

Minutes CSC Sept 12 Meeting - Approved Oct 10, 2022

The Sept meeting of the Claverack Climate Smart Committee was called to order at 5:35 PM in the Claverack Free Library Board Room.

Attendance: John Bradley, Katy Cashen, Elizabeth Davis, George Dunn, Tom Furgeson, Tom Helling, Sarah Katan, Jeff Kiplinger, Mark Menne, Julie Scchevach, Brenda Shufelt;
Notified: Katy Flammia, Vic Masters, Thomas Paino, Imre Varga, Richard Weininger;
Guests: Haley Balencoff, Sustainability, Planner for the CDRPC and Kippy Weigelt, Supervisor, Town of Claverack

Welcome and Introductions- All present introduced themselves for the benefit of our guests.

Review of the August meeting minutes was deferred to the Oct.meeting due to late distribution;

Report on Bronze Certification: Tom and John reported on the status of Bronze Certification. John noted that in the first year there were higher organizational priorities and he did not realize how complex the process was. With the formation of a Certification subcommittee in Spring 2022, Tom and Julie organized the work, set up excel files and started submitting the documentation to get credit for climate actions. The team's efforts have earned an estimated 59 points credit for completed actions and estimate at least another 63 points could be available from climate actions in progress, planned, or under discussion. In response to a question, it was noted that any interested committee person can be added to the shared drive and is invited to work on actions.

The Climate Action Planning (CAP) is an important framework for working toward certification. Haley Balencoff reviewed a slide presentation on the CAP process. (<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ItxMWFfeIOmn5Evq-cz89Q49d2NCrkvG-BA8jQCng6U/edit#slide=id.p>) She explained that the data from the Greenhouse Gas Inventory of Gov't operations highlights several of the town's opportunities to reduce emissions and operating costs. Current electricity consumption (town office, court) can be converted to renewable (solar) energy with the new town hall, and the town garage can be converted to solar energy for lighting and heating, with heat pumps. Halley gave examples of a neighboring town that is saving \$35K by converting to electric heating with heat pumps and another \$39K by having installed a solar array on their garage, eliminating fuel oil from their operations. In discussion, Kippy noted that installing solar energy for the town garage is a realistic opportunity.

The Climate Smart Pledge includes 10 'Pledge Elements' with over 130 Actions and offers ample opportunity for volunteers to work with the town and CSC committee to implement actions to move us forward and earn points toward certifications.

A slide on Funding Opportunities was discussed at length. Haley reviewed a range of programs offering grants supporting many Climate Actions. She noted that Certification enhances a town's opportunity of actually winning grants. Several Programs were discussed, including:

[NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program: Climate Smart Communities Grants](#) which include both implementation and certification, and [ZEV Infrastructure Grants](#) which can be used for EV fast charging stations - up to \$250,000 for one facility and up to \$500,000 for multiple. Many 'Climate Actions' also entail financial rewards for completed actions.

The need for a resource of Grant Writers was noted. The firm Choice Words (<https://choicewordspr.com/>) was mentioned as a resource in the Hudson Valley. The relevance of grant funding for the new town hall was discussed. It was noted that many funders require that there be a local plan that helps assure effective use of funds and accountability.

In discussing the new town hall project, Kippy noted that they were still studying issues relating to the demolition of the vacated town court-garage building. For siting the new town hall, he also shared that 4 sites are under consideration and that he expected the New Town Hall project to be a three year process for planning and implementation. Brenda noted that she is working with Katy Cashen, Jeanne LaPorte, the town historian, and several experts to establish historical preservation status for the old town garage-paper mill site in Mellenville.

Sarah Katan reported on newsletter and reader engagement between July to August. All statistics increased. There were 106 recipients in August compared to 91 in July. Opening rate increase to 60% in August, or 64 opens compared to 60 in July. August's click through rate rose to 15% versus 9% in July. Sarah also gave a brief overview of the articles and information for the upcoming September issue, which will be sent early next week. In discussing how to grow the newsletter distribution, Katy Cashen suggested that we post an announcement on the town website.

A brief update on the September meeting of the Columbia County Climate Smart Task Force was given. On August 11, The Columbia County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to engage in a Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation Planning led by the Columbia/Greene Cornell Cooperative Extension, on behalf of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC). This assistance is funded through NY DEC's Climate Smart Communities Outreach Coordinators Program and is available at no charge to the county, and to any interested municipality. Municipalities that participate will be able to develop their own community adaptation plan as well. John noted that participation in this planning process would be a useful prelude to updating the town's comprehensive plan.

Energy efficient building codes was also discussed for its importance in reducing emissions and costs and for earning certification points. The Climate Smart framework offers multiple actions that a town may take. At a jurisdiction level, a town may adopt a 'Stretch' code which would require all new construction and improvements to exceed current codes, a move often opposed by developers and landlords.. In Columbia County, Philmont is the only jurisdiction that has taken this step. Another approach is for a town to adopt a 'Green' building code (such as LEEDS) for government building as NYS has done. This approach earns certification points and grant funds for completion.

In concluding discussion, Kippy thanked the group for including him and noted that many of the discussions would be helpful for the town board.

The committee unanimously expressed its appreciation to Kippy and Haley for their participation.

The meeting was adjourned at about 6:40.

Minutes by JB