

Minutes of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force Meeting July 26, 2024

The July 2024 meeting of the Putnam County Climate Smart task force was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

Members Present

In Person: Ilona Campo, Barbara Barosa, Neal Tomann, Joe Bellucci, Joe Montuori

Microsoft Teams: Eleanor Peck, Vickie DiLonardo, Jennifer Caruso

1. **Review: April Meeting Minutes**

No comments

2. **Review: Final Climate Smart Application**

- Putnam was officially awarded Bronze Certification in late June 2024. We received two wall plaques to display in the Planning Department and the County Office Building.
- We were awarded a total 145 points but lost 26 potential points across five actions that needed revision.
- Ilona presented the **actions that were not accepted this round** including: Fleet Inventory, Construction & Demolition Waste Policy, Planning for Biking & Walking, Infrastructure for Biking and Walking, and Access to Public Transit.
 - Neal asked what kind of data the Fleet Inventory was missing. Ilona answered that according to the reviewer's comments, they wanted more info on the vehicle's function, mileage, and what department the vehicle was associated with.
 - Ilona mentioned that she is in the midst of collecting/entering more data into the inventory. A lot of the Public Work's vehicle data is tracked and updated by Chris Vitiello in the DPW. Joe B. also mentioned that they need an updated inventory for the budget process as well. Neal mentioned that the Sheriff's Dept. vehicles were more difficult to gather data on as they have the second largest inventory behind DPW. Barbara also noted that with the new Wex Fleet cards (fuel and vehicle expense cards), they will need to start tracking their vehicle mileage more closely.
 - The C&D Waste Policy was rejected as it did not include a county implementation plan. The Plan is still on the website for public viewing, but we will need to include the implementation component moving forward. This may also be a function of the Solid Waste Coordinator position that the County will need to fill.
 - We did not get points for the Planning for Biking & Walking action with our 2016 Bikeway Master Plan, it was only three points so if we need to revise to get the points, we will.
 - Infrastructure for Biking & Walking was not accepted as we did not include 'before' pictures of the bikeway signage or dated pictures of the installation of the bike parking. We will also need dates of when these projects were completed.
 - Access to Public Transit was a loss of eight points as the description for the action did not detail which exact points we were applying for. Joe B. asked if they provided any feedback for why the actions were not accepted, Ilona answered yes, they provided detailed feedback.
- **Future actions for Silver certification:**
 - This was discussed at the first CSTF meeting back in December 2023 as well.
 - The list of potential actions include: a Climate Action Plan, Natural Resources Inventory, NYSERDA sponsored County-Hosted Trainings, Organics Management Plan (can be combined with the Solid Waste Management Plan), social media accounts, EV charging stations (Alternative Fuel Infrastructure), Organic Waste Composting for Government

Buildings, Reuse Programs (take it or leave it program, partner with SP for Repair Cafés), Compost Bins for Residents, Water Smart Landscaping, and PACE Financing.

- In reference to landscaping, Ilona mentioned that she spoke to Chris Ruthven, Parks & Recreation Director, about using native landscaping; he did confirm that the County uses it wherever possible as it is less maintenance overall. He is also working with Jen Lerner at CCE to develop the recently renovated Board of Elections building's landscaping plan.
- **Action:** Ilona will reach back out to Chris and collect documentation of the use of native plants at county-owned and operated facilities. Joe B. mentioned they will also be doing the same at the DBS campus and COB.
- **CSC grant eligibility:** Ilona mentioned that you *do not* have to be a certified community to apply for the grants, but it does help you earn additional points towards your application as this is a competitive funding program.
 - Eligible projects according to [this year's RFA](#) are centered around mitigation, implementation, adaptation, and certification (CS actions). Examples include reduction in VMT, organic waste, refrigerant management, renewable energy, staff time reimbursement, etc. CSC grants are essentially for more of the same type of projects that are required for initial certification.
 - There is a 50% match required by the County. With that, the County would need to pass a resolution detailing and approving the match (similar to our other grants). We cannot apply for CSC grants this year as we do not have a resolution in place yet and the deadline to apply is July 31, 2024.

3. Discussion: Clean Energy Community (CEC) Actions

- Ilona shared that by completing some of the CS actions, that also made us eligible for NYSERDA Clean Energy Community (CEC) designation and grants. Thank you to Eleanor for all her guidance!
- By providing documentation for our solar installations, CS Bronze Certification, PACE financing, and enrollment in the NY Sun program we are now a two-star designated CEC.
- We have been notified of a potential grant award of up to \$140,000 (100% match) from NYSERDA. This will go towards more clean energy projects such as building efficiency upgrades, electric landscaping equipment, solar feasibility on other buildings, etc.
- Ilona hopes to submit the revised Fleet Inventory and NYSERDA County-Hosted Trainings for future CEC points.
- **Action:** The training will most likely be held in the TOPS building and Ilona will reach out to the designated NYSERDA contact in order to set a later date/time for the training.
- Joe M. questioned what the trainings were for, Barbara answered that they are tailored more towards land use and zoning activities. In particular, we are interested in hosting the one titled *Overview of the Model Battery Energy Storage System Law* which is relevant to the battery storage issue in Mahopac on the Carmel-Somers town line.
- Community Solar Feasibility: A lot of internal discussions concluded that organizing a NYSERDA approved community solar campaign is not feasible at this time. The County is hesitant to partner with a third party (solar vendor) and we do not have reliable contacts with NYSEG to keep track of residential sign-ups. Regardless, we will still promote community solar at local events and on the County's CS website as an option for residents to save some money on electric bills and support the development of more solar farms.

