**MEETING MINUTES**
**Town of Aurora Climate Smart Community Task Force**

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**MEETING DETAILS**

**Town Board Trustee Representative:**

**Date: 7/15/2026**
**Time:** 6:00pm
**Location:** Town of Aurora Municipal Building, 575 Oakwood Ave. East Aurora, NY

**ATTENDANCE**

***Present:*** Ben Garvey - Town of Aurora Council member, Sharon Bachman, Erie County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Claudia Newton- ACES Representative & Town of Aurora resident; Susan Russell- ACES Representative & Village of East Aurora Zoning Board;

***Present via Zoom:*** Bill Leslie, Town resident, Pat Lally, Nazareth College student and former EA High School representative for the CSC Task Force.

***Absent:*** Annika Safford - Village resident & graduate of University of VT, Sustainability & Marketing Program, Lori Borowiak- Village resident; Steve Bjella- Village resident;

***Visitors:*** Michele Bjella- Village Resident & member of Citizens Climate Lobby;John Hughes - Town Resident - jshughes6@verizon.net

## Agenda:

## Old Business:

**Scoot Around June update-** Annika/Ben
We had 109 participants that logged 1,621 miles. And we diverted over 1,400 pounds of GHG emissions. Village will take on more of the responsibility for this on-going effort. New incentive ideas: Ben- priority seating for Fireworks, Hamlin Park. Signs will be stored for next year. Great work on graphics and weekly updates.

**Dare to Repair Cafe update-**
Reaching out to local businesses (ACE Hardware, VALU, Del Aureaus for donation in exchange for being mentioned as a sponsor on any CSTF media updates about the event. (PE5 see attached) link. PE5 Waste Reduction Education Campaign Ben has ordered 2000 flyers including Rotary on flip side for Advertiser inserts. Sue will contact Michelle for update on

donor status. Sue will distribute poster around town and pick up lawn signs from Buffalo. Sue will send digital poster to Town clerk for town calendar and possibly social media. Sharon, Pat and Sue have signed up for set-up so far. Claudia will check ACES minutes to confirm volunteer interest from ACES.

**NRI update-** Ben, Claudia, Sharon
Maps have been generated by UBRI following the Open Space Committee meeting last month. Maps are being reviewed and tweaked. Next update meeting will be Thursday 7/16. Goal is to have completed by year's end 2026.

**Comprehensive Plan Memorandum update-**
Steve #1-3; Alternative modes of Transportation, Smart growth principles in land use, Conserve natural areas
Annika #4-6; Promote a healthy and safe community, Foster equality, Foster green economic development
Sharon #7-8,Decrease dependence on fossil fuels, foster the efficient use of natural resources
Claudia #9-10, Promote development of local food systems, Minimize solid waste
Sue- #11 Protect drinking water from sources from pollution
Michele #12 Promote adaptation to climate change.

Ben will follow up with Steve and Michelle.

**Circle at 400**

Email sent to Mastersons- Erin from Mastersons reports that she is happy to take on the project of getting the area cleaned up and maintained. She said that the Fall is the best time for planting so we should look at that time period for undertaking the project. They may even maintain it. Ben gave water smart criteria to Erin for consideration. Sharon will outreach to 4H and Gow School for collaboration. Dave Gunner from Highway Dept has offered help with trucks for weed removal and drop-offs for soil, mulch, etc.

**Carpool Incentive for Government employees**- Ben
No movement on this to report. Waiting for results from Active Transportation Plan.

**Recycling in Government run facilities**- Ben
Email sent to contact at Waste Management. Awaiting response. Goal is to have recycling cans in every room of municipal building with signage. Would like an extra recycling tote for building because the single one is getting filled up too fast. Also looking into cardboard recycling.

**Air conditioner/refrigerator recycling and freon harvesting-** Waste Management will harvest freon- preferable to scrappers who dump it to recycle the metal. Ben is looking to find a way to collect these units, store them until we reach capacity to have freon extracted and diverted from escaping into atmosphere. No actions taken yet except I reached out to Waste Management to see if they extract freon remotely (awaiting response).
Possible drive for the end of summer or next spring? Possible points in Innovative Ideas and/Or Refrigeration management. Bill will look into DEC for this.

Example of this being done in another community
https://www.ny4cool.org/coolest-recycling-drive

**Municipal Composting update- Ben-** In progress for cooperative program with Village and Town. Ray Wrazen is coordinating with Erie County.

**Fleet Management -** Town replacing another gas truck with an EV Truck. This will need to be documented for point status category.

## New Business:

**Active Transportation Plan (PE6: Planning for Biking and Walking- 3pts)**

Town does not currently qualify for planning grants with NYS state because we are not a disadvantaged community.

Met with Go Bike Buffalo regarding the creation of an active transportation plan for the Town of Aurora. Go Bike Buffalo gathers community input, assesses existing transportation infrastructure and identifies a priority list of actions that can be taken to create a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly transportation system. They tailor their recommendations to align with grant feasibility and availability to make sure that their recommendations are achievable. They have the ability to set up temporary measures to test implementation of traffic changes (striping of roads, bike lanes etc) and can collect data regarding their impact. They are creating a proposal for the Town to get started on this path. This is something that the Village of EA has undertaken with Blue Zones, and Go Bike Buffalo has worked with Blue Zones and Dan Burden in the past in other municipalities including Hamburg. This could be applied for the pathway to Silver Status.

**Pathway to Silver Start Status**- Need to start to review projects for eligibility that were identified by Erin. Recommendation is to work on items that have expired and need to be re-certified. Review Document from Erin, identify which items to research for gaining additional points- Planning for Biking and Walking not identified on list, but is in motion.

