

# TOWN OF WOODSTOCK ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

45 Comeau Drive, Woodstock, NY 12498

Susan M. Paynter, Chair  
Arlene Weissman, Vice-Chair  
Stacey Anderson  
Laurie Kirby  
Evan Neumann  
Joe Otters  
Kenneth Panza

## End of Year Report for 2025

After a year hiatus, the Woodstock Environmental Commission (WEC) was reactivated by the Town Board with full membership in 2025. The reconstituted WEC began meeting in July, and has since followed a twice a month meeting schedule.

### WEC Members

Susan M. Paynter, Chair	Term: expires 12/31/2025
Arlene Weissman, Vice-Chair	Term: expires 12/31/2025
Stacey Anderson	Term: expires 12/31/2025
Laurie Kirby	Term: expires 12/31/2025
Evan Neumann	Term: expires 12/31/2026
Joe Otters	Term: expires 12/31/2026
Kenneth Panza	Term: expires 12/31/2025

### The Learning Curve

WEC meetings focused on understanding what had previously been accomplished and learning about the missions and programs of other town committees. Former WEC members helped create a list of past projects to inform the new commission. WEC invited committee chairs and others to share their missions and programs, and to inform and instruct the commissioners. The invited guests included:

#### Marcel Nagele, Woodstockers United for Change

Marcel Nagele, a member of Woodstockers United for Change, was invited by the chair to address WEC regarding Shady Dump and local water supply issues. Shady Dump is a label given to the action of dumping an estimated 200 truckloads of construction and demolition material (C&D) at 10 Church Road in Shady and the effect this material had on Frank and Pam Eighmey (pronounced amy), owners of the adjacent downhill property. Other members of Woodstockers United for Change present for Marcel's presentation included Stephine Kaplan, Vince Mower, Linda Lover, Allen Weber, and Chris Finley.

### Kirk Ritchey and Caroline Ritchey of Transition Woodstock

The Transition Town Movement is comprised of grassroots initiatives that seek to build community resilience in response to such challenges as resource depletion, climate change, and economic instability. Kirk Ritchey reviewed a list of projects that Transition Woodstock and WEC have jointly sponsored.

Currently, Transition Woodstock is managing the Repair Café, sponsored by WEC and held at the Community Center. Repair Café is an event where volunteers help people fix broken household items for free, promoting sustainability and waste reduction. Visitors bring broken objects and “volunteer fixers” work with them to make the repairs. Between 75 and 100 people bring items for repair, and about 20 volunteers help with the repairs.

### Michael Veitch, Chair, Woodstock Tree Committee

Michael discussed three topics:

1. Creation and continued evolution of the tree committee,
2. The removal of over 220 trees to create a shared use bike trail to Bearsville, and
3. The danger of forest fires in Woodstock.

### Friends of Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Andy Mossey, Patty Goodwin, Woodstock Land Conservancy  
Karl Beard, formally Project Specialist, National Park Service

Friends of Catskill Mountain Rail Trail is proposing to connect the Ashokan Rail Trail to the Kingston Linear Park by utilizing a 1.8-mile undesignated section of the former Ulster & Delaware Railroad corridor between Route 28A in Stony Hollow and Basin Road. But there’s conflict with the Catskill Mountain Railroad (CMRR) proposal to use the undesignated section for the tourist railroad and to build a railroad station at Basin Road. CMRR claims the undesignated section could support both trail and railroad usage, while the Friends of Catskill Mountain Rail Trail claim dual usage on the undesignated section is infeasible –it’s either used for the trail or for the railroad, not both.

Friends of the Catskill Mountain Rail Trail called upon the Woodstock Environmental Commissions to support a “trail-only” policy on the undesignated section. The commission agreed to write a letter supporting the trail only policy.

### Howard Cohen and Grace Murphy, Co-Chairs, Complete Streets Committee

Co-chair Grace Murphy reviewed the history and programs of the Complete Streets Committee.

Co-chair Howard Cohen explained Complete Streets role advising the Department of Transportation (DOT) about its project to reconstruct the Tinker St. bridges and improve sidewalks from the Village Green to Schoonmaker Lane. It’s claimed that the project will remove many trees to create new sidewalks and bike trails. WEC Chair Susan Paynter received assurances from Complete Streets that the Tree Committee would be involved in discussions about removing and replacing Tinker St. trees.

The proposal by Complete Streets to extend the Tinker St. project, with sidewalks and bike trails to Bearsville, was briefly discussed, but this extension has not been funded by DOT.

