

Village of Ardsley CEAC 2020 - 2021 Annual Progress

Report June 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021

The following annual progress report, presented at the Village Board of Trustees public meeting on June 7, 2021, summarizes the activities and progress of the Ardsley Conservation and Environment Advisory Committee (CEAC) for the fiscal period of June 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021.

1. Brief History of the CEAC

The Village of Ardsley established the Conservation and Environmental Advisory Committee by resolution of the Village of Ardsley Board of Trustees on July 1, 2019. The mission of the committee for the inaugural year was defined as:

The Conservation & Environment Committee (CEAC) will work to educate and advise the Village of Ardsley -- Board of Trustees, Village Hall, officials, residents, businesses, and school district -- on the effective use of resources so that each may contribute as exceptional stewards towards a sustainable village environment.

Prior to approaching the Village regarding this committee, members received generous support of mentors in partner organizations including local CACs in the 'Rivertowns', climate scientists and experts, County organizations including as FCWC, ELLA, NYSACC, Sustainable Westchester, and the County Office for Energy Conservation and Sustainability. The guidance, and in some cases partnership, of these leaders continues to be invaluable to the Village and CEAC especially given efforts to mitigate the climate crisis and increase climate adaptation resiliency. A Board Trustee Liaison also continues to be a key resource for the committee.

Membership in the committee continues to grow and, in keeping with the NYS CAC founding resolutions from the 1970s, includes students from the district's Ardsley High School each year. One student member served on the committee during 2020/2021.

Two preliminary goals were adopted for the committees' first year:

Goal 1 : To **promote reduction of greenhouse gases (GHGs)** especially for transportation, waste, and buildings sectors in keeping with land use best practices.

- CEAC aimed to foster GHG reductions of 5 - 10% per person annually over a five-year horizon to bring the Village in range of targets defined by NY State law adopted Summer 2019, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Goal 2: To **establish collaborations and provide informative programming** that built goodwill and resiliency through conservation and environmental information sessions and shared climate projects with leaders, residents, employees and businesses, and visitors of our Village and the region. Achievement of the goals depended on **development of strong partnerships** among volunteers of local committees with elected officials, municipal staff, local CAC peers,

educational and non-governmental institutions, and local businesses while expanding and supporting enduring committee membership.

Ardsley became a Clean Energy Community in August 2019 by completing 4 of 10 High Impact Actions in NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities program. Ardsley passed a resolution to become a Climate Smart Community as part of the DEC's related Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program in February 2010. However, application for CSC Bronze status was delayed due to resource constraints.

When the Ardsley CEAC was formed on July 1, 2019 it consisted of two members, both co-chairs. By June of 2020 the committee had expanded to four core team members, three auxiliary members and one AHS representative from the Ardsley HS Environmental Task Force. By mid-2020 efforts focused on initiation of a ten-year community initiative to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability.

In March of 2020 the global Covid pandemic led to a pause of all in-person activities. The CEAC needed to develop new ways to communicate and engage with residents.

2. Summary of initiatives and results between June 1, 2020 and May 31, 2021

Ardsley CAN by 2030! Initiative

During the summer of 2020 the CEAC developed a ten-year initiative called **Ardsley CAN by 2030!**, which was approved and adopted by the Village government and administration. The goal is to reduce Ardsley's GHG emissions by 50% in ten years; a goal in alignment with the NYS CLCPA targets and the Village of Ardsley Comprehensive Plan. The acronym **CAN** is used to describe the four pillars in the program:

- C:** Carbon Reduction
- A:** Act Sustainably
- N:** Neighbor by Neighbor

Accomplishments will be listed primarily under these three overarching pillars.

C: Carbon Reduction:

Education:

CEAC developed four webinars for the community, reaching over 100 residents:

1. *Introduction to Ardsley CAN by 2030!* (offered twice in December 2020)
2. *Ardsley CAN by 2030! Reduce Your Home's Carbon Footprint* (offered twice in February 2021)
3. *Ardsley CAN by 2030: Renewable Energy Options for Your Home* (offered once in May and in partnership with Sustainable Westchester)
4. *Preparing your Family and Home for Climate Chaos* (offered once in May)

Resolutions:

- The Ardsley Board of Trustees passed a resolution on September 8, 2020 to include Ardsley in the Community Choice Aggregation program sponsored by Sustainable Westchester. Residents chose the source of their electricity as either 100% renewable NYS hydropower (default) or carbon producing sources.
- The Ardsley Board of Trustees passed a resolution on February 1, 2021 to use Low Embodied Carbon Concrete when possible.
- The Ardsley Board of Trustees passed two resolutions on February 1, 2021 to:
 - a. Create a CSC/CEC Taskforce and
 - b. Name Asha Bencosme as the CSC/CEC Coordinator, thereby allowing the Village to move ahead to apply for CSC Bronze certification in July 2021.

