

**MINUTES**  
**CHESTER CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**November 17, 2023 – 7:00 PM Senior Center, 81 Laroe Road, Chester**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn, Jane Dysinger, Helen Flavin, E J Szulwach, Susannah Devine, Justin George, Grayson Sussman Squires

**On-Zoom:** Kimberly Manson

**Phoned-in:** Brandon Holdridge

**Minutes:**

**A.** Brandon Holdridge, the newly elected Town of Chester Supervisor, phoned in to share information about the 2024 budget and the committee’s request for funding.

- No line item was allotted for the CCAC in the budget.
- Discretionary funds may be available for upcoming projects.
- Brandon is committed to the purpose and vision of the CCAC and intends to join meetings in person or on Zoom.
- Brandon assured the committee that the 2025 budget process would be fully fleshed out with funds available for the committee’s work and vision in preparing our community for climate issues.

**B.** Kate Schmidt, Orange County Planning, was our guest speaker. Kate shared a vast amount of ideas, resources, and contacts with the group. Shared here is a small representation of the information she shared:

- It was suggested that we reach out to local Conservation Advisory Committees as a first step. She described the CAC as a better, more effective starting place for our group as we seek to become a Climate Smart Community.
- We may want to consider a name change since “climate change” carries a negative connotation.
- NYSERDA offers many grants through Clean Energy Community resources. These are competitive yet can be targeted for specific projects and programs. Brandon had forwarded the group a recent listing of grant opportunities. Clean Energy Community Program offers help with grants and more with a Community Coordinator. The website is <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Communities>
- Another group to reach out to is the Hudson Valley Regional Council. The contact person is Melanie Patapis, Climate Smart Communities Coordinator. (<https://hudsonvalleyregionalcouncil.org/>)
- She discussed honing in on high-impact actions for our Town. For example, requiring new commercial buildings to include solar, reviewing our Town’s vehicles (highway and parks/recreation) plans to replace with electric vehicles, our Town’s recycling efforts and trash collection (especially in light of recent concerns about privatizing these collections, wildlife crossings, delineating wetlands educating our public about clean water (Moodna Creek) and the effects of road salt. Tom Becker is a point person for the Moodna Creek Watershed Council. Two important websites are: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html> and <https://hudsonwatershed.org/watershed-wavemaker-moodna-creek-watershed-intermunicipal-council/>
- Information about conducting a tree inventory and developing a tree management plan was discussed. Monroe has mandated in the Comprehensive Plan controlling the number of trees removed and also the replacement of trees being native and drought resistant.

- Involving the schools in some projects, i.e., the “green team.” Finding opportunities for young people interested in the environment and conservation to be involved in project would benefit all.
- She shared various flyers and brochures covering grasscycling, community composting, and more.

The committee thanked Kate for her time in sharing her expertise and wealth of knowledge about many aspects of the environment and our role in education and advocating for Chester Town residents.

C. The Committee discussed the desire to change the committee’s name to the Chester Conservation Advisory Committee. We will discuss this further with Brandon and move forward with the name change. The group decided to research a few topics for our next meeting.

- Grayson will review Chester’s town codes compared to Greenburgh and Ithaca.
- Justin will contact the highway department for information about the current fleet percentage of gas/electric vehicles. When will they need to be replaced? Is there a plan to replace them with electric vehicles? He will also reach out to Parks and Rec for the same purpose.
- EJ will visit municipal buildings and town locations to share how electricity can be reduced in simple yet constructive ways.
- Susannah will do some fact-finding about the current Town trash and recycling programs. She will also find out who oversees the Town’s website. It has been suggested that we have a presence on the Town website for educational information sharing.
- Jane feels one group member should attend the Town and Planning Board meetings. Also mentioned was the Town’s Comprehensive Plan – there may be some crossovers and connection points for our committee, such as the survey and its implications. Jane also recommends that we create a contact list for reaching out to community partners, i.e., Kiwanis, Historical Society, and the green team.  
She would also like to “kick off” the new year by having the Chronicle write an article informing the community about our group.
- We would also like to find out how many businesses in the Industrial Park have or will consider solar. There is a solar company located in the IP, and it looks like Pep Boys has solar panels on their roof. We want to open that up for discussion as we gain more information.
- We will continue to pursue becoming a Climate Smart Community and focus on smaller initiatives where we can be successful as we continue to learn more about how we can support the needs of the Town of Chester.

**Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Next Meeting:**

Friday, December 15, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Senior Center