

MINUTES
CHESTER CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
February 16, 2024 – 7:00 PM Sugar Loaf PAC, Sugar Loaf, NY

Attendance

In-person: Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn, Justin George, Grayson Sussman Squires, Susannah Devine, Bill Greene, Brandon Holdridge, JJ Westerveld

On-Zoom: Helen Flavin, Kimberly Manson

Approval of Minutes

On a motion offered by Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn and seconded by Grayson Sussman Squires to approve the minutes from the previous meeting on January 26, 2024.

9 in favor/ 0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES

Committee Reports

- A. Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn reported that all four resolutions (formation of the Conservation Advisory Council, Recommendation for Joint Town and Village CAC, Adoption of the Climate Smart Communities Pledge, and Creation of CSC Task Force and Coordinator) passed at the TB meeting on February 14, 2024.
- B. Brandon Holdridge expressed his support for the group and its work. He noted that the Board voted unanimously in favor of all four resolutions. Brandon elaborated on the history and goals of the CAC and CSC, highlighting grant opportunities and community information on land and water use and development, energy reduction, and climate mitigation. He stated that the CAC is positioned to consider the crucial issues in both climate and conservation. Brandon also stated that the town lawyer would review the Resolution to ensure it is sufficient for creating a CAC; otherwise, they would present it again as Local Law.
- C. An extensive discussion led by JJ Westerveld included a reexamination of past practices in Chester and Orange County, honing in on the need to protect open spaces from the destruction of our rural character and ecological habitat destruction. The difference between climate work and conservation work was defined, and there was discussion about the crossover goals (climate/conservation) of the newly created CAC. He informed the group of the existence of a previously formed NGO called the Chester Conservation Council. Brandon extended an invitation to the Chester Conservation Council members to join the current CAC. All members of the CAC expressed excitement about hearing from others, including experts, and leaning on groups such as Sustainable Warwick and The Preservation Collective for guidance. The CAC meetings are open to the public, and we genuinely want to hear from our neighbors about conservation and climate issues. Brandon clarified that no “cap” exists on how many can join.

Brandon discussed EJ Szulwach’s request to create a group concerned with climate and community issues. The Town Board posted an announcement for interested citizens to join the, at that time, Chester Climate Change Advisory Committee. Citizens responded, and the committee was established. Brandon went on to further explain that one of the essential roles of the CAC is to advise the Town Board, Planning Board, and Comprehensive Planning Committee on conservation and climate issues.

- D. Grayson Sussman Squires, the interim chairperson, mentioned efforts to reach out to large warehouse buildings at the industrial park regarding solar, still awaiting a response. We may consider a door-to-door approach, possibly starting with the Bruderhof Community building.
- E. Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn shared information about the DEC spring seedling sale and discussed the possibility of starting our own seedlings for sale or giveaway. We could include information about natives and eliminating/reducing pesticides and herbicides. JJ Westerveld mentioned having Joe-Pye Weed and discussed the riparian selection of seedlings offered by the DEC.

Discussion included locations for tree plantings and enhanced pollinator gardens, the Warwick Winery's giveaway of milkweed, and Sustainable Orange County's seedling sale.

Wendy Insinger, Bill Greene's wife also discussed a campaign where corporate parks are not mowing their property. It was suggested that we could ask our local industrial park and other large corporate buildings to stop/reduce mowing or consider planting with native landscaping.

Additionally, Knapp's View may be an excellent location for tree plantings or pollinator gardens. Suggestions were made regarding the mowing of the field that interferes with local flora and fauna, especially bobolink nesting sites.

- F. Plans for the Coolest Recycling Collaboration with Warwick were firmed up. The event will be on April 20 from 10:00-2:00, at the Town Hall. Volunteers will be Bill with his horse trailer, Susannah Devine, and Lee Squires. Susannah Devine and Justin George will work on the publicity for this event.

Next Steps/Homework

- A. Grayson will continue contacting local industrial park businesses regarding solar roofing and will meet with Tracy Schuh to discuss the Climate Smart Communities Action Plan.
- B. Elizabeth will continue exploring options for seedling sales and tree-planting events. Confirming details (location and if a Resolution is needed) for the Coolest Recycling Event, and scheduling an informational meeting with Melanie Patapis, CSC Coordinator. We would like to meet with her at our next meeting on March 13th. Elizabeth will also organize an informational speech at the Kiwanis Club with help from EJ Szulwach for the Coolest Recycling Event.
- C. JJ will share tree and pollinator placements and prepare a proposal for the mowing schedule for Knapp's View (considering bird nesting and more).
- D. Susannah and Justin will work on the Coolest Recycling publicity. Susannah will also reach out to local scouts groups and school clubs. We have not forgotten about the TREX Challenge.
- E. Bill Greene will continue to liaise with Michael Helme, Sustainable Warwick, to collaborate on the Coolest Recycling Event.
- F. All members will try to attend the Town Board, Planning Board, and Comprehensive Planning Meetings. Please let us know if you plan to attend a meeting. The schedule is listed on the next page.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – 7:00 PM – Location **TBD**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82231969982?pwd=dkcCK3RMclpTQUtYeGVGUzhCdnBHdz09>

Meeting ID: 822 3196 9982

Passcode: 207166

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn

CAC, Secretary

Town Board Meetings: 7 PM Town Hall	
February 28, 2024	Justin George
March 13, 2024	Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn (our meeting)
March 27, 2024	Grayson Sussman Squires, Bill Greene
April 10, 2024	Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn
Planning Board Meetings: 7PM Town Hall	
February 21, 2024	Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn
March 6, 2024	
April 3, 2024	
Comprehensive Planning Committee: 7 PM	
February 27, 2024 (SLPAC Pavilion)	Justin George
March 14, 2024 (Senior Center)	Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn
March 26, 2024 (SLPAC Pavilion)	Grayson Sussman Squires
April 11, 2024	

Links to view:

1. Sustainable Warwick Coolest Recycling Drive: <https://www.sustainablewarwick.org/coolest-recycling>
2. Conservation Advisory Councils and Boards: <https://hudson.dnr.cals.cornell.edu/conservation-planning/municipal-role/conservation-advisory-councils>