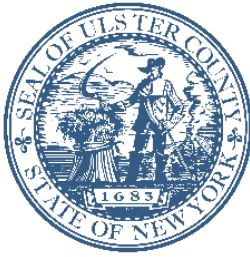


ULSTER COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Kristen Schara, Chair
Victoria Lucarini, Vice-Chair
Neil Rindlaub, Secretary



Meeting Minutes
Regular Monthly Meeting *August 2025 6:30 PM*
Hybrid Meeting Via Zoom and in-person at SUNY Ulster Kingston Center, 94 St. Mary's Ave

"The purpose of the Council shall be to review and advise the county and local governments on present and proposed methods of using, protecting and conserving the environment for the benefit of all the people."

With a quorum present, the regular meeting of the Ulster County Environmental Council was convened at 6:31 p.m.

Municipal Members Present	Kristen Schara (Chair; Hurley) Victoria Lucarini (Vice-Chair; Town of Ulster) Simon Strauss (Olive) Rob Ferri (New Paltz) Mark Ellison (Esopus) Jim Easley (Rochester) Emilie Hauser (City of Kingston) Dave Haldeman (Shawangunk)
At-Large Members Present	Carole Furman (Saugerties) Ken Panza (Woodstock) William More
Members Present via Videoconference	Roberta Clements (Gardiner) Manna Jo
Ulster County Staff	Evelyn Ellis, UC Dept. of the Environment Misha Kuznetsov (UCDOE) Brendan Walsh (UCDOE)
Guests	Mary O'Donnell

A link to the meeting agenda can be found here: <https://ulstercountyny.gov/environmental-management-council/emc-meeting-dates-minutes>

Discussion/Approval of Minutes

6:31 Convened by Kristen.

Motion to approve minutes: Mark Ellison. Seconded and approved by EMC.

Introduction of Speakers/Presentation

Dr. Elias Deuker, speaker. Professor at Bard College and longtime resident of Kingston. Interested in air quality because of the connection between air and water. "Air, and air quality, shouldn't be taken for granted."

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Elias represented the following groups:

- **Hudson Valley Community Air Network (HVCAN):** expanding the air quality networks across the Hudson Valley; hoping for opportunities to collaborate with the County.
- **Center for Environmental Sciences and Humanities (CESH).** Bridge academic disciplines and local communities to solve ‘wicked’ environmental problems, which are problems that have no simple answer.

HVCAN/CESH Methodology:

- Combine data (air quality measurements) with community to improve air quality
- Measuring air quality in Kingston since 2020. captured the anomaly of the pandemic. Now have AQ sensors at Bard, Library in Pksie, Mt. St. Mary in Newburgh, and AMNC in Kingston.
- **Ensure real-time AQ data is available to everybody.**
- Take responsibility for local environment (rather than relying on regulatory protections)
- Data driven: can’t measure impact of policy/action if nobody is measuring data. However: it takes a long time to collect the data in order to have a clear understanding of the regional baseline.

Specific Air Quality problems:

- PM 2.5: air quality can be within EPA threshold, but above WHO threshold. EPA regulatory thresholds are political lines, but WHO is more reliable. Pay attention to other points of concern.
- Wildfire haze starts in 2021, raises air pollution. Air quality pollution is additive: activities can be timed so as not to pollute when the baseline is high.
- Largest local contributors to air quality pollution: Burning oil and burning wood.
 - Wood is (unfortunately) the worst: worse than coal, oil, gas. Elias is pained to say this. 51% of all PM2.5 pollution is from 2% of NYS homes
- The AQ report on your weather app is not accurate: it reports your closest sensor, which could be hundreds of miles away.

Getting involved:

- Join HV Air Quality Coalition meetings: Monthly. Community members / leaders talking about how they’re solving problems. Meet online on zoom
- Install local sensors. HVCAN helped install many across HV, 18 hosted on libraries, over 46 in total.
 - PurpleAir: Cost to own: \$250-300.
- How you can get AQ updates: sign up at JustAir.app
 - Platform that sends you text notifications when AQ gets bad. Soon will get ground-level sensors in.
- Kristen: who is purchasing these sensors? The hosts?
 - Eli: CESH partnered with EPA and SUNY Albany to start library. CESH raised money at Bard to put in rest of network. Now the rest of the communities need to get involved so that many people are supporting the system.
- Vicki: NYS has been trying to get heat pumps in homes. This should help local AQ pollution. But what about houseplants indoors?

