

# Conservation Advisory Council Town of Hillsdale, NY

David Lewis, Chair  
Paul Duernberger  
Mary King  
Gretchen Stevens

## MINUTES CAC MEETING, 25 JANUARY 2024

The meeting was convened at 7:09 pm at the Town Hall. Paul, Mary, and Gretchen were present. David was absent. Jamie Carano was present as the Town Board liaison. Amy Davidsen attended as a guest.

### **Old Business**

#### **Approval of Minutes**

The October and December 2023 minutes had been previously approved via email.

#### **Town Newsletter**

Mary has drafted an article about watching for and protecting animals crossing roads. We will submit it for the March issue of the newsletter to remind drivers at the time when many animals are on the move after their winter rest. We may also issue an article on minimizing light pollution year-round and especially during the bird migration seasons.

#### **Community forest grant**

Gretchen has sent to David the biodiversity priority areas map from the draft Open Space Plan, with parcel boundaries, so that David can look for forested parcels that might be suitable for a community forest. The 2024 grant program has not yet been announced, but we'll need to do lots of work (and obtain Town Board approval) before applying. Amy recommended collaborating with the Columbia Land Conservancy whose interests may overlap with town interests for such a project.

#### **Open Space Plan**

Gretchen hopes to get back to working on the next draft of the plan this winter (not before March).

#### **Comp Plan/Zoning Revisions**

Jamie informed us that she and Tom Carty are on the Town Board's Comprehensive Plan Committee, which indicates that the board may be generally in favor of reviewing and revising the plan. Gretchen will compose a memo to the board from the CAC, proposing the appointment of an advisory committee to carry out full-scale reviews of and revisions to the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and other parts of the town code that address uses of land and natural resources. After the CAC has approved the draft, we will send it to the Jamie and Tom before presenting it to the full Town Board.

#### **CAC web page**

The new webpage should be launched soon. David believes that Elizabeth Sheer has sent the materials to the website manager.

### **Roe Jan Library Repair Clinic**

We intended to have the town contribute to the Repair Clinic from the CAC's 2023 budget, but did not make the request before the end of the year. Jamie believes that we may still be able to draw on our 2023 budget if we do it soon—before the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in February? Gretchen will talk to Mike Dvorchak and Bob Patterson about this.

### **Climate Smart Task Force Update**

Paul reported that we are waiting to learn the results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> public survey about climate resiliency issued by the county task force. Paul has submitted a vision statement for Hillsdale. A greenhouse gas study found that, in Hillsdale, residential uses and transportation are responsible for most of our GHS emissions.

Gretchen will ask Audrey Kropp (Cornell Cooperative Extension, Columbia-Greene Counties) whether Silver certification in the Climate Smart Communities Program is actually achievable for a small, non-wealthy rural town such as Hillsdale, or if the required tasks are geared toward larger, wealthier, or more urban municipalities. Of course, whether or not we go after a Silver certification, the town should still be working toward reducing GHG emissions, lowering our carbon footprint, and improving our resiliency to the effects of climate change.

## **New Business**

### **CAC vacancy**

We will submit a notice about the vacant position for the February town newsletter, and send it to Robina to post in the newspaper of record. Amy may be interested in applying. The option of attending CAC meetings via Zoom would make it more doable for her to attend when she is away. We will look into providing a regular Zoom option for our meetings.

### **Columbia Co CSC Vacancy**

We learned from Jamie that Tom Carty will represent Hillsdale in the Columbia County Climate Smart Communities Task Force.

### **Roe Jan Park Steering Committee Vacancy**

The Town Board is looking for volunteers for the steering committee. We agreed that it would be good to have the CAC represented on the committee.

### **Floodplain Administrator**

We understand that the town needs to have a “Floodplain Administrator” to help fulfill town obligations for the county Hazard Mitigation Plan. A CAC member may be tapped to help with this task.

### **Columbia Co EMC**

Jamie would like regular reporting on the activities of the county Environmental Management Council to the Town Board, but says that the minutes of the monthly meetings are inaccessible on EMCs website. Mary agreed to ask the EMC chair about this.

### **AARP Funds**

Paul suggested using AARP funds for well water testing in the hamlet. Paul will obtain a price list for testing for various kinds of substances. We may be able to design a program of testing everywhere (where residents want to) for coliform bacteria, say, and also spot testing at strategic locations for petroleum hydrocarbons and salt. The results might alert us to problem areas that deserve more scrutiny. Mary will draw a map with her ideas about problem locations.

Paul also suggested obtaining funding for HVAC servicing for seniors. We would need to formally propose these ideas (in a written memo) to the Town Board before their 13 February meeting.

### **CAC Membership**

Jamie suggested have the town's CAC legislation changed to allow up to nine members.

### **EMC Report** (from Mary)

- There will be a Repair Clinic in Austerlitz on 13 April.
- Various Climate Smart events are listed on the county's Climate Smart webpage.
- The Zero Waste organization reports to the EMC about events and other matters.
- The EMC urges Town Boards to lobby for a bottle bill to expand the materials that can be returned for recycling.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08pm.

### **Action Items**

Gretchen:

- edit the two articles for the March newsletter
- draft memo about Comp Plan review and circulate to CAC
- talk to Mike D and Bob P about CAC contribution to Repair Clinic
- ask Audrey K about Silver certification
- submit notice about CAC vacancy to town newsletter and Robina
- inquire about Zoom access for CAC meetings

David:

- find potential parcels for a community forest
- check on webpage launch

Mary:

- ask EMC chair about accessibility of EMC minutes on webpage
- compose map of potential problem areas for water testing in the hamlet

Paul:

- obtain a price list for water testing/analysis for various substances

Everyone:

- If we decide to propose water testing or HVAC servicing as 2024 AARP projects, we will need to prepare a formal proposal to the Town Bd before 13 Feb. Volunteers?