

Executive Order #3 of 2026

Affirming the County's Commitment to the NYS Climate Act and Establishing the Ulster County Climate Smart Communities Task Force

WHEREAS, the Sixth Assessment of the International Panel on Climate Change, released on February 28, 2022, finds that climate change is causing dangerous and widespread disruption in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world; and

WHEREAS, the Global Research and Action Agenda, developed by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, finds that facilitating collaboration in local government is important to strengthen climate governance and coordination and support decentralized, participatory governance; and,

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2019, the Governor of the State of New York signed into law the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act ("NYS Climate Act"), which commits the State to:

- Reduce GHG emissions by forty percent (40%) below 1990 levels by 2030, and by eighty-five percent (85%) below 1990 levels by 2050, with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050;
- meet seventy percent (70%) of electricity needs from renewable resources by 2030, and one hundred percent (100%) of electricity needs from zero-emissions resources by 2040;
- ensure a just and equitable transition that prioritizes emissions reductions in Disadvantaged Communities; and

WHEREAS, on October 15, 2019, the Ulster County Legislature passed Resolution 409 declaring a Climate Emergency; and

WHEREAS, on December 19, 2022, the New York State Climate Action Council approved a Scoping Plan to meet the requirements of the NYS Climate Act; and,

WHEREAS, the Scoping Plan identifies local governments as critical partners in achieving the state's emission goals, emphasizing their roles in land-use planning, building codes, and clean energy infrastructure siting; and further calls for increased technical assistance to help municipalities adopt clean energy, upgrade infrastructure, and manage climate risks; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section C-112 of the Ulster County Charter, the Environmental Management Council shall:

- Advise the County Executive and County Legislature on all matters affecting the preservation, conservation and ecologically suitable use of the natural resources of the County;
- review the condition of the County environment as a whole and prepare and submit an annual report;
- prepare a plan for the protection of the County's environment and the management of its natural resources;
- investigate and recommend to the County governing body ecologically-sound methods for use of the County's resources; and,
- cooperate with and assist such other governmental or non-governmental boards or organizations on the preparation of plans and reports or review of proposals or applications as the county may direct; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section C-111 of the Ulster County Charter, the Ulster County Executive has the authority to appoint at-large appointees to the Ulster County Environmental Management Council with confirmation by the Legislature; and,

WHEREAS, the Climate Smart Communities Program provides a framework for County and municipal government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and foster a healthier, more sustainable community; and that participation in the program positions local governments to access state resources, including technical assistance and potential grant funding; and,

WHEREAS, Ulster County has long been a climate leader, and achieved Silver-level certification as a Climate Smart Community in 2016 and 2021, and endeavors to renew its Silver-level certification in accord with the Climate Smart Community Program requirements; and,

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2023, the County Executive issued Executive Order 1 to align Ulster County's climate goals and plans with the NYS Climate Act; and

WHEREAS, Ulster County, since the issuance of Executive Order 1 of 2023, the County has continued to annually reduce its greenhouse gas emissions from government operations compared to 2012 levels; and,

WHEREAS, in response to Executive Order 1 of 2023, Ulster County has drafted a Community Climate Action Plan that identifies actions the County government can take to support reductions in climate-damaging emissions from sources throughout our communities, including from buildings, transportation and waste disposal at the local government level; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section C-25(B) of the Ulster County Charter, the Ulster County Executive has the power and duty necessarily implied or incidental thereto to "supervise, direct and control the administration of all departments" of the County;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the New York State Climate Smart Communities Program Pledge Element 1, a Climate Smart Community Program Task Force must consist of, at minimum, municipal representatives who work for the local government, and community members, and may be appointed by the chief executive officer of a municipality;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JEN METZGER, County Executive of the County of Ulster, in accordance with the aforementioned and in furtherance of my statutory duties, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. The Ulster County government shall establish the Climate Smart Communities Task Force to guide, coordinate and implement the County’s sustainability and resilience initiatives and administer its application for renewal of certification.
2. The Climate Smart Communities Task Force shall be composed of the Directors of the relevant Ulster County Departments, such as Economic Development, Environment, Finance, Health, Planning, Public Works, Purchasing and Ulster County Area Transit, or their designees, as well as representatives from appropriate organizations partnered with Ulster County government, such as the Executive Director of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency, the Chair of the Ulster County Environmental Management Council, and the Executive Director of the Cornell Cooperative Extension – Ulster County. The purpose of the Climate Smart Communities Task Forces shall be to:
 - Work in cooperation with the Department of the Environment to accomplish plans, programs, and activities that are integral to the Climate Smart Communities Certification Program; and,
 - identify and prioritize projects that align with Climate Smart Communities certification actions and communicate them to the County Executive’s Office and the Legislature; and,
 - monitor progress toward fulfillment of Climate Smart Communities Certification Action and report annually to the County Executive; and,
 - engage County residents and stakeholders in climate-smart strategies and identify supportive actions the County government can take to advance the goals Executive Order #1 of 2023; and,
 - meet twice a year, or more often as needed, to execute its duties.
3. The Ulster County Department of the Environment will convene and lead the Climate Smart Communities Task Force and the Director, or designee, will act as chair.
4. The County Executive shall appoint a County employee as Ulster County’s Climate Smart Communities Program Coordinator for the purpose of administering the County’s submission to the New York State Climate Smart Communities program.

5. The Department of the Environment, in cooperation and coordination with the Ulster County Environmental Management Council, shall convene the Local Government Climate Action Partnership as a sub-committee of the Environmental Management Council consisting of one member from each city, town and village Climate Smart Communities Committee within the County to promote best-practices for greenhouse gas reduction and climate adaptation strategies within our municipalities and in furtherance of certification under the New York State's Climate Smart Communities Program and the County's Community and Climate Action Plan.

The Executive Order shall take effective immediately and shall remain in effect until otherwise superseded or revoked.

The County of Ulster



Jen Metzger, County Executive

Dated: February 9, 2026

Kingston, New York