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- Eli: houseplants are incredible filters, BUT if you cultivate molds in plants, this is bad.
- Evelyn Ellis: [NASA has a list of houseplants that are best at filtering AQ.](#)
- William More: When building a house, if one heats with wood, wall requirements are 1/3 of what they would be if using petroleum heating instead. Because wood is “renewable.”
- Emilie Hauser: Wood is renewable *but not clean*.

Announcements

Upcoming Events:

Sept. 6th -- Olive Day. CAC has a booth with presentations. 10am-4pm.

Sept. 13th – Hurley Day at Town Park in Hurley. 10am-2pm.

Sept. 16th – Native Bee Jubilee at Ross Park in Esopus. 10am-2pm.

Sept. 17th – YMCA Farm Project Birthday in Kingston. Misha will be tabling about Rain Gardens. 5-8pm.

Sept. 25th – Climate Action Mixer in Hudson, NY. Hosted by Partners for Climate Action. 4:30-7:30pm.

Sept. 27th – Repair Café at West Park in Esopus. 10am-2pm.

Sept 21-28 – Climate Week in Ulster County. Contact Sustainable Hudson Valley to get events on list.

Legislative Updates

Vicki reports on UCRRA at County Fair: 44% increase in attendance from last year.

Decrease in MSW from agency from Jan-June. While this is a beneficial trend, decreased MSW intake means that UCRRA must increase tipping fees to haulers, which will pass costs onto residents.

Renewable Energy Implementation Committee: Releases report on recs for reaching State/Co Renewable Goals. They provide recommendations for the following six groups: county gov., state officials, Public Service Commission, electric utilities, developers, and municipalities.

Recommend to county: hire energy coordinator

RESOLUTIONS:

#470: Include thermoform plastic in ban with polystyrene foam, PULLED.

Instead focus on State-level advocacy for the *packaging reduction and recycling infrastructure act*.

#369: Confirm appointment for Andrew Bicking for director of DOE.

#178: Provide protection and restoration of Esopus Creek, Rondout Creek, and Wallkill River.
POSTPONED. Thinking about policy rather than law.

#209: Working on UCRRA service agreement. POSTPONED for month or two.

#370: Contract for 195 for Ulster County Community Action to work on Better Homes for All in mobile homes. APPROVED.

#393: Construction of public safety radio tower in the Town of Wawarsing. PASSED.

Other announcements:

Carole thanks the legislature for passing the budget to help these mobile homes.

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Kristen: UC Climate Smart Committee is reforming/reexamining what they're doing. She spread the word to this committee: what would the EMC like to see Climate Smart doing?

Department of the Environment Announcements

- Evelyn and Elias Dueker (Bard College) are working on Air Quality
- Andrew Bicking will be starting as new director on Sept. 2nd
- Brendan Walsh starts as Environmental Outreach Manager at DOE, working on Better Homes for All, Green the Scene, Community Climate Action Plan, organizing NYSACC, and other projects.
- MS4: Interim report -- Oct 4th at 6 month point. Illicit discharge detection is now a 3-part program, an improvement from a 1-part program. Misha will co-host a soil erosion course along with Jake Wedemeyer of the UC Soil and Water Conservation District (UCSWCD). Wrapping up second year of reporting now.
- Esopus watershed coordinator. DOE will hire someone, will post job in the next few months. Will work out of DOE but with UCSWCD. Perhaps more to come at next meeting.
- Meeting Site: Should be going back to Community College as of next meeting.
- No meeting in October because of NYSACC.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

EMC appointments

Many council member terms are expiring at the end of this year. It is a process to get people appointed through legislature. Members should indicate if they would like to be reappointed.

- An interest list was passed around circle, returned to Kristen.

Leachate Loophole

Kristen: Rebecca Martin wants the EMC to request DEC that they move process forward to resolve issue. Question to group: RM sent template for resolution to ask legislature to pass; the EMC could also write directly to DEC. Does the EMC want to pursue one or other?

