



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

2021 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 6:00pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 1 (currently meeting virtually under COVID restrictions). The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 147 general council meetings and 13 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 .

2021 Council Members (two year terms)

Helen Atkinson	10/19/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Elizabeth (Betta) Broad	12/11/14-1/30/21	4th term
Anita Collins	10/19/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Lorraine Farina	1/1/16-6/30/21	3rd term
Theodore (Ted) Griese	9/17/21-12/31/23	1 st term
Emilie Hauser, Vice-Chair/Chair	1/1/13-12/31/22	5th term
Kevin McEvoy, Secretary	8/21/13-12/31/22	5th term
Julie Noble, Chair	1/2/09-6/4/21	7 th term
Sebastian Pillitteri	1/2/19-12/31/22	2nd term

2021 Highlights

Updated Mission and Scope

The mission and scope of work for the Kingston CAC was originally developed at the inception of the CAC in 2008. In 2021, CAC members worked to revisit and update the mission and scope to ensure it better reflects the current vision of the Council. The mission of the CAC hasn't changed, but the scope has been updated:

Mission: Ensure the conservation of the City of Kingston's natural resources and the enhancement and protection of its environment while fostering unified action on environmental matters.

Scope: This board, consisting of Kingston residents, will:

- Advise the Planning Board, Executive Branch, Common Council, and other City agencies and departments to ensure sound environmental decisions are made;
- Coordinate with City of Kingston boards, commissions, and local community groups and organizations, which have an impact on the environment;
- Coordinate with regional environmental boards, commissions and organizations to advocate for the protection of Kingston's environment on regional issues;
- Shepherd environmental concerns from the public and consider courses of action;
- Advocate for the protection of Kingston's natural resources through the Open Space Plan, Open Space Index and Natural Resources Inventory;
- Provide environmental expertise and technical assistance on municipal environmental initiatives.

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 2021, the CAC supported the City's application for funding for a Community Preservation Plan to advance the work. The City was successful in receiving DEC funding for the Plan and the CAC will support this work into 2022. Additionally, in 2022, the CAC studied the Norwalk CT Urban Conservation Mapping Project, as a possible option for how the City of Kingston could present its NRI and Open Space data in a user-friendly, publicly accessible format. The Norwalk example includes additional data layers which the City of Kingston does not yet include, such as equity and social factors and public health index. Further, an Open Space Plan implementation tracking system was created in 2021 to enable the City to track progress along its Open Space goals.

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 2021, 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. At the close of 2021, a web portal with live data from the Air Quality Monitor atop the Andy Murphy Midtown Neighborhood Center was under development to share the data with the community. Additionally, in 2021, the CAC supported the City of Kingston in advancing a successful Green Fleet Policy as well as 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 2021 included advocacy for local air quality improvements, in particular through two direct actions: 1) a letter to the City Planning Board regarding development proposal reviews and permits that include outdoor fire pits, wood-fired bakery and pizza ovens and other wood burning devices; and 2) a letter to the NYS DEC regarding their communications and stance on wood and biomass burning.

Kingston Forward- City wide Rezoning

Representatives from the CAC participated directly in the advancement of the Kingston Forward-Citywide Rezoning initiative in 2021. This work, which spanned the course of 2021 and will continue into 2022, 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. The Council hosted representatives from Dover, Kohl & Partners to the October CAC meeting for a thorough presentation and dialogue about the process. CAC members will continue to stay directly involved with this project as it advances.

Water Quality-Septic Code Review

In 2021, a new initiative of the CAC commenced to evaluate the potential effects on water quality from the use of septic systems within the City limits. The initiative began with evaluating legislation on septic inspections; included work with Engineering Technician Greg Krupp to map locations of likely septic systems (sewer exempt properties) within the City; reviewing the City code language regarding septic systems; and, separately but related, discussing concerns about illicit downspout connections. Work will continue on this initiative into 2022 to evaluate whether the systems present are indeed a cause for concern or whether any action is necessary to ensure protections in the future.

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 2021, 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 through promotion and outreach about the Tree Planting opportunities.

USGS Stream Gage

Beginning in 2020, the CAC worked with Gary Wall of the USGS on an effort to understand: the status, history, use and value of the Rondout Creek's decommissioned USGS stream gage, to understand the cost of operations and maintenance, and to convene local organizations and agencies, who would benefit from it being replaced. The USGS Stream Gage system exists to measure the level of the river which can then serve as a planning tool, a flood warning tool, a tool to use for mapping and structural design, commercial shipping uses, and data collection and scientific research and for recreational uses, among other things. In 2021, the CAC continued discussions regarding the reinstatement of the Rondout Stream Gage, particularly in light of the threat of the infrastructure being removed from the current location. At the close of 2021, there was no resolve to replacing the Stream Gage at Rondout due to funding limitations.

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 2021, CAC members participated in Flood Resiliency Network meetings and workshops as collaborators and for professional development opportunities pertaining to the waterfront.

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 a CAC member attends each Planning Board meeting to be available for further comments or questions.

