

Minutes of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force Meeting January 10, 2025

The January 10th meeting of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Members' Present:

In Person: Ilona Campo, Barbara Barosa, Neal Tomann, Joe Bellucci, Joe Montuori, Jen Lerner, Gary Redlon, Jen Caruso

Microsoft Teams: Shanna Siegel

1. **Review: July Meeting Minutes**

- Edited July meeting minutes to incorporate Joe M.'s comment about the woodchip piles at Carmel's Airport Park.

2. **Discussion: Recent Projects/Accomplishments**

- **County Fair/Country Fest:** Neal and Ilona set up a joint table on behalf of the County's Soil and Water and Climate Smart programs respectively. There was a lot of interest in soil testing and well water testing, Neal was able to advise. Engagement ideas for this year's fair include a tabletop spin the wheel game (CCE may have one to spare) wherein table staff will ask questions/quiz fair goers and attendees will have a chance to win a prize (reusable bags, cutlery, reusable straws, wildflower seedlings, pens, etc.). Go Green North Hampstead had a representative speak at the Land Use and Sustainable Development conference in December, they had an effective approach utilizing 'climate story engagement tools' such as (1) What climate related changes do you see in your community? (2) How does it make you feel? (3) What would you like to see addressed and how? Neal also had a discussion with Westchester County's S&W Manager proposing they come up and share a table with us this year and offer a survey to attendees. Jen L. mentioned the composting survey yielded very little results; they need to be more strategic as surveys can often be overdone/repetitive. Shanna agreed that community surveys are not that effective. The Health Dept. has had some luck in the past with voting boxes that ask one main question. The data/feedback also tends to be cleaner with multiple choice questions.
- **Grants:** The County received two NYSERDA grants in 2024, one for \$15,000 towards electric landscaping equipment and one for \$125,000 for installation of a solar array (54kW) on the front end of the Transit Facility. The landscaping equipment is already in use and a separate meeting to discuss the design plan for the Transit Facility solar project will need to be arranged asap. The County also received a \$100,000 state grant for design and installation of a solar carport and EV charging station at the DBS campus. A \$ 36,564 (2023 NYSDOT MEP) grant was also secured for Level 2 EV charging at the Transit Facility (not tied to a fleet purchase yet) for future conversion of the PART bus fleet to plug-in hybrid and/or full EVs.
- **Microtransit:** A contract was executed with Via Transportation for a new micro transit/on-demand service to replace the fixed PART 3 route, Croton Falls shuttle, and accompanying Paratransit. The service will soon be advertised to the public and will operate similarly to dial-a-ride/Uber pool. The County anticipated a March 4th, 2025 launch date.
- The FTA funded **second hybrid trolley** will also be arriving mid-January. This trolley will be used to replace the original 2006 gas powered trolley that seasonally operates in the Village of Cold Spring.
- **Trainings:** Ilona hosted the Overview of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Law NYSERDA training on December 3rd, 2024. The presentation, given by Ian Latimer of NYSERDA, was well received by the 25 attendees and clarified a lot of misinformation about BESS. If you would like a copy of the presentation or the Inter Agency Fire Safety Working

Group Air, Soil, And Water Data Findings report, please contact Ilona! Future organized trainings will most likely be for Clean Energy and Your Comprehensive Plan, Overview of the Model Solar Energy Law, and/or Solar PV Permitting and Inspecting. Although the Clean Energy Communities program is not accepting any more submissions for completed High Impact Actions, the County can still get CS points for hosting programs. Jen L. questioned whether or not the training was geared towards landscapers, no, it was geared more towards municipalities to update their existing laws to be more prepared for BESS proposals that come before the town boards. There were mostly concerns about safe lithium-ion storage. Jen expressed interest in working with CCE of Westchester for more trainings.

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

- **Refrigerant Recycling/Collection Program:** Joe M. gave an overview of SP's sister organization Sustainable Warwick's [Coolest Recycling Drive](#). Check out [New Yorkers for Cool Refrigerant Management's page](#) too for more information about drop-off events. The upfront costs would be minimal and organizing an event like this would require educational outreach and promotion, volunteer coordination, and a designated drop off space. Ideally we can incorporate this program into an upcoming HHHWD or arrange it to be a standalone event. HHHWD run on a biannual basis by the Health Dept.
- Update current purchasing policy using guidance from Sustainable Westchester's October presentation.
- Partner with Savannah Usher to incorporate an Organics Management Plan into the County's updated Solid Waste Management Plan.
- Continue to explore residential food scrap drop off and composting pilot programs with separate Composting Task Force.
- **Community Reforestation Grant:** The DEC released a grant opportunity for "tree planting projects that expand, restore and create forested natural areas that serve urban populations. Projects must be on non-federal public properties (i.e. state, county, municipal) or privately owned land that is open to the public (i.e. preserves, land trusts, cemeteries)." This no match grant has a minimum project amount of \$150,000 and applications are due by March 12, 2025. For more information visit this [link](#). Jen L. expressed interest in a project on the edge of Tilly Foster near the new construction which will need deer management and fencing.

4. **Other Business / Comments**

- New Solid Waste Coordinator announced: Savannah Usher
- A [new CS action checklist](#) was released on December 20th, 2024.
- The present CSTF members participated in a brief video interview and took a commemorative photo with the County Executive and the CS Bronze plaque.
- Ilona will connect Joe M. with Nancy Montgomery for alternative Repair Café locations within Philipstown. Jen C. and Jen L. suggested looking at the Patterson Recreation Center, firehouses, and the Drew Methodist Church.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Next Meeting Tentatively Scheduled for Spring 2025.