

Public Meeting  
Kent Conservation Advisory Committee  
Wednesday, April 17, 7:00 PM

Attendees: Anne Balant-Campbell, Bill Buck, Beth Herr (Chair), Phil Tolmach, and guests: Ed Iliano, James Shearwood, Roberto Mueller (Climate Smart Coordinator, Town Philipstown), Michel Leonard – Town board liaison to the Town of Philipstown Conservation Advisory Committee.

The regular agenda was suspended in order to have more time with guest speakers Roberto Mueller and Mike Leonard, who shared their experiences in working towards DEC "Climate Smart" certification for the Town of Phillipstown.

Roberto coordinates a volunteer task force, documents progress, and stays in touch with NYS DEC. It has been a three-year process to date. The initiative began with the completion of a survey (attached) entitled; "How Green is my Town." This was organized by the Phillipstown Garden Club coordinator, Karen Urtl. Town Board liaison Mike Leonard reviewed results of the survey with the Phillipstown town board each year. It provided a bridge to help prepare for seeking DEC Climate-Smart certification.

Roberto advised the KCAC to complete the survey and be sure to capture everything that is being done. They had originally overlooked some items. The town may be further ahead on this than we realize. He suggested reviewing the survey periodically as a lead-up to enrolling in the Climate Smart program.

Having the town hire a coordinator was essential. Completion of many aspects of the initiative saved the town a significant amount of money, which more than offset the cost.

The Philipstown Town Board approved the resolution in July 2017. Michael Leonard was the board member who promoted this to the board. The resolution template is on the NYSDEC Climate Smart website. Adoption of the resolution does not require a town to complete the DEC Climate Smart certification process.

Europa McGovern works for Hudson Valley Regional Council, a non-profit that is working with the DEC on this program as a subcontractor. She presented a proposal to the town board for hiring a coordinator at a cost of \$ 6,000.00 per year (25/hour). They conducted the interviews and announced the hire.

The town developed their task force via an allied organization that offered open forums to gauge public interest in various initiatives. They obtained a grant to fund this project. Ballots were mailed to the community, leading to the selection of about 20 task force members, both town government and community members, including architects and energy experts. The task force has a smaller board that meets regularly. The task force provides regular updates to the

town board and gets on the agenda for town board meetings as needed. They have monthly task force meetings, which are open. The task force has three sub-groups:

- Community inventory
- Eco-schools program (Haldance and Garrison) using a National Wildlife Federation program
- Cornell Coop Extension - energy efficiency

The task force is working towards Net-Zero certification, not LEED certification, for the town. The NYSDEC certification requires points to be earned for various levels (bronze, silver, gold) based on specific progress.

The main cost savings to the town are for energy consumption. There are programs that can help pay for energy-saving initiatives.

They started by working on an inventory of energy consumption for town operations, and then progressed to a community-wide greenhouse gas inventory. They obtained a grant of \$19,000.00 to do an actual inventory rather than an estimate. However, estimates are also acceptable.

A company called Iclei that works with local governments on sustainability was hired. They used electrical and fuel usage data and estimated usage, agricultural emissions, fugitive emissions (HVAC), etc. This was a partnership grant. Half of the funding was from NYSDEC. The rest was covered by local fundraising. They raised \$4,500.00 at an event at a farm in Garrison, NY that was advertised through other organizations. The grant promoted involvement of veterans (e.g. to develop skill in HVAC) and a priority of awarding of contracts to businesses that are owned by or hire veterans, women, and members of under-represented groups. The partnership has the municipality as contractor of record, and so the non-profit arm transferred the funds to the town to pay Iclei. They now are doing follow-up measures with homeowners and businesses from their projects.

The town also obtained a NYS Hudson River Valley Greenway award for the purpose of updating its comprehensive plan, and some of the funding is to support the Climate-Smart program.

Their third grant was for policy projects, to review and improve existing policies to promote energy savings and sustainability (example: the town's construction demolition waste reduction program).

After completing the energy inventories, the next step was to work on plans to reduce emissions. They chose not to hire a firm to develop a full sustainability plan, but instead are developing it incrementally using local expertise. This is easier to accomplish at the town government level. To promote reductions in the community, education and outreach are needed. Support is being provided by the local land trust and the Cooperative Extension. They

will be working with the Putnam County Recycling Coordinator on brochures and refrigerant management.

They are now starting to work on the other key component of the program, which involves adapting to climate changes. Grant funding was obtained for this work as well. Can do some of that concurrently with the earlier stages of the program, via a natural resource inventory and vulnerability assessment (e.g., flood-prone areas, wind damage risks, bridges that are failing, etc.) The Hudson River Estuaries program may be helpful in developing the natural resources inventory.

The KCAC members thanked guests Roberto Mueller and Michael Leonard for their helpful presentation, and discussed the possibility of seeking Climate-Smart certification for the Town of Kent.