

## Minutes of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force Meeting April 18, 2025

The April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force was called to order at 10:07 a.m.

### Attendees:

**In Person:** Ilona Campo, Gary Redlon, Harry Kelly, Anne Campbell, Jen Lerner, Sean Seary

**Microsoft Teams:** Savannah Usher, Joe Montuori

**New Member:** Sean Seary, CCE PC/Mid-Hudson Clean Energy Advisor (to replace Amanda Catale on CSTF Board)

### 1. **Review: January Meeting Minutes**

- No comments, questions, or concerns

### 2. **Discussion: Recent Activities**

- The County received its second hybrid trolley back in January 2025. It is expected to start service May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (Memorial Day Weekend)
- There is a delay on the Putnam On-Demand Microtransit service, service is now expected to start May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- CCE applied for the Community Reforestation (CoRe) grant with a letter of support from the County Executives, Jen expects to receive notice of the award by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The project will consist of a re-forestation deer enclosure at Tilly Foster Farm. Manage for maple and slowly introduce native species. Estimates of 100 trees/year. The County, WAC, and Soldiers to Scientists (Veterans Group) are project partners.
- **Climate Solutions Summit:** Ilona, Joe, and Savannah attended the annual SHV Climate Solutions Summit on March 28<sup>th</sup> in Newburgh, NY. The goal of the summit was to maintain regional momentum in the face of federal uncertainty. Ilona's key takeaways were that most Americans do support climate action, there's often invisible work associated with building decarbonization (document, take pics, write articles, share!), and libraries are a great resource for local climate action. Joe added that there is also a library sustainability movement nationwide pioneered by Rebekkah Smith Aldrich who heads the Mid-Hudson library program.
- **Waste Stream Tours:** Ilona and Savannah have been on several waste stream tours in surrounding communities including the [Dutchess Resource Recovery Agency](#) (Wheelabrator) in Poughkeepsie, [Republic Recycling Services](#) in Beacon, [CRP \(SMM\)](#) compost in Cortlandt, and [McEnroe's Organic Farm](#) compost in Millerton. The tour of the Wheelabrator facility cleared up a lot of misconceptions about waste incineration: it a circular process, metals are filtered out and recycled, steam stacks (not smoke), 24/7 operations and energy generation, and offputs being steam, spent particle filters every few years, and fly ash used to cap landfills upstate. The recycling facility was a little more disheartening in that plastics are baled into giant cubes and shipped to east Asian nations like India, Indonesia, Vietnam, etc. where we can only hope they are being recycled. There is, however, a lot of local recovery for metal, glass, paper, and cardboard. In Cortlandt, CRP is responsible for carting food scraps from Philipstown and 28 other towns in Westchester to their compost site (Sustainable Materials Management Inc.) They have a relatively small footprint (< 1.5 acres) where they built seven bays in which the first three used the EASP method for 30-45 days then let it cool in the other bays for an additional 30-45 days for a cycle totaling roughly 90 days. Savannah has the 2024 data for Philipstown's diversion efforts including a total of 13 tons of food scraps diverted (2023 was 2.4 tons, significant increase!). As of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 283 families, two libraries, and two schools are dropping food scraps off at Philipstown's designated drop off stations. Residents can pick up compost from Nature Upcycling. Sean had a question about the EASP method. Ilona

explained that for CRP in particular, they forced air into 5-6" in diameter PVC pipes, with holes facing down, that run once every 30mins for 5mins at a time for a total of 4-6 weeks. The internal temperature of the pile can reach 130-145° which is the ideal temp. to kill pathogens and seeds. Jen also added that compost typically has to go through multiple cycles as hot piles can sometimes get too hot where the bacteria kill themselves off and then the population has to rebuild. Jen also warned that often times heavy metals and pharmaceuticals still make it into the end product, that's why it's recommended to only use the finished compost as a soil amendment for landscaping/nurseries. Ilona, Savannah, Vicki, Jen, Joe, and Sean B. also took a tour to McEnroe's Organic Farm in mid-April to view their compost operations. The setting was very rural, and they used the windrow method with a vertical auger to turn the massive piles. The piles themselves were anywhere between 80-140ft long x 16ft wide x 8ft tall. The turnaround time was roughly eight months which is considerably longer than the forced air EASP method.

