



Photo Credit: The Preservation Collective

2025 Annual Report



The Chester Conservation Advisory Council
in accordance with municipal law,
for purposes of advising the Town in the
development management and
protection of its natural resources.



1786 Kings Highway • Chester, NY 10918

WHAT IS THE CCAC?

The Chester Conservation Advisory Council or CCAC is the official body organized and appointed to serve as the main advisory group to the Town Board on matters relating to the protection and management of open spaces, natural areas, and other environmental issues, and is fully authorized to conduct surveys, studies and inventories of natural and physical features including open spaces and wetlands.

Source: Resolution to Form A Conservation Advisory Council for the Town of Chester Out of the Climate Change Advisory Committee, February 14, 2024

Introductory Local Law 3 was adopted to establish a Conservation Advisory Council

On March 13, 2024 Introductory Local Law 3 was adopted to establish a Conservation Advisory Council pursuant to General Municipal Law of the State of New York, Article 12-F, § 239-x. The members of the Council receive no compensation for their services as members. Working in cooperation with the Town of Chester Planning Board, the Council can recommend from time to time features, plans and programs relating to environmental improvement for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Chester and, similarly, recommend to the Town Board appropriate and desirable changes in existing local laws and ordinances relating to environmental control or recommend new local laws and ordinances.

CCAC Members (2025):

Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn, James Donovan, Jane Dysinger,
William Greene, Tracy Schuh, Leslie Smith, EJ Szulwach
Susannah Devine, Co-Chair
Martine DiPasquale, Chair

Liaisons:

Brandon Holdridge, Town Supervisor
Elizabeth Reilly, Village of Chester Trustee & Deputy Mayor





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2025 Selected Highlights

January 2025:

- Recommendation: Numerous recommendations sent to Comprehensive Plan Committee
- Develop: Provide layout/design for Town of Chester Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) letter. A PDR program is a voluntary, incentive-based tool used by local governments and land trusts to permanently protect open space and farmland by purchasing development rights from landowners via a conservation easement.

February 2025:

- Motion: Update information on the Town of Chester CCAC website subpage
- Discussion: CCAC Members invited to visit Laroe property. Property was visited by CCAC members.
- Motion: Elect Co-Chair and Coordinator of the Climate Smart Community Taskforce

March 2025:

- Motion: Co-sponsor Lights Out/Dark Skies Campaign and "Beauty On The Wing" Film At Chester Library
- Communication: Sought policy action and response to Orange County tree clearing on Restdale Road and in general for Sugar Loaf Mountain.
- Discussion: Oak Woods Advisory, 4 Lot Subdivision; Camp Monroe/Pickerel
- Motion: Added separate public comment section on the CCAC agenda, after old business, with time limits for each speaker.

April 2025:

- Event: Coolest Recycling Drive 4/12/25, in cooperation with Sustainable Warwick
- Event: Repair Cafe: 4/26/25
- Motion: Communicated with OC Parks Commissioner to reiterate community concern regarding tree clearing on Restdale Road.
- Letter of Support: Community Preservation Fund Support, sent to State Senator Skoufis Cc: Assemblyman Maher (Letter attached)
- Branding: Develop branded set of community "Did You Know" public service announcement for use on social media, Town of Chester eblasts, etc.
- Branding: Develop and print Lights Out bookmark announcing Spring and Fall bird migrations





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May 2025:

- Motion: CCAC to announce and co-sponsor the OC Audubon bird walk at Knapp's View
- Event: CCAC/OC Audubon bird walk at Knapp's View 5/30/25
- Communication: Send letter to Restdale Road residents with update from OC Parks Dept (Letter attached)
- Recommendation: Support community advocacy against the closure of Exit 127- Route 17 as the loss will have severe cultural impacts on Sugar Loaf community.

June 2025:

Discussions: Planning and Environmental Concerns, CCAC calendar of events, Yelverton Inn, Barn and Store

July 2025:

Motion: To approve CCAC Annual Events /Initiatives: Repair Café Arbor Day, Coolest Recycling, Lights Out Campaign, Earth Day, and annual return of Bobolinks and Purple Martins

Motion: Supported protection of funding for historic preservation citing Yelverton Inn

September 2025:

- Supervisor: Town Supervisor Brandon Holdridge provided update on Community Preservation Fund legislation and Town Comprehensive Plan, proposed town code changes to include CCAC role.
- Discussion: Historic trees and preservation advocacy
- Award: Town of Chester to receive the 2025 Building Bridges Award from the Hudson Valley Regional Council (HVRC) on November 6, 2025. The honor recognized Chester and partner municipalities for collaboration on the "Coolest Recycling Drive" to collect and safely recycle old refrigerant appliances.

