



July 1, 2022

To: NYSERDA

From: Beacon Conservation Advisory Committee

Re: CLCPA Draft Scoping Plan (CAC and EMC funding)

The Beacon Conservation Advisory Committee is charged with advising the Planning Board and the City Council on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural and man-made features in the City. In June, 2019 the CAC was appointed Beacon's Climate Smart Task Force by the City Council. The Committee advises on major environmental threats and maintains an inventory of natural resources and an index of all open spaces.

We are commenting on the following section from Chapter 19, which specifically calls for funding for Conservation Advisory Commissions and Environmental Management Councils.

- **LU5. Mapping, Research, Planning, and Assistance**
- **Page 288 Assist local governments to create land-use policies**

We support the recommendation that Conservation Advisory Commissions and Environmental Management Councils be funded, because these volunteer groups have an important and primary role in preserving open space, including producing natural resources inventories, habitat mapping, and open space plans and taking steps such as the community preservation plans and providing input on their municipalities' and counties' comprehensive plans and zoning. These groups help protect important natural areas that sequester greenhouse gasses and store water to enhance resilience. Members are knowledgeable, dedicated community volunteers and often the municipality provides no funding.

In Beacon, in addition to the work mentioned above, the CAC also does work related to pollinator health and habitat, municipal composting, and community outreach around city clean-up days and environmental education related to Fishkill Creek.

We support the recommendations to fund Conservation Advisory Commissions and Environmental Management Councils because CACs and EMCs are the local advocates for good environmental planning and connect the state policies to their communities. Without a strong association of CACs and EMCs, New York State loses its only partners between state government and local municipalities and counties. It is also important to note that land conservation and preservation primarily happens at a municipal level in New York State, and

that CACs and EMCs are the bodies by which much of this work happens. Without funding, these groups have fewer resources to work for the interests of their communities, and accomplish changes and protections in a manner that is timely enough to keep up with the pace of commercial development.

Were the Beacon CAC to receive funding, it would be used for such items as:

- Community events related to conservation activities at the municipal level (speaker fees, event space rentals, food—all paid to local vendors)
- Research time and community-building activities needed to prepare grant applications, the writing of grant applications, and meeting the requirements of awarded grants (funds to be spent in Beacon and regional/Hudson Valley)
- Cost-matching funds for awarded grants to be used for grant support, including administrative staff time, consultant fees (GIS mapping, report writing, etc.), and to support project team meetings and collaboration (transportation costs, event space rental, etc.) (funds to be spent in Beacon and regional/Hudson Valley)
- Technical program support, including the production of outreach materials (graphic or print design), communications support (social media), and support to create web outreach materials in order to adhere to New York State's Open Meetings Law and engage with all of our communities (funds to be spent, when possible, in Beacon and regional/Hudson Valley)
- Training for community members, members of the CAC, volunteers, and interested community members, including municipal K-12 students, for programs such as Open Space Planning, Hudson River Estuary Stewardship, Climate Resilience community facilitation, and more (funds to be spent in Hudson Valley and/or New York State whenever possible)
- Professional memberships that allow for the CAC to support other regional groups and organizations (funds to be focused in New York State whenever possible)
- Physical promotional materials, including flyers, tabling banners & tablecloths, and branded, Zero Waste products to promote CAC activities

It should be noted that the state funded both CACs and EMCs in the past through its LEAP program. Because of the elimination of this funding source, many counties in the state could no longer finance their EMCs and lost a valuable asset both to the county itself and to the CACs within the county, who no longer had a focal point to meet and share information. Restoration of funding for CACs and EMCs should be a top-priority of the state as we now face the tremendous challenges of climate change. The scoping document gets it right. Fund your partners, who will return that support many multiple times over.

Respectfully,



Sergei Krasikov
Chair, Conservation Advisory Committee