## Current Activities

### Shady Dump/10 Church Rd

In consideration of the information and documentation presented to the Environmental Commission by members of Woodstockers United for Change, the Commission approved two letters sent to the Town Board.

The first letter, approved October 15, 2025, recommended reserving part of the town's budget surplus in anticipation of remediation of the Shady Dump/10 Church Road site.

A second letter, approved November 5, 2025, advised the Woodstock Town Board there is an urgent need to mitigate the threat to the town's aquifer by removal of all offending material from 10 Church Road.

### Climate Change Education and Engagement Project

Stacey Anderson briefed the commission on the Climate Change Education and Engagement project, a Climate Smart action item. The strategy was developed by Anna Harrod-McGrew, Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County, in conjunction with the Town of Woodstock Climate Smart Task Force. The project focused on conveying local disaster preparedness information to community residents.

Hosted on the Town's website, a webpage covers a range of topics, from developing a family emergency plan to the multi-faceted relationship between climate change and natural disasters. Information is provided on what to do during and after a disaster, how to access emergency services, and how to start the recovery process.

### DWSP2 Working Group

On January 31, 2024, Woodstock was selected to participate in the state sponsored Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2.) The Program is a locally led, state-supported program that empowers municipalities to take action to improve and protect their public water sources and surrounding environment. Communities accepted into the program work with technical assistance providers to develop and initiate implementation of their unique Drinking Water Source Protection Program, leading to actionable steps each municipality can take to protect their drinking water sources.

Woodstock's Water Working Group, consisting of Julia Blelock, Arlene Weissman, and Councilwoman Laura Ricci met with Department of Health professionals over the past year to identify sources of contamination and develop a plan to protect the quality of the town's water supply. Paige Bogart and Michael Forgeng of the Department of Health presented the working group's initial findings at the March 11, 2025 Town Board meeting.

### Big Deep and Little Deep

Susan Paytner and Arlene Weissman inspected conditions at Little Deep and Joe Otters examined Big Deep. Big Deep and Little Deep are popular Woodstock swimming areas on the Sawkill that are heavily used during summer months. At one time, these sites were known and used only by locals, but with the explosion of the internet, the sites have become popular destinations for visitors. With heavy usage, the sites need additional regulation and management. Parking is a problem, restrooms are unavailable, and dogs are unleashed. Additional meetings with the supervisor will be held to establish a plan to address these issues.

## Zena Development

The Woodstock Planning Board held its third and fourth sketch plan reviews of the proposed extension and improvements to Eastwoods Drive. Zena Development is proposing up to 55 homes, two pickle ball courts, a tennis court, and a gym in the Town of Ulster. The plan requires extending and improving Eastwoods Drive, an existing private road in Woodstock, to the Town of Ulster town line, an estimated distance of 1,400 feet. The proposed 55-unit development does not include construction on the Woodstock parcels beyond road improvements. Eastwoods Drive and its proposed extension is within Woodstock's designated Zena Woods CEA.

The Ulster Planning Board determined that this project constitutes a Type 1 SEQR Action, and circulated a Notice of Intent to serve as Lead Agency on May 13, 2025. The Town of Woodstock objected to the Ulster Planning Board assuming SEQR Lead Agency on June 12, 2025, and requested that Woodstock should be SEQR Lead Agency.

The DEC designated the Town of Ulster Planning Board as the lead agency for the proposed Zena Homes development, settling the dispute with the Town of Woodstock. As lead agency, the Town of Ulster will be responsible for conducting the primary environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). The DEC expects the Town of Ulster to actively include Woodstock and other involved agencies in the review process.

## 2025 Ulster County Watershed Roundtable, August 11, 2025

Each year, the Ulster County Department of the Environment sponsors a meeting where all the county's environmental and conservation commissions share their accomplishments and plans. For the past three years, the meeting focused on town environmental activities and Climate Smart program accomplishments. This year the focus was on watersheds.

The Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan (SMP), published in early summer of 2024, was created to address issues along the 32-mile extent of the Esopus creek resulting from releases of muddy water from the Ashokan Reservoir. In addition to the Lower Esopus, comprehensive stream management programs have been prepared for the Rondout and Wallkill creeks. The county's watershed manager, recently hired, will be responsible for working with these watershed groups.

