

Kingston Conservation Advisory Council Year End Report 2010

General Info

This volunteer board is an advisory body that works 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 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 and Common Council on matters pertaining to the natural environment of the city; conducts public programs to inform the public of local and regional environmental issues, such as storm water management, recycling and biodiversity; and coordinates with local groups which have an impact on the local environment.

The Kingston Conservation Advisory Council meets the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 1. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 24 general council meetings and 5 special meetings. All meeting minutes and agendas are posted and archived on the Kingston CAC webpage of the City of Kingston website. See: <http://www.kingston-ny.gov/content/76/78/1896/default.aspx>

2010/11 Commissioners:

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Accomplishments

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

1) Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge

This pledge was adopted by the Common Council as Resolution 181 of 2009.

In 2010, the Kingston CAC actively worked 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.

Under this taskforce, five sub-committees were formed:

- 1) **Recycling and Solid Waste**, co-chairs: Julie Noble and Steve Noble
- 2) **Energy**, co-chairs: Valeria Gheorghiu and Casey Schwarz
- 3) **Land Use**, co-chairs: Gregg Swanzey and Guy Kempe
- 4) **Planning for Climate Change**, chair: Emilie Hauser
- 5) **Green Innovation**, co-chairs: Melissa Everett and Valeria Gheorghiu

Commitment to and implementation of this important pledge has proven that Kingston, like 90 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.

As part of the effort to engage the community with the pledge process, the CAC hosted two community workshops at City Hall. These workshops included presentations about the pledge process by CAC members, as well as a presentation by NYSERDA representative Meridith Neirenberg and Bard Professor Jennifer Schwarz-Berky. Dozens of community members participated in this process. Kingston CAC commissioners also outreached to the community at neighborhood ward meetings to share information about the process.

Additionally, for the fall 2010 Urban Practicum, under the leadership of Bard Professor, and Ulster County Deputy Planning Director Jennifer Schwartz-Berky, Bard undergraduate students conducted environmental policy research for the Kingston Climate Action Plan. In addition to their detailed policy briefs, which will be used by the CAC to develop the plan, the students created nine colorful posters after having observed the need for more communication, outreach and inclusion of the public in the climate action planning process. To see the completed work and posters, click on bardkingstonclimate.ning.com. The posters were exhibited at the Kingston Library during the month of January 2011 and will become the basis for the CAC's website and outreach campaign in the coming year.

Finally, in order to execute the task of crafting a Climate Action Plan for the City of Kingston, a federal NYSERDA/ARRA grant was secured by the City of Kingston to hire a one year, full time Climate Analyst. This position's accountabilities will be:

- Develops and implements procedures and programs to inventory activities related to greenhouse gas emissions
- Maintains and administers a clearinghouse of on-going and potential actions to facilitate

- communications between and among implementing partners and working groups
- Communicates regularly with range of stakeholders and implementing partners across the city from a range of sectors (e.g., government, business, not-for-profit).
- Develop draft Climate Action Plan with the Kingston Conservation Advisory Council and city staff for adoption by the Kingston Common Council
- Coordinates meetings of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs taskforce, including: logistics, development of agenda, preparation of materials, strategy for desired outcomes of meetings, and meeting minutes.
- Coordinates with other state agencies, regional and local organizations, non-profits, municipalities, and individuals on the status of on-going and planned activities relative to the City of Kingston Climate Action Plan.
- Attends relevant local workshops, seminars and trainings related to climate change
- Prepares a draft and final annual report (Climate Action Plan), including reporting on emissions tracking and economic impacts.
- Tracks and manages any grant obligations and prepares financial reports, as needed, relative to expenditures.

2) Planning Board and Department Collaboration

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 also established the Green Development Guidelines Committee, which is working with the planning board and planning department to develop a set of conservation guidelines addressing environmental issues that arise during the planning process.

3) Professional Development

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

- PACE Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program
- NYS Conference on the Environment
- Hudson River Estuary Program Regional Action Plan Meeting
- Climate Change Psychology Workshop
- Hudsonia's Biodiversity Conservation Roundtable
- Conference and Dialogue on Water Resources and the Regional Economy
- Certified Floodplain Manager (national certification)
- FEMA Community Rating System Training
- NYWEA Watershed Science and Technical Conference

4) Organizational liaisons

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

- Ulster County Environmental Management Council
- Ulster County Trails Advisory Council
- Kingston Land Trust
- Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee
- Kingston Planning Board meetings

5) Organizational Membership

The Kingston CAC is proud to be a member of the New York State Association of Conservation Commissions. **The New York State Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC)** was formed in 1971 to coordinate and support the work of municipal conservation commissions, conservation advisory councils and conservation boards and to stimulate the formation of additional commissions throughout the state.

In partnership with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC), NYSACC hosts an annual Conference on the Environment. The location of this Conference varies regionally throughout the State. A newsletter, *NYSACC News*, is published three times a year. It includes conservation commission activities, initiatives, projects, conservation information, and highlighted environmental events.

NYSACC provides:

- Networking
- Newsletter
- Annual Conference
- Scholarships
- Awards
- Website
- Current Environmental Information

CAC members are also members of other environmental organizations including the New York Water Environment Association and NYS Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association.

6) 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 2010 included:

- a. Animal/Cat/Chicken Legislation Review
- b. Green Development Guidelines

7) Supporting Local Initiatives

The Kingston CAC is committed to supporting local environmental efforts, including

- a. Healthy Kingston for Kids Initiative
- b. Complete Streets Initiative
- c. Emerald Ash Borer Study

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 started to branch out into social and online media. In 2010, a Kingston CAC Facebook page was created and maintained for up-to-date community connections. The CAC has also 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. The proposed website will be www.kingstoncac.org.

9) Education

Consistent with its goals, the Kingston CAC is proud to be able to offer educational opportunities to the Kingston Community. One of the best means of educating is through active engagement. To this end, the CAC launched a recycling initiative in 2010, collecting used ink cartridges, toner cartridges and used cell phones from the community to be recycled. This also benefitted the CAC in the form of fundraising, as each item recycled will generate revenue for the Council.