

## Dutchess County Climate Smart Communities Task Force (CSCTF)

Tuesday, April 4, 2023 - 5:30-6:30pm

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Task Force Meeting Attendees:

**Jen Coccozza** (DC Dept. of Planning & Development)  
**Mary Ann Cunningham** (Vassar College)  
**Audrey Friedrichsen** (Scenic Hudson)  
**Carolyn Klocker** (CCE Dutchess County)  
**Europa McGovern** (City of Poughkeepsie resident)  
**Allan Page** (A. Page & Associates, LLC)  
**Devin Rigolino** (DC Dept. of Planning & Development)  
**Brian Scoralick** (DC Soil and Water Conservation District)  
**Nancy Severns** (DC Environmental Management Council)  
**Kelsey West** (CCE Dutchess County)

#### Not Present:

**Gary Bassett** (Village of Rhinebeck)  
**Joseph Cavaccini** (Dutchess County Legislature)  
**Melissa Everett** (Sustainable Hudson Valley)  
**Michael Lauchaire** (Central Hudson Gas & Electric)

#### Welcome and Self-Introductions

Devin Rigolino from the DC Dept. of Planning & Development welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting and thanked attendees for their patience as the County took a few months to transition projects from the Task Force's former coordinator, Brad Barclay, after his retirement. Devin also took a moment to thank Brad and Shelby Frangk for their former support and coordination of the Task Force prior to their leaving County service.

#### Review and Approval of Draft Summary from September 14, 2022

Devin asked members if they had an opportunity to review the meeting summary from the last meeting, and it was determined that Task Force members would like an additional opportunity to review the summary. Devin said he would re-share the September meeting summary and table their approval until the next meeting.

#### Reintroductions and CSC Program Overview

Due to new members on the Task Force, each meeting attendee was asked to reintroduce themselves to the group. Following introductions, Devin also mentioned the names of other members that were not present at the meeting and then proceeded to give a broad description of the mission of the Task Force and the overall premise of the State's Climate Smart Communities program for the new attendees.

**Devin:** The NYS CSC program seeks to create a network of municipalities that work to increase energy efficiency and a community's overall resiliency to the impacts of climate change and reduce a community's greenhouse gas emissions. The State's program provides guidance to local governments on best practices and offers grants for certain projects and actions. The CSC program also lays out clear actions that local governments can undertake to achieve these goals, and a point system is implemented, where a certain number of points are awarded for each action that is taken. Once a community amounts enough points, they can apply for bronze or silver level certification by the State's program.

The Dutchess County CSCTF was initially convened to provide the County assistance in documenting its progress on various climate actions and with preparing an application for bronze certification. This group was successful in that effort, and Bronze was awarded to the County in September of 2019. Certification lasts for a period of 5 years. After 5 years, local governments need to re-apply to maintain their status. This means that Dutchess County's certification will expire in the fall of 2024, so re-application is due by summer of 2024.

To maintain bronze certification, the County needs to have 120 points, however the County has the goal of going for silver next year, and that requires accumulating 300 points.

**Jen:** Do old actions that the County already documented in its initial application still apply for re-application or is prior work that counted towards the first application no longer eligible? **Devin:** Certain actions have expiration dates and other actions are perpetual. For example, taking the climate pledge and forming a task force are actions that don't

expire and still qualify for points, whereas certain events must be hosted within a 1-, 2-, or 5-year period prior to application to qualify. Even actions that have already been done will require re-documentation when submitting the new application, so the County must essentially start over to ensure that each action is properly documented, and points are accounted for.

### **CSC Program and the CLCPA**

A conversation began regarding how the CSC program fits in with the new CLCPA. **Allan:** How does the CSCTF fit in with the State's Scoping Plan for the CLCPA (Climate Act), which is so comprehensive? The Climate Smart Community program was predicated on being a voluntary effort, where communities can choose to go above and beyond to pursue climate actions, and now the NYS Climate Act is requiring much of this work. What is the State going to do with these voluntary organizations and how do they encourage them to proceed when the existence of the CLCPA is going to require a lot of this work anyway? **Europa:** I don't think we can answer that, but I think this Task Force enables us to be out in front of the requirements set forth in the Scoping Plan so that the County is better positioned to handle forthcoming State climate goals. The CLCPA is meant to complement and support this work.

**Jen:** So, hopefully the State will end up providing even more funding to support work that the Task Force is doing to meet the State's goals. **Europa:** Yes, I think the Climate Act is just accelerating the work that CSC task forces are already doing.

