

Minutes of the Putnam County Climate Smart Task Force Meeting August 21, 2026

Call to order: 10:01 a.m.

Attendees:

In Person: Ilona Campo, Joe Bellucci, Barbara Barosa, Savannah Usher, Matt Covucci

Microsoft Teams: Joe Montuori, Anne Campbell, Matt Nadolny (BES)

1. **Review: May Meeting Minutes**

- No comments, questions, or concerns

Recap: Discussed CCARP development, including the Lunch and Learn Webinar and Earth Day Fest outreach; culvert replacements and dam projects; HHWD/Mattress Recycling Event/LSWMP; and BES's Hazard Mitigation Plan project kickoff. Discussed the Transit Facility solar array project (awaiting bid release), EV projects (designs advancing), and other EV acquisitions. Ilona shared takeaways from recent webinars and MOSS meetings, including Sustainable Putnam's Energy Affordability Campaign.

2. **Discussion: Climate Smart Activities Updates**

- **Community Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CCARP)** development with HVRC.
 - o Draft CCARP is available for public comment on the [website](#) through September 15th, which will be the final opportunity for resident and stakeholder feedback. Two to three constructive comments have been received to date. The Plan itself is roughly 150 pages (400 with appendices). Barbara, Matt, and Ilona will separately discuss how to best incorporate those comments, likely through a summary.
 - o The plan is to have HVRC or Planning staff present the findings and strategies to the Physical Services Committee (open to the public) on Sept. 22nd, with the Full meeting to follow on October 6th.
 - o Ilona confirmed that Sustainable Putnam will promote the public comment period in its next newsletter. The Health Department will also post about it again in early September, and Matt N. was asked to share the information through BES' Facebook account.
- **Solar at the Transit Facility:**
 - o The \$125,000 NYSERDA funded Transit Facility solar project received unofficial bid results, with Sun Blue Energy as the lowest bidder at approximately \$140,000. The \$15,000 estimated overage will be covered through an existing executed FTA grant. Joe M. noted that he previously reviewed the contractor's BBB rating, NYSERDA affiliation, and Google reviews. Sun Blue Energy is also listed as a contractor on Sustainable Putnam's website and has a 5-star Google rating and A+ BBB rating. Project completion is anticipated by year-end.
- **EV charging stations:**
 - o Transit Facility: Moving forward with INF using ChargePoint software, with some potential customer service concerns. The solar roof addition may help offset energy demand from the chargers and/or building. Installation is anticipated in 2026.
 - o Barbara noted that a new federal grant has been executed for two hybrid vans to expand the Putnam On-Demand microtransit program.
 - o DBS charging stations are still awaiting DEP SWIP permit comments.
 - o In response to Ilona's question about additional charging stations following the new EV acquisitions, Joe and Barbara noted additional potential sites at the Health Department, COB, and potentially one more.

