

Monthly Report to LaFayette Town Board

LaFayette Advisory Conservation Commission (LACC)

July 6, 2022

Submitted by: Mark Distler, LACC Chair

These are the LACC activities between June 10 and July 6, 2022:

1. **Membership** – One of our student members, Clair Virnoche, 1-year term is ending this month and David Amidon, teacher at LaFayette High School, nominated Payton Kremers to start at one year term. We are also extending the term of our other student member, Isabella Shenandoah-Kurtz, for another year when she will graduate like Claire just did. We don't need Town Board approval of the new student member, just for the seven adult members.
2. **Meetings** – No meeting was held. The next one is scheduled for September 27.
3. **Projects & Programs** - See attached status summary of projects requested by the Town Supervisor and programs selected to build a community conservation culture. Of note:
 - a. The LACC and the Optimists are working on a tree and bench memorial program for Stafford Park. New tree and bench locations have been selected and the program description is being finalized for a recommendation to be shared with the Town Board next month.
 - b. LACC received a proposal to conduct an independent study in support of the Comprehensive Plan Action Item 1, which will be submitted to the Town Board next month for funding approval.
 - c. Attached is a recommendation in support of the Comprehensive Plan Goal 2 Action Item 6 (SEQR Enhancement), which the LACC developed in coordination with the Town Attorney and Town Engineer. The Town Supervisor has approved the recommendation and wants to schedule the training session for the Town Board's August meeting.

LACC Project & Program Status Summary

Projects	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Sub team</u>	<u>Current Actions</u>	<u>Previous Actions</u>
Senior Center	Develop landscaping design that will connect visitors to the nature of Stafford Park	Kelly, Larkin, Mark	ON HOLD -Design ravine landscape & new park plantings in Spring '23	-Met ESF to discuss their involvement -Received Supervisor's and Optimist's approval to proceed w/ ESF -Got construction ROM cost estimates for ravine & nature trail plantings
Parks	Propose concepts to increase visitor's awareness of nature and/or environment	Amy, Keith, Mark, Markus	-Obtain cost estimates for trees & benches and decide with Optimists on program details -Design tree and bench location -Roll-out program to Town -Decide on option for Bailey Park	-Developed list of concepts -Finalized list of plantings for ESF by September; involve Optimists & Prince -Drafted tree/bench memorial program -Received Supervisor approval to obtain cost estimates -Worked out transaction details w/ Chartrand & Marzo
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations	Develop scope & cost for stations on Town property	Mark, Rachel	-Receive cost estimate from MakeReady contractor -Provide cost estimate and ROI to TB & recommend grant applications	-Contacted CNYRPDB to learn about funding options -Got Supervisor approval to contact contractors -Met with MakeReady contractor at Town office to start cost estimate process -Discussed concepts with Supervisor
Agritourism	Recommend approaches to create a Town initiative	Isabella, Larkin, Markus	-Consider farm products census	-Discussed possible scopes with Supervisor -Discussed possible projects with Palmer & McConnell
Invasive & Hazardous Plants	Propose approaches to manage the risk of invasive & hazardous plants at our parks	Claire, Kelly, Craig	-Repost wild parsnip posters in parks in Spring -Recommend offer to educate residents on identifying & reporting invasive species -Develop educational materials about 3 invasive species	-Discussed with Supervisor prior to identification -Prepared warning signs for installation at parks -Developed fact sheet

<p>Land Use Independent Study (AI 2-1)</p>	<p>Conduct an independent study of regulatory techniques and land use controls to manage future development in order to preserve the Town's public vistas and critical environmental and agricultural areas</p>	<p>Mark, Kelly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Obtain funding -Establish review committee -Conduct study -Draft recommendations to TB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developed SOW for expert consultant & requested proposals -Received proposal from land use expert
<p>SEQR Enhancement (AI 2-6)</p>	<p>Enhance understanding of the SEQR process by all review boards to protect our natural resources from the potential negative impacts of development</p>	<p>Mark, Kelly, Doug</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Deliver program to Town Board first -Update and deliver program to PB & ZBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evaluated needs by interviewing those conducting SEQR reviews -Developed focused enhancement purpose -Researched enhancement options to meet needs -Recommended enhancement program to Supervisor -Prepared recommendation for program with SMEs
<p>UNA & CEA (AI 2-10)</p>	<p>Inventory and identify sensitive environmental areas in the Town and designate Unique Natural Areas (UNAs) or Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs) as defined by the NYSDEC</p>	<p>Mark, Amy, Larkin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Survey experts & town residents for potential CEAs -Write description & rationale of potential CEAs -Review draft recommendations with review boards -Submit recommendations to TB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decided UNAs are the same as CEAs -Drafted initial list -Spoke with NYSDEC
<p>Tree Planting Program (AI 2-12)</p>	<p>Establish a tree planting program for Town-owned properties and public ROWS</p>	<p>Mark, Rachel, Keith, Markus, Doug</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inventory trees on Town properties -Develop cost estimate for new tree plantings -Research funding availability -Develop tree care program -Submit program recommendation to TB -Implement new tree planting and care program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decided to exclude ROWs from program since they are private properties -Identified properties and prepared maps of each