- Claudia would like to assist with Community GHG.
- Sharon would like to work on Local Forestry Program.
- Budget line for Financing for Green Energy. - Ben is working on getting that line item in next year's Town Budget. No required amount.
- Organics Management Program - underway. (See above)
- Climate Change Education and Engagement - Scoot Around June. Requires event focused on

- GHG Emissions and/or  Climate Adaptation. Sharon suggests we coordinate and education event after the Community GHG analysis is complete.

- Climate Adaptation Plan - UBRI has program for this. Ben has expressed town's interest in doing this with UBRI>

- Recycling program for public places and events - Waste Reduction - Repair Cafe and Rebicycle. With the rotary. Recycling for Warren Drive Park, Baseball Diamonds, Hamlin Park, Majors Park.  Sue could assist after Repair Cafe.

- Incentives for Employee Carpooling for. - Would require a sign. NFTA Park and Ride is a goal. Long term Goal.

Ben will open up folder files on Google Docs for all to use.

**V.  ADJOURNMENT -** Meeting adjourned at 7:14pm

**NEXT MEETING :** August 19th, 2026, 6pm

Minutes submitted by: Susan Russell

**Roll Call:**

**Ben Garvey** - Town of Aurora Council member, **Joe McCann** - Town of Aurora Council member; **Ray Wrazen** - Town of Aurora Council member; **Sharon Bachman,** Erie County Cornell Cooperative Extension, **Claudia Newton**- ACES Representative & Town of Aurora resident; **Susan Russell**- ACES Representative & Village of East Aurora Zoning Board; **Lori Borowiak-** Village resident; **Steve Bjella**- Village resident; **Annika Safford** - Village resident & graduate of University of VT, Sustainability & Marketing Program

**Michele Bjella-** Village Resident & member of Citizens Climate Lobby;

**John Hughes** - Town Resident - jshughes6@verizon.net

**Josh McClain -** UB Regional Institute, Sustainability and Resiliency Planner;

**Bob and Darcy Sowyrda,** Village residents & members of ACES;

**Jeffrey Shelley**- Environmental Science Instructor, East Aurora High School, in advisory role as Faculty Student Liaison for EAHS Sustainability Club;

**Elizabeth Cassidy**- in advisory role as Aurora Town Code Enforcement Officer;

**Kristina Farrell -** Town Resident, Kristina207johnson@gmail

**Asa Guilamo** - asaguilamo@gmail.com

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**PE6 Action: Natural Resources Inventory**

8 Points 10 Points

**A. Why is this action important?**

A natural resources inventory (NRI) maps and describes the natural resources in a community and provides an important foundation for municipal land use and conservation planning. NRIs typically include information about topography, geology, soils, water resources, wildlife habitats, and farmland, and sometimes include cultural resources such as scenic views, recreation areas, and historic sites. NRIs can also bring attention to local climate projections and natural features vital to carbon sequestration and climate adaptation, such as coastal shorelines, stream corridors, floodplains, wetlands, forests, and connected habitats. A complete and up-to-date inventory can be helpful for communities updating municipal plans, developing ordinances or overlay zones, and reviewing development projects, as well as a tool for county or regional planning and project assessment.

Maintaining the integrity and ecological health of natural areas is a key part of preventing the release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that is associated with development. In addition, certain natural, undeveloped areas serve as a buffer against some types of extreme weather that are increasing with climate change; for example, wetlands often have the capacity to absorb floodwaters and, as a result, they help prevent flood damage to infrastructure in developed areas.

**B. How to implement this action**

Developing an NRI can be part of an existing effort, such as the development of a comprehensive or open space plan, or it can be a standalone project. Project leaders are advised to work with the public and stakeholders to collect input and feedback to ensure the NRI will meet the needs of users.

When implementing this action, local governments are advised to closely follow the process and report components described in the DEC's comprehensive guide: *Creating a Natural Resources Inventory: A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed*. This guide focuses on the Hudson River watershed but the process it describes is applicable to any region. Although the guide includes information on doing on detailed inventory studies, it is not necessary to complete a highly detailed inventory in order to be eligible for points under this Climate Smart Communities (CSC) action, although communities are encouraged to do so. It is required, however, that the NRI cover the entire community. In other words, a local government cannot earn points for an NRI that, for example, only covers one watershed within the physical boundaries of its community. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with neighboring communities to develop NRIs that cross political boundaries and that are consistent with the overlapping and interconnected characteristics of most natural resources. For collaborative, regional NRIs, each local government that was involved is eligible for CSC points, as long as each applicant demonstrates that it had a substantial role in creating the NRI.

At minimum, for CSC points, the NRI report must include a descriptive summary of each map that is created as part of the NRI process. The narrative should describe each of the resources shown, discuss relevant aspects of resource distribution throughout the study area, draw attention to significant areas of resource concentration or concern, and discuss any major or emerging threats to the resource. The NRI report must also include a short summary of the process that was used to create the inventory (e.g., information on stakeholder outreach and public input, how information was obtained, etc.); this information should show that the process was consistent with the DEC guide. In addition, the NRI report must have been completed within 10 years of the application date to be eligible for CSC points.

Note that an open areas/open space inventory (OSI) is similar to an NRI but goes a step further to set parcel-level conservation priorities for the community. General Municipal Law § 239-y defines a conservation open areas inventory as "an inventory of open areas within the municipality with each such area identified, described and listed according to



# Natural Resources Inventory Town of Aurora

(initial draft)

Rennie Selkirk
Town of Aurora Open Space Committee
March 27, 2025