- **Native landscaping at the Transit Facility**
 - Project was completed June 29, 2026, which also coincided with a week of extreme heat. Some plants were affected but are recovering and spreading. The project came in under budget, allowing for additional plants if desired.
 - CCE provided a Pollinator Pathway sign. Educational signage is still needed to meet the Water Smart Landscaping action requirements. Ilona asked whether DPW's sign shop could produce the signage, Joe confirmed they could. The sign can be relatively small but must include educational information.
- **Department Updates:**
 - **DPW (Joe B.):** Ongoing work includes several culvert replacements including projects located on Peekskill Hollow Road, Wiccopee Drive, and Snake Hill Road in Philipstown. They are expected to go out to bid shortly, with the culverts being upsized. DPW is also still awaiting execution of the EPA grant for the Vacall/Vactor stormwater management trucks. Barbara and Ilona met with HVRC on Monday, August 17th, for a progress update and to discuss needs for future projects. There was a discussion of soliciting them to create a Stormwater Management Plan for the County as the current draft was never approved. Barbara noted that she prepared a plan approximately a decade ago, but some of the language may have been too committal.
 - **Health (Savannah):** The Health Education Division continues to stay active with community outreach through social media. The final DEC-approved LSWMP will go before the full Legislature for adoption at the October 6th meeting. Once adopted, the County will move forward with a countywide, two-year food scrap recycling pilot program in Patterson, Kent, Carmel/Mahopac, and Brewster/Southeast. Cold Spring/Philipstown will be excluded for now, as they have their own food scrap recycling programs. The County plans to meet separately with the Town Supervisors and Mayor to discuss how best to support the program, and will invite Mayors, Town Supervisors, and Town Climate Smart members to discuss buy-in and implementation. The County Executive is fully supportive of the program.
Health also received the results of the Waste Characterization Study, which showed high contamination rates in both MSW and recycling samples, resulting in improper diversion. The countywide contamination rate was 41.6%. The Department has begun developing educational materials and meeting with haulers contracted within the towns to establish a more standardized message, with the goal of seeing improvement reflected in their annual reporting for permit renewal. The Department also recently applied for the HHW and Municipal Waste and Recycling Coordination (MWRC) grants to support education, promotional materials, and related efforts. The Department also received outreach from Orange County CCE regarding a seven-county grant application focused on food waste prevention. Southeast, Brewster, and the Town of Kent/Lake Carmel were identified as anchor communities, targeting adults ages 18–35 and parents in that age range with children under 18 to better understand what information and educational materials would be most useful for food waste prevention. The Health Department's Solid Waste Program and Early Intervention Program will provide letters of support for the project.
 - **BES (Matt N.):** BES' Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) virtual draft review meeting is scheduled for September 23rd at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. and will be open to the public. Planning provided comments on the Draft Annex during its development, as many of the same themes came up during the CCARP planning process. Matt N. noted that BES has received the first of two volumes of the draft: [Volume One](#) covers the administrative content, identified hazards, and how they apply to the County, while [Volume Two](#) will include the individual municipal annexes. Matt expects the draft to be submitted for approval by December/January. Ilona asked whether there would be a public comment period for the HMP, and Matt noted that there may be a mechanism for public comment.
 - **Transit (Ilona & Barbara):** The Department recently applied for and received an FTA grant to fund two new hybrid microtransit vehicles to expand the County's Putnam On-Demand service. Expanding service zones to Putnam Valley and Philipstown was one of the recommendations

from the Transit System Study, along with several fixed-route suggestions. The Study is now available on the County's [Transportation website](#). Depending on grant funding, the County would also like to pursue an enhanced mobility program serving seniors and individuals with disabilities countywide, similar to programs in Westchester and Long Island. This would have fewer limitations than the current Paratransit service.

In bikeway news, the NEPA process has concluded after roughly three years of delaying the Putnam Bikeway IV project. The project will complete the missing segment over the Southeast railyard near Kobacker's Market in Brewster, connecting to the Maybrook Trail, and is estimated to take approximately 1.5 years to complete. Barbara also noted that Connecticut received funding to continue its [Fairfield County railway network](#).

3. **Discussion: Recent Webinars/Conferences/Meeting Takeaways**

- **DEC's Climate Connection Summit:**

Ilona attended this conference in Utica back in June and noted that it was a good opportunity to put faces to names. One of the more interesting projects discussed was Ulster County's Transportation System (UCAT), which operates approximately 20 routes with complementary paratransit service and provides roughly 400,000 rides annually at no cost to riders. UCAT also has EV chargers located inside its bus bays with solar panels on the facility roof and has not experienced any fire-related incidents to date. Barbara noted that the County would need to continue charging fares, as eliminating fares would result in the loss of STOA funding, which helps offset roughly half of the County's operating budget.

The conference also included a discussion on soliciting community feedback for climate plans. Buffalo/Niagara presented an innovative climate challenge game designed to identify community priorities for local and regional climate mitigation actions. Participants use "monopoly money" or poker chips to weigh different carbon-reduction strategies based on GHG reductions, social benefits, implementation costs, complexity, and grid demand. Feedback from the game helped inform the Buffalo Niagara region's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP), which outlines regional emissions-reduction efforts over 25 years. Ilona noted that a similar approach could be useful for other planning processes by bringing the activity directly into the community.

- **Cornell IPM's [Webinar](#): Managing Spotted Lanternfly in Home and Landscape**

The Cornell Integrated Pest Management team's August monthly webinar featured a detailed 40-minute presentation on Spotted Lanternfly management. The presentation covered the species' life cycle, non-native host plant (Tree of Heaven), feeding preferences and crop damage, egg-laying cycle, natural predators, and recommended management practices for the insects and host plants. Joe M. noted that native plant gardens can help attract insects and birds that are natural predators of Spotted Lanternfly. Ilona highly encouraged everyone to watch the presentation.

