

MINUTES
CHESTER CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
June 27, 2024 – 6:00 PM 3 Romers Alley, Sugar Loaf, NY

Attendance

In-person: Martine DiPasquale, Jane Dysinger, EJ Szulwach, Tracy Schuh, Susannah Devine, Bill Greene, Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn, Deputy Mayor Betty Ann Reilly (Village of Chester Liaison), Town Councilman Bob Courtenay (Town of Chester Liaison), Langdon Morris, Rose Schilling

On-Zoom: Grayson Sussman Squires

Absent: Justin George

WELCOME

Martine DiPasquale, CAC Chairperson welcomed Deputy Mayor Betty Ann Reilly and Town Councilman Bob Courtenay.

Old Business Update and Committee Reports

- A. Grayson presented the preliminary draft Greenhouse Gas Inventory. He shared that he was missing fuel usage data. Town Councilman Bob Courtenay suggested that he would follow up and provide the information to Grayson. Grayson shared information about the GHG Inventory as a component of our Climate Smart Community actions. The GHG Inventory should be completed by the end of July.

Recommendation: None

- B. Susannah shared information regarding the procurement and placement of a Purple Martin (PM) house at Knapps View. Our local Tractor Supply has the recommended type house cited by the [Purple Martin Conservation Association](#). It was suggested that the PM house be installed near water on the property.

Recommendation: The CAC recommends the Town Board approve the placement of a Purple Martin Gourd Condo in the best location at Knapps View, and allow the CAC to investigate the possibility of receiving a donation of one or funding through the Town. Cost \$295

Motion offered by EJ Szulwach and seconded by Susannah Devine
8 in favor/ 0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES

- C. Susannah and Jane provided an update regarding planning a Pop-up Repair Café. Jane and Susannah shared background information about Repair Cafes, including Warwick's successful events. The next Warwick Repair Café is **on July 20th**, and all members of the CAC were encouraged to attend. Tracy added that we might ask local craftspeople from Sugar Loaf if they would serve as Coaches. Obtaining the required insurance for the event was discussed. We will need to secure a one-day rider for the event. Susannah will contact Town Supervisor Brandon Holdridge. Bill suggested that there may be other places to obtain affordable insurance. More information will be shared at our next meeting regarding the Pop-up version of the Repair Café.

Recommendation: None

- D. Bill led a discussion about the formation of a Tree Commission in both the Town and Village of Chester. His proposal was shared with the group. The Tree Commission would be tasked with working with the Parks Department, DPW, and Town and Village Board to among other things, plant more trees, apply for grants (Arbor Day), create a citizen-sponsored memorial tree program, and engage in public education about the value of trees. Once established, the Tree Commission would require funding. Bill shared links to nearby Tree Commissions:

- <https://www.townofwarwick.org/warwick-tree-commission>
- <https://villageofwarwick.org/2021/05/village-of-warwick-shade-tree-commission/>
- <https://www.middleton-ny.com/DocumentCenter/View/818/City-of-Middletown-City-Code-Chapter-449-Trees-PDF>

Rose shared that the DEC offers free trees and has very knowledgeable arborists. Grayson also reminded the council that CSC points could be obtained through a tree inventory and plan for tree preservation.

Recommendation: The CAC recommends the Town Board and the Village Board of Trustees form a joint Tree Commission. The Tree Commission should be tasked with working in conjunction with the Parks Department, DPW and both the Town and Village Boards in planting more trees, applying for grants (Arbor Day), create a citizen sponsored memorial tree program, and engage in public education about the value of trees. The CAC could be tasked with reviewing applications to establish the Commission. The Commission should function as an independent body thereafter.

**Motion offered by EJ Szulwach and seconded by Tracy Schuh
8 in favor/ 0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES**

- E. Elizabeth informed and updated the council about the Monarch Town designation and planned collaborative project with Chester Elementary School. The planning will continue in September when the school is in session. Elizabeth, Jane, and Tracy will continue to seek more community involvement for this project. Town Councilman Bob Courtenay suggested outreach to local Scouts. Elizabeth suggested a showing of the video, Beauty on the Wing by Kim Smith.

Recommendation: The CAC adopts the Monarch Town initiative as a collaborative program with Chester Elementary School to begin in the Fall. The CAC will extend the public education effort as an initiative with other groups, esp. youth centered organizations within the Town.

