

TO: Town of Lewisboro Town Board
Town of Lewisboro Planning Board

FROM: Lewisboro Conservation Advisory Council

SUBJECT: CAC Annual Report for 2022

DATE: December 20, 2022

The Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) presents its annual report for 2022 to the Town of Lewisboro, as required by state law.

The CAC is comprised of volunteers appointed by the Town Board to work on conservation issues that are important to the town and its residents. Since town residents get their water from local wells and lakes, and about one third of the residents of Lewisboro are members of lake communities, the CAC recognizes the importance that town residents put on protecting water resources. As our role demands, we work together on the committee to preserve and protect Lewisboro's environment including its watercourses and wetlands.

The CAC meets monthly, on the first or second Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public, and agendas are posted to the town website prior to each meeting. Minutes for all of the meetings are available through the Town Clerk and posted on the town website. Preparation of the draft CAC memos is shared among the members, and review, comments, and revisions of memos and minutes take place by email. For 2022, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the CAC continued the meeting as a virtual meeting using Zoom. A notice for the public to be able to attend was placed both in the Record Review newspaper and in the CAC agenda which is posted on the town website. Zoom information is included on the agenda, posted on the town website or can be obtained from the CAC chair.

During 2022, the CAC operated with seven members through April and then nine thereafter. Two new members were approved by the board in April and joined the committee for the May meeting. Attendance for the year was 86% among active members. Three CAC members plus the chairperson terms expire at the end of 2022. All three have indicated the desire to remain on the CAC and will be recommended for renewal to the Town Board. We are dependent upon the appointment or reappointment of capable, knowledgeable, committed members with environmental interests and adequate time to support CAC activities.

Advisory Role to Planning Board

During 2022, the CAC issued 22 letters to the Planning Board concerning applications or issues before that board. In addition, the CAC has provided a letter of support for the Town's BridgeNY grant application. Public attendance continued to be higher than pre-Covid years.

This is primarily due to virtual access via Zoom and the enhanced publication of CAC meeting dates and times. A CAC representative, generally the Chair, attends and participates in Planning Board meetings. This participation at Planning Board meetings enables the CAC to express their views on applications and environmental issues, and to stay informed on the activities in front of that board. Four members participated in the four site visits. Attendance at the walks enables more insightful comments by the CAC.

While the number of letters is one indicator of activity, a more important parameter may be the ability to provide informed advice. We believe that the CAC has continued to build a trusted and respected advisory relationship with the Planning Board regarding conservation and environmental issues. We are gratified that the members of the Planning Board solicit and thoughtfully consider our input. As a result, many of the CAC recommendations have been incorporated into applicants' plans and into the approved resolutions.

Committee Participation with other Town committees and boards

The CAC also reaches out to other boards and committees in addition to the Planning Board. The CAC provides environmental views, opinions and other information to the Town Board. In 2021 the CAC presented a draft tree removal ordinance at the request of the Town Board, which was passed with minor modifications. In April of 2022, the CAC reviewed the effectiveness of the ordinance and found that no permits had been issued. A number of violations came to the attention of members of the CAC and these were communicated to the building inspector, who has enforcement responsibility. Two things became clear with the enforcement of the tree ordinance. First, much of the public was not aware of the ordinance and second, the building department, being overwhelmed by its other duties, had a difficult time enforcing the ordinance.

The CAC has taken the following actions to help enhance the effectiveness of the ordinance:

- A Tree Removal Ordinance web page has been added to town website with a direct URL www.lewisborotreeordinance.com
- A postcard mailing has been sent to town residents informing them of the ordinance, its highlights and providing them the links to the pertinent town website pages.
- The CAC is proposing changes to the current ordinance to clarify an issue with new construction sites, align the Lewisboro ordinance with Westchester County on licensing and make the ordinance consistent with current special character district policy on tree removal.

The main issue with a successful tree removal ordinance continues to be enforcement and enforcement resources.

Regarding town committees, a CAC member is very active on the OSPAC and reports to the CAC on their activities. The CAC has contacts with the PRAC committee to share information and discuss items of mutual interest. Our newest member is active on the Sustainability Committee.

The CAC chair is a member of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The CAC members provided input to the Comprehensive Plan consultant in October of 2022.

The CAC continues to publicize the town's septic system law that requires inspection every five years. The Information is available on the CAC page of the Lewisboro website has been recently updated and a new septic system map replaces the one that is more than 5 years old. In conjunction with the Stormwater Committee, a poster describing the requirements and enforcement dates and a map of septic systems that have been pumped recently is displayed at the office of the Building Inspector.

The Westchester County Executive, George Latimer, attended the February CAC meeting.

Intermunicipal Cooperation

Lewisboro CAC members continue to work with individual municipalities in comparing municipal codes and approaches to common concerns. The CAC chair is in contact with the ELLA (Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance).

Appreciation

The CAC members contribute their valuable time, varied perspectives, and interest in serving the Town on this volunteer committee. While we don't always agree, each member remains committed to considering what is best for Lewisboro, and we are fortunate and more effective because of that participation and intent.