October 2025:

- Event: Repair Cafe, October 25, 10-2pm

November 2025:

- Training: 3 CCAC members attended Community Preservation Fund (CPF) training via Scenic Hudson in November at no cost. Members learned about history, benefits and implementation of CPF.

December 2025:

- Motion: To approve reimbursement for purchase heavy duty pole for Purple Martin house being constructed and donated by Bruderhoff Community
- Discussion: To honor Chester community/former CCAC members with living tree and plaque at Knapp's View, via Town Board action



TODAY! And we are most certainly COOL...

The COOLEST RECYCLING DRIVE of 2025

We're Collecting:

- window air conditioners
- dehumidifiers
- water coolers
- mini-fridges
- small appliances with refrigerants

Sponsors



Date: Sat, April 12, 2025
Time: 10am-2pm
Place: Chester Town Hall
 1786 Kings Highway,
 Chester NY 10918

FREE Event:

We are collecting & properly recycling small appliances with refrigerants. Chester NY area residents are invited to bring old appliances with refrigerants.

NOTE: Items must fit in the trunk of a car.

Town of Chester

Orange County, New York
 Village of Chester • Hamlet of Sugar Loaf
 1786 Kings Highway • Chester, NY 10918 • (845) 469-2000

WHAT IS A PDR?

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program is a voluntary initiative that aims to permanently protect productive, sensitive, or aesthetic landscapes.

HOW DOES PDR WORK?

Under a PDR program, a landowner voluntarily sells the development rights to part or all of their land to a land trust or municipality. The program compensates landowners for accepting a deed restriction that limits future development. The landowner still owns the land maintaining all other rights and can sell the land in the future for purposes specified in the agreement for farming or open space uses. Participating landowners in the program contribute to the above list of benefits to the community and a lasting legacy of land preservation for future generations.

IS PDR USED ELSEWHERE AROUND HERE?

Yes, the Town of Warwick has a working program for over 20 years. A multimillion dollar bond issue was endorsed by the voters of Warwick in 2000 to use farmland through the voluntary purchase of the development rights of farm properties and open space, which means the land remains farmed in perpetuity and farmers receive monies now which enable them to modernize their operations and stay farming for the foreseeable future.

HOW ARE PROPERTIES SELECTED FOR PDR?

A PDR program operates on a voluntary basis with willing landowners. The Town is focused on protection of water and other natural resources; the creation of parks and recreation areas; the preservation of ecologically important areas; the preservation of historic places; and protecting farmland from future development.



BENEFITS OF A PDR

- Maintain the green belts that surrounds our town, village & hamlet
- Save our natural beauty
- Hold down school taxes
- Protect our water
- Protect our infrastructure
- Preserve significant historic places
- Reduce the loss of farms and local food production
- Hold down costs of municipal services
- Preserve our wildlife
- Encourage sustainable land use planning
- Enhance property values
- Boost tourism/agritourism

PDR protects our most important assets:
 water, open space, quality of life, keeps taxes down and balances growth with maintaining green spaces in our community. It also is proven that it builds value in our community.



QUESTIONS? EMAIL: ChesterAdvisory@gmail.com

REPAIR CAFE

SAT 4/26/25 .10am-2pm

Chester Senior Center
 81 Laroe Road, Chester, NY 10918

Have something broken?

Bring your beloved broken items to a fix-it clinic to be repaired **FREE OF CHARGE** by neighbors, neighbors. Together, let's recycle, reuse & repair!

- Electrical/Lamp Repair
- Sewing/ Mending
- Knife/ Scissors/Tool Sharpening
- Computer Repair
- Bicycle Repair
- Jewelry Repair
- Glueing Wood, Pottery, etc

- You must be checked in by 1:30pm to participate.
- Limit 2 items per person.
- NO gas/propane powered items.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER? HAVE QUESTIONS? EMAIL: ChesterAdvisory@gmail.com

Sponsors



Did You Know?

About Knapp's View?

In 2004, Chester voters overwhelmingly approved a proposal to preserve this 90 acre property as "open space for public use."

By the Town purchasing the property, the rural character of the area is preserved, and a habitat corridor is protected. Today, the mowed paths of this parkland are enjoyed by nature lovers, birders, trail walkers/runners, photographers, picnickers and more.

Location: 1603 Kings Hwy, Chester, NY 10918

Come visit this beautiful place!