Energy Reduction Campaigns:

- The Village of Ardsley partnered with the neighboring municipalities of Hastings-on-Hudson, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, and Tarrytown to run a successful campaign to promote the ConEd GridRewards program. Ardsley Neighbors for GridRewards resulted in 37 new subscribers for the program during April, helping to reduce Ardsley's carbon footprint, securing the Village \$5,000 in a grant award from NYSERDA, and adding 200 points to Ardsley's CEC tally.

CSC and CEC Task Force:

Clean Energy Communities: The CSC/CEC Coordinator, working closely with Village administration, was able to move Ardsley from 800 points in June of 2020 to 2,700 points as of June of 2021. Additional points make Ardsley eligible for more grant awards. In fact, Ardsley received a grant award of \$5,000 from NYSERDA in 2021 for 2020 point achievement, with further awards anticipated.

The CEAC provided the Board of Trustees and Village administration with information on the NYStretch energy code and recommended adoption of the code for Ardsley. Adoption of this code is a high impact action for Clean Energy Communities and, if adopted by Ardsley, will secure Ardsley another \$5,000 NYSERDA grant while adding 1,200 points to Ardsley's CEC leaderboard

Climate Smart Communities: The CSC Taskforce, in close partnership with the Village of Ardsley, will submit the application for CSC Bronze certification in early July. Twenty-one actions were completed, documented, and uploaded for an anticipated 162 points, providing a cushion for the required Bronze certification minimum of 120 points.

Online Resources:

- The CEAC developed and launched **the Ardsley CAN by 2030!** website in February 2021 (www.ardsleycan.org) to provide information to the community on understanding climate change, reducing carbon emissions, acting sustainably, and promoting community volunteer activities.

- A CEAC Twitter account was created to inform followers in the community about important climate and sustainability information, as well to announce events and webinars (@ardsleyny_ceac; https://twitter.com/ardsleyny_ceac).

Measurement:

- The CEAC calculated the baseline carbon footprint for area code 10502 (Village of Ardsley) utilizing data from many sources, including the EPA and CoolClimate Network.
- Ardsley's baseline is 100,000 metric tons of CO₂e per year, with an average of 66 metric tons of CO₂e emitted per household. The percentage of those emissions were calculated as follows:
 - Transportation: 35.1%
 - Housing: 21.3%
 - Services: 15.2%
 - Food: 14.5%
 - Goods: 13.9%

These GHG estimates derived from work by the Cool Climate Network of UC Berkeley will be adjusted later in 2021 using data from ICLEI as of 2021 and ICF reporting to NYSERDA as of June 2012. We expect the reported figures to decrease. We remained committed to a 50% reduction in total emissions in the decade between 2020 and 2030. Measurements will be taken before year-end to track progress on our carbon emissions.

A: Act Sustainably

GREEN Growing and GREEN Living:

Twelve GREEN Growing monthly articles and six GREEN Living monthly articles were drafted and issued to Ardsley residents via email blast during this past fiscal year. These articles focused on sustainable landscape practices, water conservation, carbon reduction, and building a healthy ecosystem.

New Ardsley DPW Garage:

The CEAC has provided input on green building practices that would increase the energy efficiency of the new DPW garage while reducing energy costs and positioning the building for the future (e.g. EV charging stations; solar panels). CEAC will continue to bring information about green building practices to the Village that will provide value to the DPW project and, ultimately, the residents of Ardsley.

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Project:

The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway kicked off on February 22, 2021. An extensive 'how-to' website was developed and launched in February 2021 (www.ardsleypollinatorpathway.org). Four educational webinars on creating pollinator habitats were offered to Ardsley residents between March and June of 2021.

