

# COLUMBIA COUNTY CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE

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## MEETING MINUTES - DECEMBER 5, 2024

### Call to Order

The Columbia County Climate Smart Communities Task Force Virtual Google Meet Meeting was called to order by Chairman David Newman at 10:00 am.

### Attendance

Don Meltz took the roll call

### Members Present

David Newman, Chair  
Deborah Conrad  
John Bradley  
Jennifer Phillips  
Matthew Mercier  
Joshua Cohen  
Kathy Schneider  
Betsy Albert  
Bill Mancini  
Tom Paino  
Laura Cannamela  
\*Don Meltz  
\*Brenda Adams

### Members Absent

Suzan Flamm	Notified
Lisa Bouchard Hoe	
Will Powers	
Cara Boyle	Notified
Matt Stinchcomb	
Sean Casey	
Stan Yarian	
Steve Powers	Notified
John Leone	
*Donal Collins	

\* - denotes non-voting member

### Also Present

Haley Balcanof - CDRPC Sustainability Planner  
Todd Fabozzi - CDRPC Director of Sustainability  
Jim Yienger - CDRPC CAP Planning Consultant  
Christina Bohnsack - Capital Region Clean Energy Hub  
Lindsey Strehlau-Howay - Cornell Cooperative Extension - Program Coordinator  
Cameron Parlman - Columbia County MIS  
YouTube Public Link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/yoKL4M-KLhQ>

## MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Newman thanked everyone for joining and called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Don Meltz recorded attendance.

Betsy Albert made a motion to approve the November 2024 minutes, seconded by Deborah Conrad. All were in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Newman noted that Jim Yienger and Todd Fabozzi were joining us at 10:30 to discuss the CDRPC Regional GHG Inventory and Climate Action Plan.

## CURRENT ACTIONS

### Climate Action Plan (CAP) - Land Use Subcommittee

Chairman Newman began the discussion mentioning the committee has met a few times with the goal of setting ourselves up so we are able to manage and help steer some of the land use components of the work we expect to do next year. We're familiarizing ourselves with tools, models, and potential collaborators that we might want to work with. We also have brainstormed a group of people that we would like to rely on as an advisory group.

That group may include Soil and Water, NRCS, CCE, CLC, Young Farmers, Farm Credit East, Farm Bureau, Berkshire Ag Ventures, and then a number of farmers and possibly a forester or two. Jennifer Philips is heading up an effort to do a pilot analysis at Bard using one of the Agricultural tools called Comet.

Jennifer - explained she teaches a course in the Spring for graduate students at the Bard Center for Environmental Policy on Climate and Agroecology. She will use her grad students to do an exercise where they'll use the COMET model that's been developed by the USDA to estimate greenhouse gas emissions from field crops.

Supervisor Adams mentioned that the Vispos at Farmscape Ecology have done some analysis of farm operations at the Hawthorne Valley Farm.

Chairman Newman - The ultimate goal for the GHG Inventory and for the CAP is to create a baseline that's replicable, so we need to have some way of analyzing agricultural emissions that we can use to compare in five years.

Supervisor Adams asked about hay being a crop. Jennifer replied that hay is the fourth largest land use in the county, and it definitely has emissions associated with it.

Chairman Newman - On the forest side, New York Forest Carbon Assessment, Climate & Applied Forest Research Institute (CAFRI) has set up a tool described "...to maximize climate benefits that advance forest based solutions across New York State". The map-based assessment provides a basis to identify and prioritize parcels and land owners that are best suited to different strategies and practices based on their recent, current, and projected future carbon stocks and land use changes. It also has an ability to do a more granular analysis of the sort of emissions and sinks coming from and going into the forested areas. We've reached out to them to see if that's an opportunity to collaborate. It seems like it's tied together with the State climate plan.

NYSERDA CEC Grants

Don Meltz gave an update on the status of recent CEC grants. The Courthouse Heat Pump project is fully approved, contracts have been signed, and construction is imminent, if not already begun. We received notification that we are able to apply for our next \$412,500 grant. We still have to work through the contract signing process, but it looks promising. NYSERDA CEC grant funds have been exhausted. The supervisors have decided to put all efforts in this last grant towards energy efficiency upgrades at the 401 State Street building.