Community Solar	Promote NYS Community Solar program with residents	Mark	-Obtain cost savings estimate for Town to subscribe to solar project -Write follow-up newsletter article	-Wrote newsletter article
Culture Building Programs				
Town Newsletter Articles	Provide communications that increase resident's awareness to nature and environmental conservation	Rotating authors	-Write 4Q article on invasive plants, due September -Future topics: glass recycling	22Q3 - Community Solar 22Q2 - Solar Farm law 22Q1 - People & plastics 21Q4 - LACC update, plastic recycling 21Q3 - LACC update, tick safety
Town Website	Post conservation topics on a LACC web page	Mark	-Continually update content	-Obtained Supervisor & IO approvals -Added existing content to the site page -Monthly updates
Resident Experts	Use volunteer resident experts to address conservation-related needs of Boards, as they come up	Mark	Speak with Supervisor about program and ways to eliminate liability concerns for volunteers	
NYSACC Newsletter	Write article about LACC for NYSACC's quarterly newsletter	TBD	-Write article about LACC -Take photos of LACC, Bailey Park, Wild Parsnip, Stafford Park tree planting	
Completed Projects (since April 2021)				
Solar Farms	Propose recommendations to revise and update the solar farms law (§290-32 (H))	Carole, Kelly, Doug	COMPLETED	-Researched other towns' guidance -Drafted recommendation edits to current law -Completed internal review -Submitted recommendations memo to Supervisor -Submitted recommended edits to Town Attorney -Present proposed recommendations to Town Board

Comprehensive Plan Goal #2	Lead the execution of the 12 action items listed under Goal #2 of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan	Mark	COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prepared plan to complete Goal #2 action items -Identified volunteers and subject matter experts needed to conduct 5 action items for 2022 -Held kickoff meetings
Comprehensive Plan Update	Participate on Tiger Team to update 2012 Comprehensive Plan	Carole, Kelly, Mark	COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Submitted input on vision, goals, objectives, action items -Provided input on land use approaches -Wrote FAQs for public communication -Prepared for public open house & hearing (10/28) -Provided input on revisions to CP based on public input -Define and organize the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC)
Bailey Park Tree Planting	Coordinate planting of trees at Bailey Park to replace those removed	Amy, Mark	COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Obtained cost quote to plant 5 trees -Received Supervisor's approval -Coordinated planting & residents' donation
Apple Valley Park Noise	Provide technical support of noise & noise ordinance	Mark	COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conducted noise evaluation during concert, submitted report -Recommended revisions to noise ordinance

Recommendation to Enhance SEQR Understanding LaFayette Advisory Conservation Commission

To: William McConnell, LaFayette Town Supervisor

From: Mark Distler, LACC Chair
Kelly Wypych, LACC Member
Doug Anderson, LACC Member

cc: Jeff Brown, Town Attorney
Mark Chambers, Town Engineer

Date: June 2, 2022

This recommendation addresses the Town's Comprehensive Plan's action item 6 of Goal 2:

Enhance understanding of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process by all review boards to protect our natural resources from the potential negative impacts of development.

Purpose:

The LACC is the Lead Party of Goal 2, obligated to address the goal's action items. We spoke to the two Town experts who lead the SEQR process for the Town's review boards (Town Board, Planning Board, and Zone Board of Appeals), Jeff Brown, town attorney, and Mark Chambers, town engineer. Both experts identified that an enhanced understanding for board members would include:

- (1) Learning more about the SEQR process, including how projects are classified and when SEQR reviews are triggered by that classification
- (2) Clarifying board member responsibilities with respect to making their decisions on EAF questions and their votes on SEQR declarations, and
- (3) Improving how board members can be prepared to make their decisions by learning more about certain aspects of the project's environmental impact

Recommendation:

Based on the experts' input and our own research, the LACC is recommending the following:

1. Starting with the Town Board, a training session be held by the two experts to cover the content summarized below
2. A process improvement be implemented to aide Board members with their responsibilities (see content summarized below)
3. Receive input on the training session, adapt and hold training session with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals

Training Session Content Overview:

1. SEQR process

SEQR Enhancement Recommendation

- a. How and when are proposed projects classified by SEQR type
 - b. How does SEQR classification trigger SEQR EAFs (short form or long form)
 - c. Guidance on answering EAF questions and what constitutes “no or minor impact” or “moderate or large impact”
2. Roles & responsibilities
 - a. Expert responsibilities (guide through process, provide relevant project information)
 - b. Board members responsibilities (provide answers to EAF questions, vote on SEQR declaration)
3. Process improvement
 - a. Board members to answer SEQR questions
 - b. Expert to provide relevant project information prior to meeting
 - c. Board members to visit project site prior to SEQR reviews, if applicable