

Climate Smart Communities Task Force

Monday, January 12, 2026 Minutes

Dr. Robert L. Yeager Health Center

50 Sanatorium Road, Building A, 6th Floor Conference Room

Pomona, New York, 10970

Prepared by Elizabeth Aranguiz

Members Present: Jake Berdugo, Paul Cleary, Marcy Denker, Claudia Depkin, Patrick Donahue, Peggy Kurtz, Darwin Keung, Frankie Ledo, Colin Schmitt, Joanne Louis-Paul, and Amogh Vaz

Members Not Present: Colin Schmitt

Ex Officio Members Present: Paul Brennan, Al Carnevale, Michael D'Angelo, Kathy Galione, Nicole Laible, Nick Longo, John Lyon, Kevin McGuinness, Paul Pietropaolo, Brianna Rosamilia, Rich Schiafo, and Glenn Sungela

County Staff Present: Elizabeth Aranguiz and Doug Schuetz

Members of the Public Present: Isaam Chaudhry and Jason Laines

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting began at 3:40 pm.
- 2. Roll Call:** Darwin Keung took attendance. All members were present, except Colin who is on paternity leave.
- 3. Welcome Remarks:** John Lyon thanked the task force members and the County staff for their participation on behalf of the County Executive. He mentioned meaningful state grant funded projects that this task force will assist in guiding. He pointed out that this task force will help the County continue to fill its leadership role among the municipalities to assist them with projects that smaller municipalities might not have the capacity to take on. He also talked about striking a balance between the preservation of open space and development. John expressed his excitement to work with the task force on upcoming projects.

Darwin Keung thanked attendees and reviewed the agenda.
- 4. Introductions:** Icebreaker exercise in breakout groups of two to three people. Approximately, ten minutes later the meeting was reconvened, and groups introduced each other to the larger assembly.
- 5. CSC Task Force Purpose:** Darwin provided an overview of the County's sustainability efforts and CSC program history, culminating in the 2026 inaugural CSC Task Force meeting.

Darwin provided an extract of the Founding Resolution for the Task Force highlighting three main purposes for the Task Force:

- Advise the County on Climate CSC Actions and Certifications.
- Foster collaboration and bridge the gap between county staff and community members.

- Create accountability through open communication via annual reports and open meetings.

Darwin asked the Task Force to review the roles and responsibilities of the public members and ex-officio members of the task force.

- Role of Members (Public) – Members are responsible for proposing ideas, providing feedback, planning initiatives, and offering guidance on future actions.
- Role of County Staff (Ex Officio) – County staff assist in submitting necessary documentation for certification, and proposing, planning, and advising on future actions.

Darwin then gave information on the purpose of procedural and organizational format of the Task Force. He also asked for those interested in volunteering to help draft some of the necessary items outlined below to meet with him at the end of the meeting.

- Meetings will follow Robert’s Rules of Order and NYS Open Meetings Law
- Task Force will develop by-laws, elect officers.
- Members must use County emails and complete any required trainings from the County

6. **CSC Program:** Darwin summarized the NYSDEC-administered CSC Program, which supports municipalities in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change through certified actions across 12 pledge elements. Points earned through actions lead to Bronze and Silver certification. Ultimately, completing actions leads to collecting points, which allows a municipality to be certified at Bronze and Silver levels.

Darwin showed sections of the NYSDEC CSC Program website. If members have questions about whether on-going projects can be documented for points, they can check the CSC website or contact Darwin.

Darwin explained the timeline and application windows that the CSC Program uses. The goal is to have an application ready for Bronze Certification for the January 2027 window. Paul Pietropaolo asked if The County’s current goal is to obtain Bronze status. Darwin and John confirmed that this is the goal, and then the County will work towards Silver once that is accomplished.

Darwin asked the Task Force to please continue to share information on any sustainability projects around the County that could help the County’s application.

7. **County Sustainability Projects:** Darwin introduced the County’s current sustainability projects.

- GHG Emissions Inventory and Climate Action Plan (grant awarded; RFP in progress)
- Natural Resources Inventory (funded through Hudson River Estuary Program)
- Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CCARP), beginning Summer 2026
- Comprehensive Plan update (final draft expected soon; includes sustainability elements for CSC points)
- Clean Energy Communities designation and past grant-funded projects
- EV Infrastructure Feasibility Study
- Renewable Energy Feasibility Study
- Water Task Force initiatives

Rich elaborated on the process of the GHG Emissions Inventory and CAP, the NRI grant, and Comprehensive Plan update.

Darwin announced that the County will be working with the Hudson Valley Regional Council to develop a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CCARP). This will begin this Summer 2026.

Rich mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan sustainability and climate focused component, so it could be submitted to the Climate Smart Communities Program for points. John advertised the Comprehensive Plan survey that is currently available on the Envision Rockland website (<https://www.envisionrockland.com/>). The goal is to reach a thousand survey responses.

Rich stated that the County is a designated Clean Energy Community. The County has received some grants through this program for small projects like getting electric landscaping equipment and an electrical vehicle for the Parks Department. The program is currently pending the State to reopen its application cycle for 2026. Rich pointed out that working towards these designations opens doors for more money and better funding opportunities for projects.