4. Discussion: Community Composting/Composting in Government Buildings

- Ilona mentioned the enthusiasm others have expressed towards this initiative.
- There are CSC grants available for this kind of initiative. If we would like to start small, we can approach composting in government buildings as an initial pilot program, or we can discuss a residential drop-off program in more detail at a separate Task Force meeting.

- A residential food waste drop-off program would most likely be a function of the Health Department as they manage the County's Recycling and Municipal Solid Waste collection programs.
- A Composting Task Force would most likely consist of Ilona Campo (Planning Dept.) , Joe Montuori (Sustainable Putnam), Vickie DiLonardo (Health Dept.), Jen Lerner (CCE), Barbara Barosa (Planning Dept.), Shanna Siegel (Health Dept.), and any other interested or involved individuals.
- Neal asked what kind of composting this is for (such as brush and leaves), Ilona answered we are thinking more along the lines of residential food scraps drop-off (i.e. not including businesses, grocery stores, landscaping companies, etc.). Barbara mentioned that the logical place for this kind of set up would be at Tilly Foster Farm.
- Neal noted that we would need to be careful not to take in debris from landscapers because when they did a similar program at Glynwood, they took in some invasive species infected brush. There are other factors to consider on a scale this large.
- Ilona mentioned that Nick from Curbside Compost could be a good contact if we want to involve the Purchasing Dept. to contract with them as a designated organic waste hauler. There are a lot of options to explore at the moment.
- Vickie confirmed that the Health Dept. still offers composting bins for sale for residents (average of 20 sold/year). Babara asked if it was the barrel model for sale, Vickie confirmed saying they look like "Darth Vader helmets" and that they encourage the "lasagna" method of layering browns and greens on top of each other. They advertise it as backyard composting and one barrel can roughly accommodate food scraps from a family of four.
- **Action:** Ilona will organize a separate Composting Task Force meeting within the next month or so.

5. Other Business / Comments

- Ilona and Neal will be setting up a joint table/tent to promote the S&WCD and Climate Smart initiatives at the Putnam County 4-H Fair on July 27 & 28. Ilona mentioned the tri-fold display in the back of the room and how she is trying to take a more general "climate change education & engagement" approach. Sustainable Putnam and their volunteers, and CCE's Community Energy Advisor, Amanda Catale (formerly on the CSTF), will also be in attendance. Joe M. mentioned he will have a composting activity for the kids. Ilona will have a greenhouse effect demonstration and candy for the kids. Neal will also have the DPW's drone on display and offer drone pics to interested residents.
- Sustainable Putnam will also be hosting Green Drinks at the Clocktower Grill in Brewster on August 7th at 5:30pm, feel free to register in advance or just show up!
- There will be another Repair Café on September 14th at the Mahopac Middle School. Items serviced include small appliances, lamps, clothing, etc. Registration is recommended, see [SP's website](#) for more details. Joe M. mentioned there is an amazing network of 'repairers' in the Hudson Valley as well as local folks that love to be involved.
- Ilona and Eleanor attended the Climate Solutions Summit in Newburgh, NY back in June. One program of interest under way is the New York Cap and Invest (NYCI) program which "sets an annual cap on the amount of greenhouse gas pollution that is permitted to be emitted in New York." Read more about the program at <https://capandinvest.ny.gov/>. Ilona also mentioned the materials management breakout session that she attended at the Summit and how the City of Kingston (Ulster County) may be a good model for composting efforts. The goal is to create a circular economy.
- Joe M. also mentioned that Putnam Valley residents are talking to the Town Supervisor about creating a community compost drop-off program there and in the Town of Carmel as well. Discussions remain very preliminary. He also mentioned the City of Beacon which has a well-established food waste transfer program that Eleanor also happens to participate in. Beacon also

runs a yard waste collection program (a separate program from the food waste one) and they compost it themselves at the city's transfer station as it tends to be a quicker and simpler process. Ilona asked where Putnam County piles its yard waste from landscaping municipal buildings, ~~Joe M. mentioned he saw a large brush pile at the Lower Veteran's Memorial Park.~~ Neal reiterated again that there are problems with contamination and pollution to keep in mind.

- Joe B. mentioned the DBS campus had its final solar array inspection a couple of weeks ago. NYSERDA has officially given the system its final blessing.
- Neal asked if the CSTF and County Executive would like to take a picture with the CS wall plaque. Barbara mentioned she dropped it off at the COB and Jennifer C. now has it.
- **Action:** Jennifer will ask Chris F. if he wants to take a photo of the CSTF and County Exec. for a press release.
- **Action:** Ilona will help promote the next repair café on the County's CS website and she will organize the Composting Task Force kick-off meeting and NYSERDA hosted trainings.

Meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m.