- *The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway: How to save pollinator in your own*

- yard (three offerings in March and April, 2021)
- *Native Gardening for Pollinators* (April 2021)
- *Replacing the Green Desert: Native Plant Alternatives to Turf* (April 2021)
- *Gardening Strategies for Climate Change* (May 2021)

A total of 95 residents have attended or requested to be on the contact list for the Pollinator Pathway project.

Free extensive garden consultations were offered to residents to help novice and experienced gardeners create healthy pollinator habitats in their yards. Twenty-seven in-depth consults were completed between March and May, 2021.

The first annual Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Garden tour was held on May 15 to raise awareness about the need for pollinator gardens and demonstrate the ease of creating a pollinator habitat.

Eda Kapsis is a member of the Soil subcommittee of the Westchester County initiative *Planting Westchester*. This initiative's goal is to create pollinator and ecosystem supportive landscapes across Westchester.

Support for the Comprehensive Plan:

With the passage of the Ardsley Comprehensive plan in 1Q21 the CEAC has aligned its projects and work in support of the goals of the plan. Specifically, the CEAC sees a role in helping to support and/or implement many of the Protect principles and goals within the plan.

In spring of 2021 the committee recommended that the Village of Ardsley pass a Complete Streets resolution, which aligns with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Other:

Ardsley became an EPA WaterSense partner in 1Q21, demonstrating its commitment to water conservation.

CEAC partnered with the Greenburgh Nature Center to present a webinar on April 19 on *Food Scrap Recycling, Composting and Food Waste Reduction*. There were 26 participants enrolled in the webinar.

A natural resources inventory for Ardsley is underway.

N: Neighbor by Neighbor

The global pandemic prevented in-person community events. However, socially distanced sharing of experiences and gatherings did occur.

Ardsley 2021 Earth Month (4/17 - 5/17) activities and events provided residents some opportunity to work together for the benefit of the environment as well as attend numerous webinars supporting the three **Ardsley CAN by 2030!** pillars. A total of 15 events were offered to residents.

Additionally, the CEAC has been in constant contact and in partnership with other Rivertown CACs, Pollinator Pathways, and with environmental and conservation organizations across the county.

Since its kickoff in November of 2020, over 200 residents have been engaged with **Ardsley CAN by 2030!** In some capacity.

3. Challenges Encountered.

Over the past year we have identified a few challenges and risks.

1. The greatest challenge and risk for the CEAC are resources, both financial and human.

Many of the initiatives to support the Comprehensive Plan and **Ardsley CAN by 2030!** require funding and this resource is constrained. NYSERDA grants help to fund future initiatives, and CEAC will most likely need to identify and apply for grants in the future to fund its work. None of the CSC members are familiar with grant writing and are concerned about both the learning curve and the amount of time and effort required to apply for grants as well as meet the management and reporting requirements.

Constrained human resources is another issue. The current part-time volunteer core team has worked diligently on creating a wave of progress during the inaugural year of **Ardsley Can by 2030!** However, one of the core team members will be rolling off the team at the end of 2021 to pursue another opportunity, with significant impact to the part-time core team members. This will impede operational progress. As with other volunteer organizations, it is difficult to find consistent recruits who can dedicate the time and effort required for CEAC initiatives.

2. The second challenge is driving engagement with the Ardsley community. The pandemic restrictions made community engagement difficult. By April we were noting that people were “Zoomed out” and interest in webinars and events began to wane. Hopefully in-person activities and events can start again by 3Q21.

4. Next Steps

The CEAC will hold strategy sessions in June - July 2021 to set goals for 2021/2022. We know that there will be required actions as well as new opportunities. Goals will be aligned to the

Ardsley CAN by 2030! initiative as well as the Ardsley Comprehensive Plan. A report of the 2021/2022 goals will be supplied to the Mayor and Village Manager during the summer.

Respectfully,

Core Team:

Eda Kapsis, CEAC Chair, CSC/CEC Taskforce
Asha Bencosme CEAC Co-chair, CSC/CEC Taskforce Coordinator
Dave Lew, CEAC, CSC/CEC Taskforce
Carol Sommerfield, CEAC, CSC/CEC Taskforce, Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Chair

Auxiliary Team:

Michael Fishgrund
Lorraine Kuhn
Greg Weinberg