

Canaan Climate Smart Task Force Meeting

August 19th, 2025 – 7PM

In attendance

Task Force Members:

- Victoria Mills
- Elyse Mason
- Tom Potter
- Becky Meier
- Mark Harbick
- Nick Adams

Outside Contributors:

- Brenda Adams (Town Supervisor)
- Tara Donadio (CDRPC)

Approval of July meeting minutes: Becky motions to approve, Tom seconds

Planning discussion

- Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Certification: We have hit the maximum level of recognition from the state; there is currently no gold certification. However, the CSC framework is still useful for planning, and the points are a good proxy for impact.
- Tara: planning is a key function of the Climate Smart Task Force. Next step would be to develop Climate Action Plans (CAPs) for the town government and community.
 - CAPs provide a framework to make planning more strategic and impactful. Address issues including electrification, waste, and getting to net zero.
 - Several other towns have done CAPs (e.g., Austerlitz, New Lebanon). There will be a county-wide CAP.
- Comments on focus areas identified in last meeting (land conversation, climate resilience, invasives removal, energy conservation, communication and funding):
 - Add planning as a cross-cutting activity. Setting goals and tracking and communicating progress is an important role for the Task Force.
 - Energy conservation: We've maxed out on what the town can do with available resources. However, we could do more to help homeowners upgrade their properties. Include fire company, rescue squads, and small businesses to help lower their costs and improve efficiencies.
 - Climate resilience is a big category, and includes land conservation, hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, and invasives removal/native restoration.
- What are some actions we could accomplish in the next 6-12 months?
 - Communication:
 - Redesigned website. Design the CSTF page as a designated page on new town website. Some neighboring towns have this page on their websites.
 - Plan for community engagement. Where should our task force show up?

- Send out a survey to find people who are willing to help accomplish our goals. Pool resources.
- Article in quarterly newsletter. 150 words and a picture.
- Funding:
 - Watch for release of the Comprehensive Funding Application in May 2026
 - Unclear if Clean Energy Communities program will have funding next year
- Planning: Climate Action Plans for government and community (PE2):
 - Purpose of the CAP is to establish what the community wants to accomplish with regard to addressing climate change.
 - The county CAP is about 12 months out and is in the hiring process.
 - CAPs are no easy lift but not a massive undertaking either. There are existing plans to use as a template. Tara will share useful resources. We can do it ourselves and not hire an outside consultant.
 - Public outreach for CAP should wait until 2026 due to the amount of recent local planning (risk of “planning fatigue”).
 - CAPs focus more on climate mitigation (reducing GHGs) than adaptation/resilience.
 - We also need to determine which source of maps to use. There is some variation in data on flood maps.
 - Climate considerations were major update to the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Energy conservation:
 - Review the town’s restrictions on solar panels. Comprehensive plan committee is looking at this as well. Scenic Hudson has a tool that can help identify locations ideal for solar installation.
 - Energy conservation: Battery storage is another important consideration. There are fire concerns and regulatory hurdles with battery storage.
- Climate resilience: Land Conservation. Canaan has a low amount of conserved land according to CLC (although 72% of our land area is forest, NRI)
 - Identify funding sources for municipalities specific to land conservation.
 - Assemble a current and comprehensive list of ALL conserved land
 - Identify key properties to conserve in Canaan (Columbia Land Conservancy is doing this for the county)
 - Join [Highlands Conversation Act](#) – now allows for communities in Columbia County to be part of the highlands area. Watershed protection. Town must pass a resolution saying they want to be part of it.
 - Expand the Taconic headwater area to include Queechey Lake .
 - Go through the CARP and identify all the recommendations that we’ve implemented and all those that we still have to do.
- Climate Resilience: Community services
 - Create a list of roads and residents (done), identify vulnerable populations (TBD), assign “road captains” to check on residents during power outages/severe storms. This would help emergency services prioritize and make better use of limited resources.
 - Smart meters – get widespread installation of smart meters to help storm response efforts as well as our understanding of local electrical use.

- Climate-Smart Land Use (PE6)
 - Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements: Public outreach for the Comprehensive Plan has concluded, so task force should flag any climate priorities for them within 30 days.
 - EV Charging Station: find the money to repair this
 - Look at zoning: how do we incentivize climate-smart growth?
 - Forestry: look at tree assets and provide resources to residents on what trees to plant.
- What next? (Lots of ideas, limited resources)
 - Should the Task Force prioritize a Climate Action Plan for Canaan, or get other things done first?
 - We need to read other towns' CAPs to decide. We should also review the town's input into the Comprehensive Plan to understand residents' priorities.
- Homework
 - Read other towns' CAPs
 - Read community comments on Comprehensive Plan
 - Finish reviewing the CARP, HMP and NRI if you haven't already
 - Think about which initiatives you want to work on.
 - Send list of good/bad websites to Christine
 - Tom to send Brenda information and draft resolution to become a Highlands Conservation Community.
- Money from NYSERDA is being reimbursed! Another thank you to Victoria, Elyse, Tara, and Brenda for their huge push to get our new infrastructure.

Updates on Events

- Despite a valiant effort by Dylan Cipowski, the water chestnut removal has been postponed until next year due to DEC's permitting process.

Meeting Adjourned 8:38PM.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 16th at 7pm.