**Motion offered by Bill Greene and seconded by Grayson Sussman Squires
8 in favor/ 0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES**

New Business

- A. Grayson shared a report detailing a pricing structure for the Level 2 EV chargers at the Senior Center and SLPAC. Town Councilman Bob Courtenay suggested gathering data from Warwick and Middletown regarding their usage and rates. Deputy Mayor Betty Ann Reilly asked what the pricing schedule was currently. It was unclear if these “slow-charging” stations currently have a fee/price. Given the need for more information, the pricing recommendation for the Level 2 EV chargers will be presented at the next meeting.

Recommendation: None

- B. Tracy addressed policy concerns in light of the new subdivision project (1414 Kings Highway) located at the intersection of Kings Highway and Well Sweep Lane. As described in the developer’s updated application materials online, there may be wetlands within the proposed construction area and surrounding neighbors have concerns about tree damage due to proposed water line installation. With this being the first project on the CAC dashboard, we need:
1. In general, a clarification of our role in working with the Planning Board, including the 30-day period for recommendations.
 2. Project-specific - -Potential site visit to observe wetlands and report back to the appropriate board (Planning or Town) regarding issues from concerned citizens adjacent to the subdivision.

Recommendation: The CAC will submit a memo to Supervisor Holdridge seeking facilitation of its advisory role to the Planning Board.

**Motion offered by EJ Szulwach and seconded by Tracy Schuh
8 in favor/ 0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES**

- C. The council discussed the past proposal for an intermunicipal agreement between the Town and Village to protect the Village water station on Black Meadow Road. Town Councilman Bob Courtenay suggested reaching out to Town Councilman Tom Becker, as he worked on this previously and is most knowledgeable. Deputy Mayor Betty Ann Reilly also suggested Gary Green as a resource. Jane suggested having an aquifer and water protection expert speak with the group. Susannah will serve as lead on gathering this information, including reaching out to a member from the Monroe Conservation Advisory Council because Walton Lake is also used as drinking water for the Village.

Recommendation: The CAC will contact Town Councilman Becker and a member of Monroe Conservation Advisory Council to gather information related to Walton Lake protection because it is used as drinking water for the Village of Chester.

Black Dirt area flooding concerns were discussed and future updates will be provided as appropriate when available.

Recommendation: None

- D. Tracy and Susannah will construct a Conservation Advisory Council brochure for dissemination to the public and have it readily available at events.

Recommendation: None

- E. The Red Oak trees outside Town Hall need to be removed/replaced. Tracy spoke our resident arborist about the removal of them in the Fall. She also reached out to Kristen Palmer from Parks/Rec. Kristen is willing to coordinate with the Highway Department for manpower and necessary tools.

Recommendation: The CAC recommends the Town move/replace the Red Oak trees outside Town Hall in the Fall, supporting coordination between Parks/Rec and Highway Department.

**Motion offered by Susannah Devine and seconded by Bill Greene
7 in favor/ 1 abstained/0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES**

- F. The council discussed the dedicated page on the Town website. Available information is limited. Member profile information is not yet complete. The CAC will generate materials and information about "who we are" and "what we do".

Recommendation: The CAC will pursue the possibility of being included on the Village website as well to promote interest in the work of the CAC and recruit residents. Deputy Mayor Betty Ann Reilly will follow up.

- G. The receipt of an email requesting CAC participation in a resident-coordinated pollination planting project with passive public education signs/kiosks at Knapps View was discussed. Of note, Jane offered three dates related to her availability earlier this month to assist, which was contingent on the CAC receiving planning information and other horticultural information from the resident. Having received a rejection of the request for additional information from the resident for implementation plans and a clear role for the CAC, the dates were not shared. The CAC may revisit consideration of its participation in a pollinator planting project pending receipt of the requested additional planning and potential resource allocation information from the resident.

Recommendation: Table discussion and consideration given the current workload of the Council.

**Motion offered by EJ Szulwach and seconded by Jane Dysinger
6 in favor/0 opposed: MOTION CARRIES**

Recommendation: For discussion at the next meeting as a separate matter... The CAC needs a “field trip” to Knapps View by a committee of interested members to outline a process for the creation of a “master plan” to guide current and future site-specific programs, esp. public education initiatives. No action taken.

[quorum lost - members had to leave before end of meeting]

- H. The Community Preservation Fund and a potential list of options were discussed. Town Councilman Courtenay will look into this and provide the council with an updated listing of properties. Background: The Town has requested that we review listed properties for identified criteria such as wetlands, unique land features, and flora and fauna. The Town Board is actively discussing how to preserve such properties by purchasing or buying development rights to maintain open space. The council will come back to the CPF at our next meeting after obtaining an updated property listing.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, July 25, 2024, 6 PM, 3 Romers Alley, Sugar Loaf, NY