3. **Discussion: Upcoming Events**

- Earth Day is April 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The PC CSTF is being honored at the Putnam County Land Trust's 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit Gala on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Anne, Joe, Gary, and the County Executive plan to attend.
- Kent is also hosting their town wide cleanup day on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Putnam County's biannual HHWD is also scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup>, pre-registration is required. Anne mentioned that the Kent Town Board was not aware of the event, the County's Health Dept. is responsible for outreach. Joe mentioned that he heard about it from subscribing to Putnam County events on [EventBrite](#) where he gets notifications of upcoming events.
- Philipstown is also hosting their Earth Day event on April 26<sup>th</sup>. The Pollinator Pathway, Sustainable Putnam, and CCE's Master Gardeners will be in attendance.
- Patterson's Earth Day event is scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sean will attend as well as some Pollinator Pathway volunteers.
- The annual Putnam County Fair is scheduled for July 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> at Veteran's Memorial Park. This is typically when a lot the County departments show up for community engagement. Registration is due by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

4. **Discussion: Future Actions/Partnerships**

- **Natural Resource Inventory:** Putnam's NRI is from the early 2000s. Kent recently re-did theirs in 2023 and had the following successes/challenges/takeaways:
  - o They started with an informal Kent Nature Almanac wherein residents would send in photos and observations.
  - o The town applied for and received an HREP grant for \$50,000 with a 15% labor match. They had a goal of creating a combined NRI and biodiversity inventory. Two biologists were on the team which they were able to charge their time for as the match.
  - o They formed a steering committee of about 10 people: planning board members, historical society members, residents, climate smart board members, an environmental planner, etc.
  - o They contracted with Hudsonia Ltd. via Gretchen Stevens who has since retired. She wrote the document with guidance from the steering committee.
  - o The first effort was developing a series of 30 maps and narratives, and discussions about making specific recommendations to the town.
  - o They also had a (grant required) community engagement component which they incorporated via soliciting photographs for the document from the community.

- The only unexpected cost was for formatting and typesetting (additional \$11,000). The total document was about 300 pages. Kent chose to print hard copies, but the community still requested more. Kent is now planning to offer more print versions for sale.
- Part of the contract with Hudsonia was that they would provide some workshops, which Kent still has a couple more to do.
- The Town of Gardener's [website](#) uses an [interactive map](#) that is a great model to follow, it is subject to change (i.e. tax map overlay) if updated in GIS. A web developer is currently working on this for Kent.
- Managing the grant reports and billing for reimbursement is still an effort.
- There were no requirements from HREP at the time for what should be in the NRI or biodiversity inventory, Kent relied on the expertise from the consultant.
- Including the biodiversity inventory is what made their grant application more competitive.
- Kent is using this new NRI as a component of their comprehensive plan which they plan to update soon.
- Jen made a good point that the County can let towns know of available funding if they want to re-do their NRIs. HREP may release more grants, Ilona will send out a notice if they do. If all the towns in Putnam complete and NRI, what is the appropriate model at the County level? This is a long term goal (within the next 5 years).
- Anne also made the point that there could be county staff available with GIS expertise that could possibly integrate town maps.
- **Climate Action Plan:** Dutchess and Westchester participated in the '23-'24 HVRC Climate Action Planning Institute (CAPI) Cohort. The 12 month program included various towns and counties that drafted climate vulnerability assessments funded through CSC grants. Dutchess and Westchester can be used as models. This is also a long term goal (within the next 5 years).
- Ilona and Savannah are working on a County Facility Composting Pilot Program outline (separate meetings). There is no set timeline for this initiative, and it has to fall under the guide of the SWMP. When included in the Plan, it should be eligible for CSC points too. The SWMP will also ideally include a construction/demolition waste component too.

## 5. Discussion: Other Business/Comments

- News article + photo with CE link: [Putnam County Climate Smart Initiatives Continue in 2025 - Putnam County, New York](#)
- Ilona created a listserv/distribution list called [PutnamClimatePartners@putnamcountyny.gov](mailto:PutnamClimatePartners@putnamcountyny.gov) for local climate leaders (roughly 15 people) to share resources, best practices, local events, questions, grant opportunities, etc. If you would like access or have ideas for other members to add, please contact Ilona.
- There is a new [solar dashboard](#) for the County facility solar installations (different from SolarEdge monitoring).
- Ilona will set up a meeting with Jen to discuss native landscaping options at the Transit Facility.
- There is a new [MIT-led study](#) that confirms the healing of the Antarctic ozone layer as a direct result of global efforts to reduce CFCs. Climate action is effective!
- CCE is working with Columbia University on a climate battery greenhouse located at Pleasant View Farm in Brewster. The project includes integrated solar panels, hydroponic operations, and two geothermal wells. They hope to offset winter heating and summer cooling costs using a passive air exchange system. The greenhouse will grow a couple thousand heads of lettuce in a rotating pond to start.

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Next Meeting Tentatively Scheduled for Summer 2025.