

Minutes of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force Meeting May 15, 2026

Call to order: 11:03 a.m.

Attendees:

In Person: Ilona Campo, Gary Redlon, Joe Montuori, Savannah Usher

Microsoft Teams: Amy Sayegh

1. **Review: January Meeting Minutes**

- No comments, questions, or concerns

Recap: Discussed CCARP development including the public CVA and Partnership surveys, CSRP summary report, and Scenario Planning Workshops. Discussed Transit Facility solar array project (design completed) and EV projects (MV's EV maintenance and safety presentation), and transit study kickoff. Ilona shared takeaways from recent webinars/MOSS meetings. DPW gave an update on the solar carport at the Donald B. Smith (DBS) campus project, statuses of some dams and culverts, and shared updates on fleet equipment (vector/vacall trucks and electric golf carts). Health discussed the need for a Putnam Lake Cooling Center, and BES's Hazard Mitigation Plan update was discussed.

2. **Discussion: Climate Smart Activities Updates**

- **Community Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CCARP)** development with HVRC.
 - o Draft Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) completed. Following Spencer's departure, the revised vision statement, now featured on the CCARP [website](#), was updated using survey feedback and will be included in the final plan.
 - o The next step is a 30+ day public comment period, currently anticipated for June/July, followed by Legislative adoption in September. A public presentation is being considered.
 - o The Lunch & Learn webinar drew approximately 20 attendees, with a follow-up survey (closed May 11th) to help prioritize strategies.
 - o Ilona conducted CCARP outreach at Boscobel's Earth Day Festival on April 25th. Despite rainy weather, the event had a fairly strong turnout and provided valuable engagement, particularly with residents from the western part of the County. Savannah and Joe were also in attendance doing community outreach.
 - o The CCARP Leadership Team/Working Group is continuing to develop plan implementation indicators and metrics, with a follow-up meeting scheduled for May 18th.
- **Solar, EV Charging Station, and Native Landscaping Projects at the Transit Facility:**
 - o The Transit Facility solar project design is complete and awaiting bid release. Due to the loss of available NYSERDA incentives, additional FTA funding will likely be needed.
 - o Final EV charging station designs are complete for the Transit Facility and DBS. Gary is still collecting contractor estimates and advancing designs for additional County EV locations, including the Kern (Health Dept.) building, Koehler Senior Center, and PC Golf Course facilities. Waiting on Lilypad's proposal and we may end up piggybacking off of an existing ChargePoint contract. Gary also got a preliminary estimate for the seven chargers at DBS in the \$66-70k range for EVs only, the solar portion may need to be separate as the project keeps shifting. Planning for public and fleet charging infrastructure continues as project scopes evolve.
 - o Purchasing already acquired a fully electric vehicle for the Health Department.
 - o Ilona shared the preliminary native landscaping design plans created by Jen Lerner (CCE). This project will eventually support our application for the CSC [Water-Smart Landscaping action](#) which requires 1,000fts² (recently landscaped Board of Elections building may help us reach that

goal too). Plant purchases are underway through CCE's annual plant sale and the Catskill Native Plant Nursery, with federal grant funding supporting the project.