Questions? Email: ChesterAdvisory@gmail.com



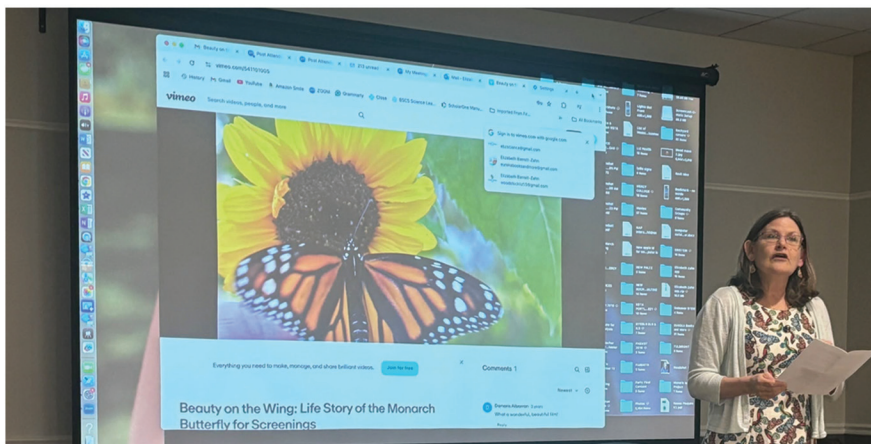
Join the Orange County Audubon Society & Chester Conservation Advisory Council
for an evening walk at Knapps View
Friday May 30 at 6pm

1603 Kings Hwy, Chester NY 10918
 Map: <https://shorturl.at/ihYrX>



Bring binoculars, wear walking shoes/boots as the paths may be muddy. There have been sightings of bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, American Kestrel, song sparrow, hermit thrush, Baltimore oriole, Northern flicker, and more. After the walk, join the group at Océane Vineyards and Winery for dinner or drinks.

For info email:
eurekabooksandmore@gmail.com





Lights Out!

The Lights Out! initiative aims to reduce the negative impact of artificial light on migrating birds who can become disoriented and collide with buildings or windows.

Spring Migration:
April 15 - May 31

Fall Migration:
Aug 15 - Nov 15




What you can do:

- 1) Help migrating birds with safe passage between their nesting and wintering grounds by turning off outside lights.
- 2) Put non-essential lights on a timer, so they turn off after 11pm. This reduces energy use and saves you money.
- 3) Lights Out is healthier for humans too. Research suggests that the use of artificial lights at night can contribute to obesity, depression, diabetes, sleep disorders & breast cancer.
- 4) Down-shield exterior lights to eliminate glare and light that's directed upward.
- 5) Install automatic motion sensors and timing controls wherever possible.

Learn more: darksky.org



Town of Chester
Orange County, New York



Did You Know?

Don't Toss it! Fix it!

Chester NY is hosting a Repair Café:
Saturday, October 25, 2025 from 10am-2pm
Chester Senior Center
81 Laroe Road, Chester, NY 10918

Bring your beloved broken items to a fix-it clinic to be repaired **FREE OF CHARGE** by neighbors, for neighbors.

You must be checked in by 1:30pm.
Limit 2 items per person.
NO gas/propane powered items.

Questions?
ChesterAdvisory@gmail.com



Make a Note:

NYS Environmental Hotline

If you witness an environmental crime or believe a violation of environmental law occurred, please call the NYS DEC Division of Law Enforcement hotline:

1-844-332-3267

Learn more
on the NYS
DEC website



What is a Conservation Advisory Council?

A Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) is an advisory body that provides formal advice to local governments on the development, management, and protection of local natural resources.

- Consists of no less than three (3) and no more than nine (9) members who shall be appointed by the Town Board of Chester to serve a term of two years. In addition, the CAC has associate members (non-voting) including a liaison from the Town and Village Board.
- Provides input, assistance, comments and recommendations regarding environmental assessments and environmental impact statements for proposed actions.
- Conducts studies, surveys, and inventories of the natural and man-made features and to create and maintain a Natural Resource Inventory and Open Space Map.
- Reviews materials and makes recommendations regarding the preservation and development of natural resources in a manner that enhances the value of the natural environment to the Town's residents.

Projects

The CAC finds opportunities to provide education or information to public officials and the community on environmental issue and topics.

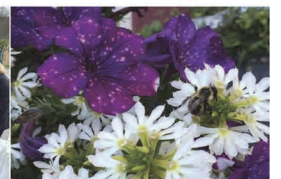
Projects include tree and animal protection, encouraging biodiversity, Climate Smart initiatives including the Chester Repair Café and air conditioning recycling event.



