



## Kingston Conservation Advisory Council Year End Report 2011

### 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 Thursday of each month at 6:30pm in Kingston City Hall Conference Room 2. The meetings are open to the general public. Since its inception, the CAC has held 36 general council meetings and 6 special meetings, in addition to sub-committee 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>

### 2011 Council Members:

Julie Noble, Chair JulieLNoble@Kingston-ny.gov

Elizabeth Higgins, Secretary liz.higgin@gmail.com

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Casey Schwarz caseyschwarz@gmail.com

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Felipa Gaudet, Secretary (past) felipagaudet@hotmail.com (Term ended June 2011)

Sophie Dolamore sdolamore10@gmail.com (Term ended June 2011)

Valeria Gheorghiu valerialexia@gmail.com (Term ended June 2011)

## Highlights

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

### 1) Climate Action Planning

As per the adoption of the Climate Smart and Green Jobs Community Pledge as Resolution 181 of 2009, a Climate Smart and Green Jobs Taskforce was formed, initially led by the Kingston Climate Analyst and then the Climate Smart Coordinator for the City of Kingston. This group was formed as a body charged with implementing the Climate Pledge. Initially, a sub-committee structure was established that ultimately morphed into the one taskforce, with support from other stakeholders. The mission of the Climate Smart Green Jobs Taskforce is to create and implement an action plan including comprehensive policies and programs for the City of Kingston to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance operational and energy efficiencies, reduce energy costs, support local job growth, and adapt to a changing climate while improving quality of life, saving taxpayer dollars, and promoting social justice.

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 full time Climate Analyst for one year, who began working in March 2011. The Climate Analyst has worked to complete an assessment of the city's energy use and what the energy usage means in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. A Bard College intern and a CAC member worked with the Climate Analyst to help inventory the city's vehicles as well as gather, review and analyze the city's utility bills. There was also significant assistance from numerous city employees. The Kingston Community Energy and Greenhouse Gas Report, in Draft form, is under review as of December 31, 2011. A page was also set up under the Kingston CAC webpage, with ongoing information regarding the Climate Action Planning Process.

In 2011, the Kingston Conservation Advisory Council was awarded a \$2,250.00 grant from the *Clean Air-Cool Planet Community Catalyst Fund* to help advance the efforts outlined in the Kingston Climate Smart and Green Jobs Communities Pledge. The grant has provided funds for the City to become a member of ICLEI-Local Government for Sustainability thereby providing the City access to ICLEI's greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and climate action planning software tools, training and technical resources. The grant also provided funding for the production and distribution of public outreach and education materials to encourage citizen engagement in a community effort to reduce energy usage and GHG emissions.

### 2) Natural Resources Inventory

In May 2011, a CAC sub-committee was formed to begin the process of creating a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) for 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. This is done by

- (1) Gathering existing digital data layers and sectioning out the data for Kingston including such data as: Surface waters, Geology, Flood zones, Soils , Agricultural Lands, Vegetated Lands, Forests, Ecologically Sensitive Areas, Parks and Recreational Areas, and Developed Areas
- (2) Gathering any data that is missing or not mapped

- (3) Compiling and creating map layers that will visually demonstrate and inform decision makers in land use decisions. For example: Environmental Justice Areas, Walking/Biking Routes, Complete Streets, Watersheds, Potential Garden/Park Space, Land Use Changes, Green Infrastructure Potential, Renewable Energy Potential, Brownfield Sites

The Kingston CAC is working with the Town of Rosendale CAC, Scenic Hudson, Ulster County, Kingston Parks and Recreation, Hudsonia, and local initiatives and organizations to gather the information and create a useful database, with a set of maps and recommendations. Ultimately, this information can be integrated into an Open Space Plan for Kingston.

### 3) Kingston's Green Guide

In September 2011, the Kingston CAC began the task of creating a "Green Guide for Kingston." Using the Woodstock Environmental Commission's *Green Guide* as a template, the council began the process of creating a document and digital resource for the Kingston community. This resource, once complete, will serve as a clearinghouse of environmental services and conservation information for Kingston residents and visitors. This guide will include information about: green purchasing, home improvements, reducing your carbon footprint, landscaping and gardening, solid waste reduction and composting, energy efficiency improvements at home, the office, and at school, links to local green initiatives, info about renewable energy, and local food.

### 4) Non-Toxic Landscape Management Plan

In November of 2011, the Kingston CAC began the process of investigating the feasibility of a non-toxic landscape management plan for the City of Kingston. After reviewing a model plan adopted by the Ulster County Legislature, the CAC met with Amanda LaValle, Coordinator of the County Department of the Environment, who also chairs the County committee charged with overseeing this new law. This process was in its infancy as of the year end 2011, and work will continue into 2012 to examine the viability of a similar law/resolution in Kingston.

### 5) 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 2011, the Green Development Guidelines Committee continued to work to develop a set of conservation guidelines addressing environmental issues that arise during the planning process.

### 6) Supporting Local Initiatives

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

- a. Environmental and Climate Justice Initiatives
- b. Environmental Protection Fund Park Planning and Development
- c. Kingston Parks and Recreation's Clean Air Initiative and Grant
- d. Healthy Kingston for Kids Initiative, including Complete Streets and Gardening

## 7) Professional Development

Kingston CAC council members 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. In 2011, CAC council members participated in:

1. NYS Conference on the Environment
2. Ulster County CAC Annual Roundtable
3. Place making in a Changing Climate Forum
4. ArcGIS Training at NYS DEC
5. Kingston's Renewable Energy Tour
6. Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Workshop at Ashokan Center
7. Presentation to the Hudson River Valley Greenway Conservancy Board
8. Complete Street Forum at the Hudson River Maritime Museum
9. Presentation to the Parks & Trails NY Board
10. Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Public Meeting at SUNY Ulster
11. Development of the Natural Resources Cluster for the REDC Strategic Plan
12. Presentation for the Trails Conference at SUNY New Paltz
13. US Green Building Council presentations on LEED programs and related building, energy, landscaping, and water conservation techniques
14. Conference and Dialogue on Water Resources and the Regional Economy
15. NYWEA Watershed Science and Technical Conference

## 8) Organizational Liaisons/Appointees

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

1. Ulster County Environmental Management Council
2. Ulster County Trails Advisory Council
3. Kingston Land Trust and Rail Trail Committee
4. City of Kingston Comprehensive Plan Working Group
5. Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership
6. City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council
7. City of Kingston Climate Smart and Green Jobs Taskforce
8. Friends of Forsyth Nature Center
9. NYS Association of Conservation Commissions
10. NYS Association of Environmental Management Councils
11. American Solar Energy Society
12. Public Safety/General Government/Auditing Committee liaison
13. Kingston Planning Board meeting liaison
14. Healthy Kingston for Kids Garden Committee

## 9) 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.

10) 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, the Kingston CAC has also continued the process of establishing a separate website for more extensive public outreach including links to other environmental agencies and organizations, council member biographies, documents and policy templates, for example. A local web designer, CIXdesigns, has donated their time and expertise to designing and setting up the website content. The website, [www.kingstoncac.org](http://www.kingstoncac.org), is projected to be launched in Spring 2012.