Last month there was a question about how much money has come to the county through the CEC program. Since December of 2023, the county and all its municipalities have received \$2,662,500 through the CEC grant program. Of the \$25 million allocated to the CEC program state-wide, over 10% has come into Columbia County. And over \$1 million of that has come to the County Government itself. Because this program is winding down and transitioning to something else, Don has been assembling past notes and started developing a new Roadmap for the future.

CDRPC Regional GHGI and CAP

Chairman Newman invited Todd and Jim to jump into the conversation.

Todd Fabozzi - As mentioned, the allocation of the \$25 million to CEC in this phase has been claimed but they're working up something else. We just don't know what that is and we don't know exactly when that will be, but sometime probably this coming year we will know, and there'll hopefully be a new program with funding. It might look a little different. I think they're trying to shape something that will lead into the future, into 2027. CDRPC will be awarded the Climate Smart Outreach Services grant again and serving Columbia County for another three years. One of the projects CDRPC is working on is a regional GHG Inventory and Climate Action Plan, funded through the EPA.

Jim Yienger - We are deep into doing our inventory, and are committed to providing value to the local communities by making this as granular as possible, so local communities do not have to repeat the process for every local inventory and plan. Jim was impressed with the work we are doing regarding Ag and Forest, and may invite us to participate in the Statewide Protocol Group. The idea is to standardize these processes and automate things as much as possible. We should expect some form of invitation next year to a protocol discussion group for Ag. In NYS, Forestry is responsible for sequestering about 25% of GHG emissions.

Chairman Newman - In our grant application for our CAP we carved out a little bit for some work on Ag and Forest Land Use analysis. He asked about timing.

Jim - We currently have county-level inventory data and are breaking that down into municipal levels, aiming to have it done in January with 2022 data.

Supervisor Adams asked what Jim meant about scalability. Jim responded - scalable down to the local municipal level. Ideally, a local community would be able to go to some sort of dashboard to access their emissions, or at least download a protocol and know it's consistent and vetted by experts, so they have confidence in their data.

Chairman Newman - Asked about policy questions, if that is something you are looking at? Todd responded "Yes". He then asked about the CAFRI analysis and modelling tools. Jim responded he sees this as a next-generation approach, and he intends to engage with it.

## Columbia County Climate Smart Communities Task Force

There was a lengthy discussion about measuring carbon stock on undeveloped land, and analyzing the change in carbon stock due to development, what land use policies might help mitigate the loss of that carbon stock.

Todd - Addressing the “engagement” strategy for the regional GHGI & CAP. CDRPC has been reaching out to regional agencies, groups, organizations, and larger businesses. They want to begin working with local municipalities, possibly through the county task force. Chairman Newman - perhaps a presentation at our February meeting would work. Supervisor Adams thinks this timing is very good as the CEC program is over, we need to look to other kinds of activities to implement GHG reduction projects. Jim and Todd - An hour to an hour and a half would work, with a survey distributed for follow-up.

Tom Paino - Soil type mapping is a useful tool, wondering how that might be used, and how do we analyze hydro-topography? Jennifer - Soils is one of the primary layers being used in the COMET model she is working with. Todd - The work CDRPC is doing is primarily mitigation based, and not addressing adaptation.

Don - Regarding granularity of data, yes, the soils has a lot of highly granular information. Other land cover datasets can be improved by manually digitizing various types of land cover, he has done this at the local municipal level, but at a county scale it’s probably not a realistic goal. He also suggested broadening our list of invited guests for a February CDRPC Presentation meeting, including all of the supervisors and other local Task Forces. Supervisor Adams mentioned the County HMP being developed, and that may be an additional resource for local, granular data and strategies.

Chairman Newman - We will continue connecting via open channels about next steps and the February meeting.

### Clean Energy Hub

Christina Bohnsack - Set a date for an Energy Literacy workshop in Valatie Saturday February 1<sup>st</sup>, at 10:00 AM. Looking at another one in Hillsdale in June, and one in Hudson before that.

### Local Task Force Actions, Updates, and other topics - All Members

Chairman Newman suggested moving the January meeting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> due to the Holidays. Don will send out a notice of the change.

Don mentioned we have a new representative from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Lindsey Strehlau-Howay, who will be invited to all future Task Force meetings.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Newman adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 1/9/2024 at 10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Meltz

Columbia County Planning Department