- **Department Updates:**

- **DPW:** Ongoing work includes culvert replacements, the Fair Street construction project, EV charging infrastructure, additional solar projects, and the removal of underground fuel tanks, including the one at Tilly Foster. Interior work at the CCE barn remains underway, while steel tariffs continue to impact project costs and timelines. DPW staff also met with the DEC regarding dam projects at South Lake and Lake McGregor, including construction of an access road later this summer. Ilona encouraged documenting the work with before-and-after photos to support future CSC certification. Additional discussion included potential walking paths near South Lake (off of Farmer's Mill Rd.) and the DEC's continued efforts to remove aging dams, including many that are privately owned.
- **Health:**
 - **HHWD:** Savannah shared updates from the biannual Household Hazardous Waste Day held on May 2nd. In total, over 300 households participated and the event introduced vape disposal collection for the first time. A new contractor, MXI/Maumee Express, significantly improved efficiency, reducing unloading times to approximately seven minutes per vehicle. Health also partnered with the Sheriff's Office to distribute vape disposal buckets to schools in response to plumbing issues caused by discarded vape devices. Savannah continued to inform the Task Force on the regulatory challenges of vape disposal, including their nicotine and lithium battery components, and efforts to establish the Health Dept. as a registered collection site.
 - **Mattress Recycling Event:** Planning is also underway for the County's first ever mattress recycling event on May 30th at 526 Gage Road in Brewster (Patterson). The free event, supported by Household Hazardous Waste funding, will serve as a pilot program to address illegal mattress dumping. DPW will assist with the heavy lifting, and recyclable materials will be recovered through a waste management partner (Castella Waste Management Systems). They're expecting the event to reach capacity by May 30th.
 - **LSWMP:** The Department expects DEC comments on the Local Solid Waste Management Plan (LSWMP) in June and is continuing to work with the Law Department to strengthen the County Code related to waste diversion, recycling, permitting, and enforcement, including updates to the Mandatory Recycling Law. Staff are also exploring a textile recycling partnership through [Helpsy](#) and will begin work on the Construction and Demolition (C&D) policy after DEC comments are received.
- **BES:** Ilona reported that BES has partnered with Tetra Tech again to update the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). A kickoff meeting was held on April 21st, and departments are currently reviewing and providing comments on the Draft Annex. Ilona noted that the HMP update process closely parallels the CCARP, with significant overlap between the two plans.
- **Transit:** Ilona reported that two new electric vehicles have been ordered through Purchasing: one for the Health Department and one for use as a mail van. The Transit Study is expected to conclude in June. Department staff are also preparing an FTA grant application to fund six new paratransit and microtransit vehicles (including two hybrids) for the County's transit fleet.

3. **Discussion: Recent Webinars/Meeting Takeaways**

- **PCA's Funding Futures [Webinar](#) – “Invasive Plants as Agents of Change or Symptoms of Other Stressors”:** This webinar from April 2026, presented by Dr. Bernd Blossey from Cornell University, gave an overview of the long-term ecological impacts of non-native plant species. The presentation emphasized that some established non-native species may naturally decline over decades or centuries as they alter and deplete micronutrients and bacteria in the ecosystems that support them, highlighting the importance of evaluating conservation outcomes over longer timeframes (50-250 years). During the Q&A, the presenter noted that several well-established invasive species, including Japanese knotweed, phragmites, garlic mustard, and mugwort, are unlikely to be effectively managed

through individual removal efforts alone due to their widespread establishment. It's species dependent, but there's no definitive list of species to leave alone or to remove.

- **Sustainable Putnam and CCE Mid-Hudson Energy - Putnam Energy Affordability campaign:** Joe provided updates on the [campaign](#), which offers free home energy guidance, resources, consultations, and workshops for Putnam residents. Following the first community webinar on April 21st, engagement has increased, with more residents seeking advice over Zoom and phone consultations. Additional workshops are planned at local libraries and other community spaces including potentially at the Promenade on Six art gallery. Sustainable Putnam is also coordinating a community solar drive with Sustainable Westchester. Gary mentioned Peekskill's Camp Field Reservoir [floating solar array](#). S.P. also hopes to host a potential fall Home Energy Expo featuring in-person energy consultations and potential Climate Smart tabling opportunities. With rising energy costs, interest in home energy efficiency and management continues to grow throughout the community. Joe also shared information on Home Boost, a tool that can be plugged into a smartphone and used to take infrared pictures of a residence that combine with online data analysis to identify potential home energy improvements. The service provides residents with a final report (typically \$99) outlining possible efficiency upgrades. Philipstown residents can access the device for free thanks to their Hudson Library System and Central Hudson partnership. SP has partnered with Home Boost and added the resource to its [website](#).
- **HVRC's Mid-Hudson sustainability meetings:** Ilona continues to participate in bi-monthly meetings hosted by HVRC for local counties (Putnam, Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Ulster, etc.) to share updates on sustainability initiatives, CSC actions, partnerships, and local projects. Ulster County offered to meet with Putnam County to discuss their EV transition efforts and fleet electrification experience.
- **NYS MOSS Meetings:** The group is formalizing its structure by establishing a board, officer roles, and bylaws to support future grant applications, expanded programming, and in-person meetings. The April 2026 meeting featured a roundtable discussion on regional sustainability initiatives, including: Westchester County's EV charger expansion efforts and challenges with BESS restrictions and demand charges; Dutchess County's solid waste diversion feasibility study and transit fleet electrification study; Kingston's expansion of curbside food scrap collection (sent to UCRRA); Albany's successful climate action planning (utilizing Kim Lundgren and Associates) and electrification efforts; Tompkins County's induction cooktop distribution program for residents and solar carport installations (Gary added the one right outside of Kingston in Ashoka as an example); and lastly, Ithaca's new community prioritization "matrix" for identifying projects and legislative priorities. NY MOSS will be adopting bylaws in the coming months.