Tree planting and dedication for Arbor Day



Cooler Recycling Event with Sustainable Warwick



Working to create pollinator pathways



Created an open space maintenance plan to protect grassland birds



Working with issues of preservation and development

The Chester Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC) and Climate Smart Community (CSC) held their 3rd Repair Café (RC) on Saturday, October 25, 2025 at the Senior Center in the 4-hour period from 10am – 2pm.

A team of 27 volunteers joined together to provide this unique, free repair service. Sixteen (16) of the 27 volunteers are skilled “fixers” who volunteered their time and talent to be repair “coaches”.

Eleven (11) other volunteers including six CCAC members and 5 members of the Chester community supported the repair efforts with greeting, registering, taking photos and videos, creating posters and displays, engaging the public with conservation information and answering questions, preparing/serving refreshments and conducting exit interviews.

Sixty-four residents came to the front desk requesting 145 repairs.

Here are the final statistics for your review.

Newcomers to the Repair Café Concept

- Twenty-five (25) people attending this were “first-timers” to any repair café. In addition, it should be noted at least 5 other people saw the RC sign at the end of the driveway and came in to our event to find out what a Repair Café is all about. They said they would definitely bring items to the next RC.

- That’s over forty-five percent (45%) of attendees who had either never even heard of the repair café concept before this event and / or never attended one. So that’s another 30 people who now know about RC’s and plan on using this service in the future. Some of the positive comments received from residents at both the CCAC Information Table and at exit interviews are outlined later in this report.

Types / Numbers of Repairs

In preparation for upcoming holiday dinners, many knives were sharpened. Garden loppers and hedge clippers were tightened and sharpened for next year's growing season. One hundred forty-five (145) items were analyzed for repair and here is the summary by "category" based on repair tickets statistics:

- 76 Sharpening jobs (Knives / Scissors / Garden Tools)
- 7 Lamp repairs
- 27 Sewing repairs
- 1 Sewing Machine repair
- 7 Electrical / Mechanical repairs
- 16 Jewelry repairs
- 9 Glueing repairs
- 2 Computer / digital repairs

145 Total items repaired

Of the 145 items brought in, 137 were successfully repaired (95%).

Eight (8) items (5%) were not able to be repaired for assorted reasons including missing or needed parts, parts no longer available, bad circuit board, motor burned out, "too far gone" - broken beyond repair.

Bottom line, the Chester Repair Café succeeded in keeping 137 items from "landing" in a landfill.

Photos and Videos

The photos and videos taken during the RC event show how grateful and happy residents were in having their beloved broken items fixed. Many brought items they cherish or use daily and the Repair Café event gives them a chance to bring them back to life for free.

Behind every object brought back to life there is more than a fixed piece – there is a story that continues.

Click on the link/scan the QR Code below to see and hear the interaction and camaraderie among fixers, neighbors and volunteers and to see for yourself what a Repair Café is all about.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15VoUvnXAeQlyM0yVujMP6jTYqSiaNL5g?usp=sharing>



Scan for photos and videos of
Sat, Oct 25, 2025
Chester NY Repair Cafe





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To Whom It May Concern,

We write as representatives of the Town of Chester Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC) to express profound disappointment and frustration regarding the recent tree-clearing and excavation activities undertaken by Orange County and the NY/NJ Trail Conference in our rural community of Chester, NY – Sugar Loaf Mountain Park area, specifically on Restdale Road, Chester NY 10918.

This decision has not only disrupted the natural landscape but has also significantly and negatively impacted the environmental and aesthetic value of the area. In addition, the Sugar Loaf Mountain parcel, in particular, has archeologically sensitive areas, and the siting of trails is of concern to local historians.

Trees are vital to our community's health and well-being and enhance the scenic beauty that draws visitors and residents to this region. The removal of these trees undermines these critical ecological benefits and disregards the values and voices of the community. The effect of the reckless tree clearing has created what is essentially a denuded area requiring immediate corrective action.

The plan to further destroy the trailhead to develop a parking lot for agency vehicles is not an acceptable use for that land. Oddly enough, clearing trees in that area will also require added expense to regrade the land, further destabilizing the root system of the remaining trees. Trees are now more likely to fall from area flooding or high wind events. Developing a parking lot abrogates the promise to improve a trailhead in that area and is a bad deal.

In addition, the potential for increased car and truck traffic in this residential community with no outlet is an unfair and unwelcome imposition. Will your agencies compensate residents for the sudden drop in their property values? Or regarding the security measures they will need to undertake as the parking lot may draw new and unwanted gatherings from people outside the local area?

The planned construction of a parking lot at the expense of a thriving natural landscape demonstrates a troubling prioritization of convenience over conservation. The trees that have been removed provide essential ecological benefits—absorbing carbon dioxide, supporting wildlife habitats, and stabilizing soil. Their loss cannot simply be mitigated by asphalt.