**Allan:** There needs to be additional clarity on how the CSC program fits in with the CLCPA. It would be good for the DEC or NYSERDA to recognize the work that is being done by these task forces. **Devin:** There are a lot of unknowns ahead as it relates to the CLCPA and the implications that legislation will have on local governments. I think that a lot of the work of the Task Force is complimentary to the Climate Act, but also in other ways is distinct in that the Task Force is here to advise on the implementation of the actions that are best suited for Dutchess County. What we choose to pursue might be different from what other counties in the state choose to do. In the meantime, we all will continue to monitor what's going on at the State level regarding the CLCPA and Scoping Plan, and the work that the Task Force has already done will put the County in a better position to respond to new laws and requirements that may come down on local governments and residents.

**Allan:** If you take the initiative to lower carbon emissions, the State should acknowledge that and not just roll it into larger efforts and just say emissions are going down anyway. It seems like a lot of the CLCPA falls on local governments to implement so it should take into consideration feedback from the local level. **Europa:** The number of communities participating in the CSC program across the state have increased dramatically over the years. In the beginning it was a really big deal for communities that were early adopters of this work. Now that the Climate Act provides this top-down approach, there is an inevitable shift in the work, but the CSC program provides a framework list of actions that is so helpful to communities in navigating this work. The planning framework and the grants are helpful. **Audrey:** Allan brings up a good point that local governments should be included and have a say in State programs like the upcoming cap and invest program. The Scoping Plan states in several places the goal of supporting local governments through the CSC and CEC programs.

### **Update on CSC actions for Dutchess County**

**Mary Ann:** Have there been conversations about the kinds of steps that want to be taken next and which actions should be pursued next? **Devin:** Yes. Kelsey and I have been looking at the various actions, and have identified ones that have already been accomplished, and ones that are pending, and those actions, once completed and documented, should total to about 168 points. So that's good news, in that it shouldn't be a major lift at all for us to minimally re-apply for bronze certification, but of course, we have been encouraged to apply for silver, so the daunting news is we have some work to do to identify the remaining ~130 points we will need to hit 300.

**Devin:** I want us to talk about the few actions that are currently in progress and then have a conversation about committees and see if they are working well or need to be changed, and then do some follow-up where we identify actions that each committee can work towards pursuing. A year until having to re-apply for certification doesn't sound bad, but that's really only about 6 Task Force meetings since we only meet quarterly. That means that there is going to have to be some homework for these committees and additional work and meetings that must take place outside of

these larger Task Force meetings. Also, we have some vacancies so if anyone has recommendations on new names to add to the Task Force, forward those as well so that we can have as much help as we can get on working towards this goal. Achieving silver is doable but won't be easy so Mary Ann is correct in that we need to identify clear actions that we can work towards to meet that goal.

**Update on Dutchess CAPI (Climate Action Planning Institute)**

**Devin:** CAPI project has taken longer to launch due to pandemic and then staff turnover. The project finally launched in January. It's an intermunicipal project where multiple governments are working together to prepare greenhouse gas emissions inventories and climate action plans. We meet monthly as a cohort and then as individual teams. Up to 48 points can be awarded for this project. The GHG inventory will be done later this summer and then the CAP will be done in early 2024.

**Update on Dutchess County Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)**

**Devin:** Another major action is updating the County's NRI. This will be completed later this year and will be worth a maximum of 10 points.

**DC CSCTF Committees**

**Devin:** One of my goals tonight is to iron out the details of the committees and then Kelsey and I can meet with the chairs of each committee and identify relevant actions for each committee to work on outside of the Task Force meetings. **Europa:** There is a lot of funding available; does the County have plans to apply for funding to support any actions, like a community GHG and CAP for example? **Devin:** One of the things we are trying to do in the Planning Department is to identify all the various funding sources and then determine which ones are the most appropriate for us to pursue. By the next Task Force meeting, I will be able to give an update on which grants the County is going to pursue and for which projects.

Devin then proceeded to review and describe each committee:

**Greenhouse Gas Inventories & Climate Action Plans Committee:** This committee is responsible for reviewing Priority Actions related to the development of both government operations and community greenhouse gas emissions inventories and climate action plans.

Devin Rigolino	<a href="mailto:drigolino@dutchessny.gov">drigolino@dutchessny.gov</a>	Co-Chair
Kelsey West	<a href="mailto:kjw228@cornell.edu">kjw228@cornell.edu</a>	Co-Chair
Europa McGovern	<a href="mailto:europamcgovern@gmail.com">europamcgovern@gmail.com</a>	Member
Carolyn Klocker	<a href="mailto:Cak97@cornell.edu">Cak97@cornell.edu</a>	Member

**Renewables and Energy Efficiency Committee:** This committee is responsible for reviewing Priority Actions related to efforts to reducing energy use and utilizing green energy systems, including conducting energy audits and improving infrastructure/facilities to be more environmentally friendly and efficient.

