston
- i) Kingston Forward: Rezoning Committee
- j) Kingston Tree Commission
- k) Hudson Valley Affordable Housing and Land Conservation
- l) Hudson River Environmental Society
- m) Complete Streets Advisory Council
- n) Kingston Preservation, Inc.
- o) Lehigh Gap Nature Center
- p) Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission
- q) Hudson Valley Flood Resilience Network
- r) Hudson Valley Climate Action Network
- s) Grow Well Kingston
- t) Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Project Advisory Committee
- u) Certified Local Govt Historic Grant Advisory Committee (Ponckhockie & Wilbur)
- v) Rondout Waterfront Stabilization Project Advisory Committee (Weston and Sampson)
- w) Community Preservation Plan Project Advisory Committee
- x) Kingston Point Park Phase 2 Project Advisory Committee
- y) Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee
- z) League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region
- aa) Pace Land Use Law Center, Resiliency Plan for LWRP