- Vicki: do both. Send two letters to DEC: one from legislature, one from EMC.
- Emilie: do one ourselves. Kingston CAC asked Common Council to send letter as a resolution. They sent it.
- Kristen asked if anyone would like to write the letter. Emilie will share the template for the resolution.
- Vicki agreed to write the letter and send it to DOE/EMC before next meeting. Misha will send the letter along with next month's agenda

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- Point of Order: What is the procedure to send a letter from the EMC? Vote after everyone has seen the letter?
 - Emilie: EMC could deputize Vicki to write the letter based on the template. Waiting for next meeting slows down the process.
 - Kristen: vote on this at the next meeting instead of now.

NYSACC conference planning

Emilie has been working tirelessly over the last two weeks to finalize conference schedule.

Dates: Oct 24th and 25th. There will be a meet & greet on Thursday (location TBD).

There is a Friday (10/24) dinner you can attend. Saturday (10/25) will have field trips. NYSACC offers discounts to members of CACs that are members.

NYSACC planning group needs help right away! EMC members were encouraged to sign up on sheet of paper.

NYSACC Conference Needs:

Join the Planning team. Meet once/week. Can do the following actions:

1. Help with exhibitors, promotions.
2. Coordinate zoom
3. Coordinate volunteers for the day. Timekeeper for every room, etc. Move mic around, introduce speakers, etc.
4. Setup/Takedown on Thursday night and Saturday evening
5. Field trips coordination. Manage carpool; help folks find directions.
 - a. Mohonk Preserve;
 - b. Community Compost in Kerhonkson;
 - c. HV Seed Company Accord;
 - d. Kingston Tour: Urban Biodiversity. Green facilities at Golden Hill and UCAT;
 - e. Cornell HV Agriculture Research Center in Highland (Agrivoltaics going in soon!).
6. Need someone to coordinate where to go on Thursday – a bar?
7. Find a box lunch caterer for field trips.
8. **Big ask:** Need sponsors. [Can sponsor on NYSACC website](#) – any amount will do.
9. **Connect with Emilie Hauser at eehauser@gmail.com**

Other NYSACC Conference Details:

- New Venue: Best Western Plus in Kingston.
- All keynotes, all speakers, site visits, all arranged already. Lots of work done.
- Registration will be online September 3rd, posted on website. NYSACC.net
- Keynote Speaker: Steven Pausner at Garrison Institute. Uplifting. UC Executive Jen Metzger will be here, so will Mayor Steve Noble of the City of Kingston.
- Meeting is 5pm next Tuesday, Sept. 2nd.
- Think about: after breakfast, have a chance for CACs to say what they've been doing. Go around, or have 10 CACs do a presentation. From around the State. If you have a good story, talk about it.

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Theme: Innovation, solutions for changing environment.

- Will NYSERDA sponsor? Reach out to Emily Chessin in Kingston.
- Present cost of registration: \$125, doesn't cover dinner or field trips.

NEW BUSINESS

DEC Catskills Visitor Use Management Plan

William: NYS DEC released new Visitors Use management plan for High Peaks in catskills. It's 260 pages long. William made the group aware of a few elements: those designated "trailless peaks have been "overrun" by tourists. William explains that hiking organizations have enjoyed the boom from COVID, encouraging people to join the Catskill 3500. Annual use has almost doubled in some peaks (700 to 1200 visitors per year). Other points made include:

- DEC plan is to put marked trails on peaks, which would consolidate herd paths to one path. As long as orgs have recognition/rewards, will face overuse of the peaks.
- EMC should be aware. Consider the management plan from "Kaaterskill Falls debacle."

Trash Talk at EES Meeting

Vicki: Over the last 6-8 months, lots of talk about garbage. RICK (?) is off the table, especially as concerns UCRRA. UCRRA's composting program is successful – but need help from Municipalities. For their zero-waste plan, they'd like to start with food scraps. Asks:

- Could each municipality's CAC help out with education and so on? Start composting? All transfer stations can start collecting organics?

Emilie suggests that UCRRA come and talk, and either ask for help or advice. Vicki would like to help with public education programs. There is a standing question of whether or not the county can mandate multi-stream hauling based on whether the county has "flow control" over MSW.

William motions to adjourn, Vicki seconded
Kristen adjourns meeting at 8:47pm.

Next meeting September 24th, location TBD. At 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brendan Walsh, Ulster County Department of the Environment