Audrey Friedrichsen	<a href="mailto:afriedrichsen@scenichudson.org">afriedrichsen@scenichudson.org</a>	Co-Chair
Carolyn Klocker	<a href="mailto:Cak97@cornell.edu">Cak97@cornell.edu</a>	Co-Chair
Michael Lauchaire	<a href="mailto:mlauchaire@cenhud.com">mlauchaire@cenhud.com</a>	Member
Mary Ann Cunningham	<a href="mailto:macunningham@vassar.edu">macunningham@vassar.edu</a>	Member

**Transportation Efficiencies Committee:** This committee is responsible for reviewing Priority Actions related to current transportation efforts, including public transit usage, local bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and vehicle fleet efficiency, etc. This committee is working in cooperation with the [Dutchess County Transportation Council](#) to forward these goals.

Gary Bassett	<a href="mailto:mayorbassett@villageofrhinebeckny.gov">mayorbassett@villageofrhinebeckny.gov</a>	Co-Chair
Kelsey West	<a href="mailto:kjw228@cornell.edu">kjw228@cornell.edu</a>	Co-Chair
Allan Page	<a href="mailto:apage@apageassociates.com">apage@apageassociates.com</a>	Member
Melissa Everett	<a href="mailto:everett@sustainhv.org">everett@sustainhv.org</a>	Member

**Outreach and Education Committee:** This committee is responsible for reviewing Priority Actions related to climate change education, as well as employing various forms of social media to enhance awareness on this subject.

Melissa Everett	<a href="mailto:everett@sustainhv.org">everett@sustainhv.org</a>	Co-Chair
Kelsey West	<a href="mailto:kjw228@cornell.edu">kjw228@cornell.edu</a>	Co-Chair

**Devin:** While there is a formal appointment process to be on the Task Force, anyone can be added to a committee, so if you know anyone who might be interested in joining a committee, please let me know. **Audrey:** I'm happy to continue chairing the renewables committee. Has there been any thought to getting rid of committees that are no longer needed and forming new ones around new actions we want to pursue? **Devin:** Yes, committees shouldn't exist just because they always have existed. If we can't find actions for a committee to work on, it should be dissolved, and new ones should form as needed.

**Europa:** Perhaps the outreach committee could be dissolved since it only has one member? **Devin:** I'm also not opposed to pet projects, so if we don't have a need for an entire committee but Melissa wants to work on a specific outreach task, I'd be fine with Kelsey and I working with her on that. I don't want anyone to have the full weight of a committee on their shoulders if they don't have additional members. I will follow up with Melissa and see how she feels about the outreach and education committee. **Kelsey:** There are a few actions that could align well with that committee, so if Melissa wants to continue, I'd be happy to support her. **Devin:** So, Kelsey should I add you to that committee? **Carolyn:** Traditionally, one of us from CCE sits on every committee. **Devin:** Great. It could be that we just keep these 4 committees for now and after they have their initial meetings, they might make determinations on their usefulness at that point. I'm also going to follow up one-on-one with Task Force members that aren't currently on any committees and see what their interests are and how we can leverage their interests towards climate actions.

**Audrey:** Does anyone know if the current list of actions is going to change? **Carolyn:** They last changed in 2021; they didn't change any in 2022, but they do make updates typically in the fall. **Kelsey:** Typically, they give some warning and post that an action is under review prior to removing it. Several descriptions for various actions have changed over the years.

**Mary Ann:** I'd like to join the renewables committee and later this summer, I'd like to have a meeting to learn more about the climate action planning project since I'm doing some of that work for another town. **Devin:** Thanks Mary Ann. Also, Nancy I will follow up with you directly to describe some of the actions and committees in more detail and see what you think is the best fit for you. **Nancy:** That would be good. Initially I'm thinking the transportation committee might be a good fit.

### **Meeting Format**

It was determined that the Task Force will continue with hybrid meetings in the evenings and that using Doodle to find the best days works well. Devin will send out a Doodle poll for the next meeting along with the summary from this meeting once they are ready. The next meeting will likely be in May or June.

### **Public Comment/Correspondence**

No members of the public were present.

Submitted by:

Devin Rigolino  
Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development