A parking lot will increase impervious surfaces, contributing to stormwater runoff, flooding, and heat island effects. It also sends a troubling message about the values of Orange County legislature, the County Executive, and the Trail Conference—that hardscape development for trucks and vans is prioritized above preservation and sustainable practices for community benefit.

Rural areas like ours rely on preserving natural spaces to maintain their unique character and appeal. The indiscriminate cutting of trees for purposes that have not been transparently communicated or justified to the community is not only unacceptable but transparently communicated or justified to the community is unacceptable and reflects poor planning and a lack of respect for public input.

We urge the Orange County legislature, Orange County Executive, and the NY/NJ Trail Conference to explain this decision and provide a detailed plan to mitigate the damage. We request a halt to further tree-cutting activities until a full environmental impact assessment is conducted and shared with the public. We also request plans for reforestation, a review of current policies to prevent such actions in the future, and an open dialogue with our community's residents to ensure that their perspectives are considered in future decisions.

We hope that your organizations will take responsibility for their actions and work collaboratively with the community to restore and protect the natural environment we all cherish. Failure to do so risks not only the public's trust and support but also the long-term sustainability of the trails and open spaces you are each entrusted to steward.

The Town of Chester established the CCAC to foster unified action on environmental issues and advise on developing, managing, and protecting the Town's natural resources. It is part of our mandate to maintain communications with public and private agencies, whether local, state, or national in scope, whose programs and activities impact the viability and sustainability of our natural environment.

We look forward to your prompt response and concrete steps toward rectifying this matter.

Sincerely,

Martine DiPasquale, Chair

Susannah Devine, Co-chair

Cc: Orange County Executive - Steve Neuhaus

Orange County Legislator - Glenn Ehlers

NY/NJ Trail Conference

Chester Town Board

Chester Village Mayor

NYS-DEC - Permits Region 3





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May 5, 2025

Dear Restdale Road Neighbors,

We hope this letter finds you well.

Recently, Orange County initiated tree clearing at the proposed Sugar Loaf Mountain Park trailhead on Restdale Road. This action was undertaken on an expedited timeline to ensure completion before the Indiana Bat nesting selection period, as per NYS law.

We have been assured by the Orange County Parks and Recreation Commissioner Travis B. Ewald P.E., that no further work is anticipated at this portion of the property in the immediate future. Orange County Parks Department has agreed to notify the community in advance of any future construction activities.

Town Supervisor Holdridge secured a commitment to convene a "community conversation," which may be held in person or via video conference. We will provide further details once the meeting has been scheduled. In the meantime, if you have any questions or notice activity at the Restdale Road site, please do not hesitate to reach out to Town Supervisor Brandon Holdridge: BHoldridge@thetownofchester.org

Sincerely,

Town Supervisor Brandon Holdridge

Brandon Holdridge
Esigned with permission

Chairwoman Martine DiPasquale

Martine DiPasquale

Co-Chair Susannah Devine

Susannah Devine





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April 28, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Re: Community Preservation Fund Support - S277A (2025-2026)

Dear State Senator Skoufis:

We, the Chester Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC) members, respectfully urge you to continue to advocate fiercely for the approval of S277A (2025-2026).

It is imperative that the Town of Chester be permitted to hold a public vote to establish a community preservation fund. Passage of the S277A (2025-2026) will save farmland, protect drinking water aquifers, and support the preservation of other open spaces and historical assets.

Establish a dedicated community preservation fund would help the Town in matching important state and federal grants that will aid and advance open space protection goals as outlined in the Town of Chester Comprehensive Plan and Community Preservation Plan.

Funds secured will be used to assist willing landowners eager to contribute to the preservation of critical natural resources and open space. The Town's largest residential development project in progress has even provided a letter of support to local officials.

The people of Chester are not asking for anything more than what the neighboring Town of Warwick has been allowed to do for over two decades as well as other municipalities in the region that recently received State authorization.

The benefits of open space for the environment and community are well-known, highly advocated for and would have a long-lasting impact for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to securing approval and Governor's signature on S277A (2025-2026).

Respectfully,

Martine DiPasquale

Martine DiPasquale, Chairwoman

Susannah Devine

Susannah Devine, Co-Chair

Cc:

Hon. Brian Maher, Assemblyman

Hon. Brandon Holdridge, Town Supervisor

Hon. Tom Becker, Deputy Town Supervisor

Hon. Robert Courtenay, Town Councilman

Hon. Antonio Ardisana, Town Councilman

Hon. Larry Dysinger, Town Councilman

