

Town of Clinton Conservation Advisory Council
Meeting Location: Town Hall
1215 Centre Rd, Rhinebeck, NY
April 10, 2024, Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Jean McAvoy, CAC member, at 5:30 PM.

CAC members: Margaret Pierpont, Deborah Valchar, Joe Phelan

Town Board Liaison: Katherine Mustello

Guests for Special Discussion: Sean Carroll, Senior GIS/Environmental Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County; Paul Thomas, Chair of the Clinton Planning Board; Charles Canham, member of the Clinton Zoning Board of Appeals and Senior Scientist, Emeritus, at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

Minutes: A motion to accept the March 13, 2024 minutes was made by Deborah Valchar and seconded by Joe Phelan. The minutes were approved by the group.

Special discussion on wetlands: This conversation was scheduled because of upcoming changes in the way the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulates wetlands. The current DEC maps will be considered non-regulatory and for educational purposes only while its maps are updated.

It was concluded that a local response (i.e. possible changes to our wetland regulations) must wait until the state determines its new rules and guidance.

Sean Carroll agreed to create a Town of Clinton Jurisdictional Wetlands Map based on the map in the Natural Resources Inventory. The map will highlight all wetlands (and their town-mandated buffers) that fall within Clinton's current jurisdiction, with currently unprotected wetlands both larger and smaller shown differently. The data will be supplied to Dutchess County Parcel Access. Sean has also agreed to tally up total acreage of wetlands and buffers in the town.

Also discussed was how to determine which of the wetlands that are smaller than 1/2 acre have unusual characteristics or particularly robust biodiversity. With current funding from the DEC Estuary Program, Hudsonia might be able to conduct a survey of smaller wetlands, particularly vernal pools, that fall outside the current regulations. The Town Board Liaison authorized the CAC to investigate the possibility of Hudsonia doing such a survey.

The recent Red Hook building moratorium passed in response to anticipated DEC changes was briefly discussed. The opinion was expressed that a similar action would serve no purpose in Clinton, put an undue burden on property owners, be unnecessarily divisive and lack the nuanced response already available on a local level.

Six Senses: It was noted that written comments would be accepted from the public through Thursday, April 11, and that the ZBA will mostly likely make its ruling in May.

Steep Slopes: Whether the CAC needed to see PB applications for steep slopes was discussed. It was agreed that the current law and its application are comprehensive and no additional concern is needed for wildlife.

Education Outreach: The group noted the need to finalize plans for CAC participation at the May Library Book Sale. Suggestions included displaying NRI maps and the new CAC website. Planning of this and other educational events was postponed to the May meeting.

Climate Smart Community Task Force: The Town Board adopted the Climate Change and Education Resolution at its meeting on April 9. The resolution, affirming the Town's commitment to being a Climate Smart Community and authorizing the creation of climate-change emergency information on the Town website, brings the Town closer to receiving Bronze certification.

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, May 18, 2024 – Clinton Community Library Book Sale and Book Sale, 9am to 3pm. The CAC and CSC will have a table at this event.

Saturday, August 31, 2024 – Clinton Community Day. The CAC and CSC will have a booth at this event.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm. The next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2024, at 5:30pm.

2024 Meetings: June 12; July 10; August 14; September 11; October 9; November 13; December 11.

Respectfully submitted,
Margaret Pierpont