- **HVRC's Mid-Hudson sustainability meetings:** Ilona continues to participate in these meetings hosted by HVRC for local counties, including Putnam, Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, and Ulster, to share updates on sustainability initiatives, CSC actions, partnerships, and local projects. The most recent meeting focused on HVRC's goals, including updating the Communitywide Greenhouse Gas Inventory, for which the County previously received CSC points. The group also discussed the feasibility of establishing region-wide GHG emissions reduction goals.

- **Discussion with HVRC Leadership:** At the same August 17th meeting, Kathleen Abels (Putnam Economic Development Council), Barbara, and Ilona met with HVRC leadership to discuss potentially establishing intermunicipal working groups with the Towns and Villages. The idea would be to have a municipality volunteer to host (or for the County to host) designated meetings focused on local climate action. HVRC is willing to help organize these meetings, potentially beginning next year. HVRC also noted limited to no engagement with the Town of Southeast this year. HVRC staff are also working on a [capped landfill project](#) in Philipstown that incorporates methane biofilters,

which was presented at the Climate Connection Summit. HVRC is also hiring a new Resilience and Adaptation Coordinator in September to replace Sofie's role.

- **NYS MOSS Meetings:** Ilona continues to attend the monthly NYS MOSS meetings. During the August meeting, the group discussed inviting a NYSDEC CSC representative to hear feedback on the CSC program. In recent news, the City of Kingston recently received two curbside packing vehicles for its curbside [composting program](#), while the City of Ithaca received portable potable water vehicles to support response during extreme heat events. The Town of Bedford recently implemented a moratorium on BESS and suggested having NYSEERDA staff, particularly those with firefighting experience, speak with local volunteer fire departments about best practices for extinguishing potential BESS fires. Erie also has a relatively new [Extreme Temperature Plan](#) addressing both extreme heat and cold events and response. The City of Albany shared an adverse experience with ChargePoint customer service as a potential consideration.

4. Discussion: Other Business / Comments

- Sustainable Putnam's upcoming [events](#):
 - o **Mahopac Repair Café:** September 12th, 10:30-1:30pm @ 425 Baldwin Place Road
 - o **Senior Resource Fair:** September 18th, @ 3500 Hill Blvd. in Yorktown Heights
 - o **Putnam County Home Energy Expo.:** October 24th, 10-2pm @ Koehler Senior Center in Mahopac. The event is open to the public, with home energy contractors on hand to provide information and answer questions about insulation, heat pumps, solar, and other home energy solutions.
- **Putnam Energy Affordability Fund:** Joe M. highlighted the proposed fund, which is being developed in response to current economic challenges and would support not only low- and moderate-income households, but also ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but still struggle to afford basic necessities. The proposed fund would supplement NYSEERDA incentives and utility rebates to help homeowners with insulation and potential heat pump installations, as well as basic home repairs that may be necessary before insulation work can be completed, such as a leaky roof. There are currently no programs that address these needs. The program is still in development and would depend on securing grant funding, with SP modeling it after a similar program operated by Sustainable Finger Lakes for more than a decade.
Savannah asked whether these programs and events are being submitted for inclusion in [NYSEDEC's monthly newsletters](#), which feature statewide local events such as repair cafés. Joe B. also offered to send Joe M. the County's Article 9 energy audit, which is also available on the County's [website](#).
- Optional deep dive – *Wildfires and Climate Change*:
<https://science.nasa.gov/earth/explore/wildfires-and-climate-change/>
Ilona shared a NASA website on the connection between wildfires and climate change, prompted by recent Canadian wildfire activity and air quality concerns. The website notes that extreme wildfires have become more frequent, intense, and larger over the past 21 years, with climate-related factors including higher temperatures, earlier snowmelt, warmer nighttime temperatures, and decreased summer rainfall contributing to the trend. While the number of fires has remained relatively consistent, the amount of area burned has increased as fires have grown larger and more intense. The website also highlights that wildfires release significant amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere. Ilona encouraged members to explore the additional links and resources on the site.

Meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Next meeting: Fall 2026