## Scarecrow Festival, Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025

WEC hosted a table at the Woodstock Land Conservancy's Scarecrow Festival with two objectives: 1) to understand community environmental priorities, and 2) to recruit volunteers. It was reported that fewer Woodstock residents attended the festival than did out-of-town visitors and tourists. Although they were unable to get a sense of community environmental priorities, they did identify about ten individuals who expressed interest in getting involved with environmental activities.

## Comeau Pollinator Garden – Joe Otters

The Woodstock Pollinator Pathway (WPP) received permission from the Town of Woodstock to design, install and maintain a pollinator friendly garden in a sunny 50 x 100-foot graded area beside the new wing of the Town offices. Designed by WPP member and horticulturist Cindy Muro, the garden will showcase the beauty and benefits of a pollinator-friendly garden.

On Sunday, November 2, with the help of a dozen volunteers, the first phase of the pollinator garden was completed. Removal of hay and weeds preceded the spreading of 7 cubic yards of

compost. Cindy Muro, WPP horticulturalist, donated about \$1,000 worth of seeds, which were distributed in accordance with Cindy Muro's garden design.

### CERM Conference, October 22 & 23 – Ken Panza & Arlene Weissman

CERM, the Catskill Environmental Research & Monitoring Conference was held October 22-24, 2025. The conference was first convened in 2010 by government agencies, university, and non-profit partners that continue as conference conveners.

The purpose of the CERM conference is to: (1) Highlight environmental research and monitoring efforts related to the Catskill Mountains; (2) Bring together a diverse interdisciplinary group of researchers, students, resource managers and others interested in the Catskills; (3) Explore the impacts of environmental stressors on water quality, biodiversity, and ecosystem health; and (4) Stimulate discussion and promote collaborative efforts that address data gaps and environmental issues affecting the region.

### Perspective on Town of Ulster BESS – Ken Panza

Terra-Gen, a company partially owned by UAE-based Masdar, is proposing to tear down the former Coleman Catholic High School and construct a 250-megawatt lithium-ion battery facility (BESS). During its May 15 meeting, the Ulster Town Board declared its intention to be the lead agency for the project.

The site plan calls for construction of a substation on the east side of the property about 22 feet from a residential property, a 30,000-gallon water storage tank with a fire command center near Hurley Avenue, a 10,000-gallon water storage tank in the middle of the property, a 5,000-gallon underground storage tank in an unidentified location, and approximately 300 industrial lithium-ion batteries in 14-foot tall containers covering nearly 12-acres of the 15-acre property. A 0.3-mile, above ground, high-voltage transmission line and fiber optic cable will be constructed from the project to the existing Central Hudson transmission lines at the Hurley Substation.

## 2026 WEC Goals & Objectives

### DWSP2 Working Group

A draft report prepared by the DWSP2 working group was submitted for review and approval by the state. Once released, the WEC will have a major role in implementing its conclusions. Included in the report are updated source water aquifer maps, groundwater modeling, possible water contamination and quality issues, and a discussion of protection and management strategies.

When the DWSP2 is released by DEC, the Environmental Commission will have a role in implementing its recommendations.

### HVRC Landfill Biofilter proposal - Ken Panza

The Hudson Valley Regional Council (HVRC) secured a \$3 million grant to mitigate methane emissions at Mid-Hudson landfills, a program which got under contract and kicked off on November 1, 2024. The goal is to install biofilters to reduce methane emissions at 14 closed landfills in municipalities in the Mid-Hudson Region. Biofilters are a reliable and cost-effective solution for reducing landfill gas (LFG) emissions by utilizing methanotrophs, specialized bacteria capable of converting landfill methane to less harmful gases. The Woodstock landfill is a candidate site.

### Zena Development

The Town of Ulster Planning Board is the lead agency on this project, and Woodstock concerns are therefore considered by the Town of Ulster Planning Board. WEC will continue to monitor the actions of the planning boards and participate as appropriate.

### Town of Ulster BESS – Ken Panza

Continued investigation into battery technology and safety. Participate in the Town of Ulster SEQRA process as appropriate.

### Comeau Pollinator Garden – Joe Otters

Like all gardens, the Comeau Pollinator Garden will need constant attention.

### Public Environment Priorities Outreach Survey

A questionnaire, first used at last fall's Scarecrow Festival and subsequently posted to Facebook, is collecting Woodstockers opinions and priorities about environmental issues. When completed, the survey results will be used in discussions about WEC program commitments for 2026.

Respectfully submitted,



Kenneth S. Panza, Secretary pro tempore  
Woodstock Environmental Commission