Paul P mentioned he is working with Darwin for the EV Infrastructure Feasibility Study. John added that getting grant funding comes with some hurdles and challenges, and so with the 2026 budget the County Executives office is trying to make this process easier and faster. John gave the example of including EV infrastructure information in the budget. Paul P stated that part of the importance of the feasibility study is its ability to help the County plan for the future by identifying the constraints of the current technology and plotting out areas where infrastructure should be built in the future. It will identify both short term and long-term goals.

Nicole discussed the Water Task Force, which will be working with the CSC Task Force closely. The Water Task Force has a lot of overlap with members and projects. Nicole said that the Water Task Force will be going after five potential CSC actions

for points, mostly regarding PE7. They will be working on green infrastructure, flood resiliency, and USEPA WaterSense fixtures. Outside of the CSC actions, they will also be working on climate resilience efforts, general mitigation, and education programs. Rich asked if the Water Task Force existing gets CSC points. Nicole said no, but that she is looking into advocating for more water related actions to be added to the point system. Marcy added that some of the tasks within these larger projects do give points, and gave the example of a fleet inventory, which would be part of the EV Infrastructure Feasibility Study and would give points.

Rich mentioned that some of CSC actions can be difficult for a County to complete because of scale. Darwin agreed that the CSC system seems to be made with smaller municipalities like towns in mind. Paul P asked if there are counties that are certified under CSC. Rich confirmed that several surrounding counties are certified such as Dutchess, Orange, and Westchester. Rich reiterated that the CSC program is doable, but the scale of some projects can be more difficult and lengthier due to size, specifically for transportation. Marcy added that having the experiences of the surrounding counties to draw from is a benefit for Rockland, so we can avoid some of their early mistakes as we build our own programs and projects. Patrick asked if a private company were to upgrade their infrastructure for climate resilience or to less polluting variants, could the County get CSC points? Darwin explained that the program does not account for external actions done by private companies and organizations alone.

John stated that the County is getting involved in these programs to be a leader in the area for the municipalities within the County. Rich added that the Department of Planning has reached out to other counties for information on how they navigated a specific project. Patrick asked if those documents are public, and Paul P responded that typically they would be public. Rich confirmed that most of these documents would be public unless they have not been published yet.

- 8. Discussion of CSC Task Force Priorities:** Darwin stated he would like the CSC Task Force to develop a mission statement, and that he is asking for volunteers for a drafting working group. In the next meeting, he would like the Task Force to review the CSC Action Matrix Website, and will be sending out a survey to poll interest in climate topics and specific CSC actions.

Darwin asked for volunteers regarding drafting bylaws. Amogh Vaz volunteered. Patrick suggested that Darwin and Amogh could use the bylaws from other county's CSC Task Forces to get an idea for what the bylaws should include.

- 9. Scheduling for Future Meetings:** The consensus was that a monthly meeting is doable, and Darwin will be sending out a poll to pick the date and time.

Jake Berdugo asked if remote meetings are possible. John explained that due to NYS Open Meetings Law the member joining remotely would need to be in a public space with a computer set up that would allow members of the public to participate, and this additional location would need to be included in the public meeting notice. Brianna Rosamilia added that the remote member would also not count towards quorum. Essentially, remote meetings are not possible.

Kevin McGuinness asked how long the average meeting will be. Darwin answered that meetings will typically be an hour long.

10. Public Comments and Questions: Marcy asked if there is a CSC Action Matrix that the County has already been working on, specifically at the Department of Planning. Darwin answered that yes, there is a matrix that the Department of Planning has been using and working on. John explained that in 2021 a consultant made an implementation matrix, which will act as a starting point. It will need to be updated with current information before it is shared with the CSC Task Force.

Joanne Louis-Paul asked about the longevity of actions once points are earned. Darwin answered that it depends on the action, but that through the recertification process of the program the County will need to show ongoing support for some projects that need upkeep and maintenance. Rich gave the example of the GHG emissions inventory, and how there will be a tracking component. Joanne asked if it is possible to lose certification if a municipality does not meet certain metrics. Rich responded that since municipalities have to get recertified there is a chance they could fail the recertification.

Patrick asked about the documentation lift required for County staff to create the CSC application that will be submitted next year. Rich replied that this is why the CSC Task Force has ex officio members for each of the major departments that will be completing this paperwork, so that they are aware of all the information related to the program. Rich added that a lot of the CSC actions are actions the County was already taking, but creating the paper trail to get the points was the next step. John agreed with this and stated that adding the documentation component will be crucial.

Discussion of EV purchasing and availability of EVs. Paul P and Paul Brennan mentioned supply chain issues affecting purchasing of EVs and hybrids as manufactures discontinue them. Paul B explained that the County tends to rely on hybrid vehicles because the infrastructure for EVs is not currently in place. Paul B also brought up the challenge of knowing what the availability of certain technology will be over time. Paul P agreed and added that installing the infrastructure for some

of this technology is a big investment, and that the County needs to be aware of what that cost will be. Paul B stated it also takes a lot of coordination with Orange and Rockland to ensure they can support the additional load to the power grid. Paul P pointed out that these challenges will be explored in the EV Infrastructure Feasibility Study. Legislature Paul Cleary brought up that the County may want to consider generating their own electricity through solar panels over parking lots, or on vacant land. Paul B expanded on this by offering the example of Ramapo College that does something similar to this.

11. Adjournment: On a motion made by Darwin, and seconded by Marcy, the meeting was adjourned at 5:04 pm.