4. Discussion: Other Business / Comments

- Sustainable Putnam's upcoming [events](#):
 - o **Green Drinks:** June 4th, 5:30-7:30pm @ Thai Golden (Carmel)
 - o **Mahopac Repair Café:** June 13th, 10:30-1:30pm @ Mahopac Middle School
 - o **Summer Solstice Celebration:** June 20th, @ Veterans' Memorial Park
- Garrison Institute Event: Community Resilience and Emergency Preparedness Workshop May 19th 6-8pm @ Desmond Fish Library. Mary Lambert (formerly w/ HVRC) is partially presenting along with the NYS DOS. Attendees get a free emergency preparedness backpack.
- Upcoming NYS Climate Connections Summit: Hosted by NYSDEC's Office of Climate Change, June 10-11 in Utica, NY. Ilona will be attending, the event is primarily for municipal/state staff, non-profits, and consultants who have roles in sustainability.
- Optional read: [El Niño is set to take hold this summer, driving up global temperatures.](#)
 - o Ilona gave a brief overview of what El Niño is: a weather pattern that develops every few years when trade winds weaken, allowing vast volumes of warm ocean water to move from the Eastern

- Pacific towards the Americas. Trade winds that typically blow East to West (the Americas to Asia) now blow West to East towards Peru and Central America.
- Forecasters predict that there's a 62% chance that El Niño will emerge between June and August 2026 and will linger into early 2027 with the most impactful months being Oct. 2026 – May 2027.
 - El Niño causes the increase of average global temperatures which are already intensified by climate change - the same reason why 2023 and 2024 broke the records for the hottest years ever recorded. This event will have a large effect on temperatures in 2027, which is on track to be the warmest year on record after 2024.
 - What to expect: wetter/cooler conditions in the southern U.S. and warmer/drier conditions in the northeast and Pacific northwest. El Niño is also said to suppress the formation of Atlantic hurricanes.
- Savannah provided an update on the Stony Brook University Waste Characterization Study conducted on March 17th. Stony Brook University's Waste Analysis and Data Institute is funded by NYS DEC to conduct waste characterization studies all throughout New York State. The study evaluated municipal solid waste and recycling streams from facilities serving Putnam County including transfer stations in Westchester and Dutchess Counties. Samples were collected from Win Waste in Somers and Royal Carting in Hopewell Junction, representing waste from several Putnam County communities including Carmel, Kent, Lake Carmel, Philipstown, and Patterson (Southeast's waste goes to Westchester). Preliminary results indicate significant contamination and improper recycling practices, with recyclable materials entering the waste stream and non-recyclable materials contaminating recycling loads. The Health Dept. is awaiting the final report, which will help inform next steps, including a potential education campaign with waste haulers and residents. Joe added that the challenges and contamination associated with single-stream recycling often outweighs any benefits. This is why individual waste reduction practices and improved recycling awareness is crucial to any successful waste reduction campaign. Savannah shared a personal example of how increased awareness of daily waste choices can help reduce one's overall waste footprint. She noted that she selects Amazon's "Carbon Neutral" shipping option when available, which provides credits that can be used toward Amazon Prime content, and has observed that much of Amazon's current packaging is recyclable.

Next meeting: Summer 2026

Meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.