In 2021, several site proposals were reviewed by the CAC including:

- a) Hutton Brickyards
- b) #264 Lucas Avenue Multi-family Apartment
- c) Ulster County Housing Development Corporation and Golden Hill Development
- d) 65-85 East Strand
- e) R191-199 Hurley Ave (Kingston Meadows)

Letters of Support for Municipal Initiatives

The Kingston CAC values the work of the municipal staff in regards to relevant environmental issues and often provides letters of support to municipal applications for funding directed toward environmental initiatives. In 2021, letters of support submitted to the City by the CAC included:

- a) City of Kingston Consolidated Funding Applications
 - a. Department of State LWRP Kingston Point Park Phase 2
 - b. Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation HAS Kingston Point Rail Trail Phase 2
 - c. Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation RTP Maintenance Equipment
- b) NYS DEC HREP Rondout Creek Accessible Kayak dock
- c) NYS DEC HREP Community Preservation Plan

City Plan Review/Support

A new initiative of 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 2021, the CAC helped the City advance projects including:

- a) Midtown Parking Lots Green Infrastructure
- b) Safe and Accessible Flatbush and Foxhall
- c) Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan
- d) City Tree Planting Grant

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 2021, the Kingston CAC participated in the following reviews:

- a) Esopus Creek Ashokan Release Protocol Environmental Review, Resolution 84 of 2021
- b) City of Kingston Green Fleet Policy and Anti-Idling Legislation Review
- c) Electric Vehicle Charging Station Parking Violation Proposal

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 2021 was Alderperson Michele Hirsch. Alderperson Hirsch attended several monthly meetings thus maintaining the line of communication to the Common Council.

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 2021, the Kingston CAC hosted the following special presentations or guests:

- a) Lynsey Timbrouck, City of Kingston Parks & Recreation, Kingston Point Beach access
- b) Amy Groves of Dover, Kohl, & Partners, Form based code presentation
- c) Susan Winchell-Sweeney, Bard GIS for Environmental Justice, Smell Walk Program
- d) Eli Dueker, Owen O'Connor, Lorraine Farina, Bard College Community Science Lab, Kingston Air Quality Initiative Update

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 2021, CAC council members participated in:

- 1) Conferences and Workshops
 - a) NYSACC Conference
 - b) DEC Conservation and Land Use 101 Webinar, Open Space Plans
 - c) Flood Resilience Network Lunch and Learn Quarterly Meetings
 - d) New Mobilities: Smart Planning for Emerging Transportation Technologies Webinar
 - e) Community Preservation 101: Smart, Sustainable Growth in your Area Webinar
 - f) Rails to Trails Conservancy webinar - "Getting Involved in Trail Advocacy: The Essentials"
 - g) SUNY Albany, Rockefeller College graduate level course - "PAD 504: Data Models & Decisions"
 - h) Soul Fire Farm training - "Uprooting Racism in the Food System"
 - i) Sustainable Hudson Valley: Climate Leadership: The Emerging Agenda Workshop
 - j) LGNC Speaker Series by Zoom: S Stronsick, PA Bat Rescue, "All About Bats"
 - k) D. Klein, Muhlenberg College, "Birds, Windows and Conservation".
 - l) Climate Action Plan proposal, City of Kingston, Nov 8
 - m) Information meeting on Esopus River turbidity, Riverkeepers Esopus, Nov 18
 - n) Protecting Wildlife Habitat by Land Use Planning. By Hudson River Estuary Program, Dec 7
 - o) NY Sea Grant Hudson Dynamic Shorelines Story Map Presentation Sept 2021
 - p) DEC HREP Conservation and Land Use Webinars: May 2021(Wetlands) and December 2021(Protecting Wildlife and Land Use Planning)
 - q) DEC Wetlands Mapping Webinar (HREP) May 2021
 - r) Ashokan Reservoir Release Protocol DEIS Meeting May 2021
 - s) Ashokan Reservoir Release Protocol Meeting November 2021 concerning upgrade shutdown

- t) Land Trust Alliance Meetings: May 2021 (NYS) & October 2021 (LTA Rally President's session)
 - u) Hudson River Watershed Alliance Meeting June 2021
- 2) Publications
- a) Edited a 19-page report providing guidance on the equitable deployment of electric vehicle technology, for use by state legislators and utility companies, for Environmental Defense Fund.
- 3) Talks Delivered
- a) Native Bees of Lehigh Gap nature Center for LGNC Speaker Series, March 21
 - b) An Introduction to Native Bees of PA, for Berks County Herb Society, Feb 20
 - c) Workshop on Artificial Insemination of Honey bee Queens, Penn State University, State College, PA, July 7-8

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 (including Greenline, Land Use, Housing committees)
- c) Climate Smart Kingston Commission
- d) Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
- e) NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
- f) Public Safety/General Government Committee liaison
- g) Kingston Planning Board liaison
- h) Heritage Area Commission
- i) Friends of Historic Kingston
- j) Kingston Forward: Rezoning Committee
- k) Kingston Tree Commission
- 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) Climate Change Education Committee
- r) Hudson Valley Flood Resilience Network
- s) Grow Well Kingston
- t) Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Project Advisory Committee
- u) Climate Action Plan 2030: Advisory Committee
- v) Certified Local Govt Historic Grant Advisory Committee (Ponckhockie & Wilbur)
- w) NPS Historic Grant Advisory Committee (Pine St African Burial Ground)
- x) Rondout Waterfront Stabilization Project Advisory Committee (Weston and Sampson)
- y) Ulster County Water Quality Coordinating Committee
- z) League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region