



**Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee
Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT
Thursday, December 12, 2019 – Meeting Summary**

Welcome and Roll Call

- Holly Drinkuth (CAC CT Co-Chair, The Nature Conservancy) called the meeting to order at 9:45 am with a quorum of 19 members present.
- Holly made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2019 CAC meeting; David Miller (NYLCVEF) seconded; the motion carried.

CAC Bylaws and Policy Guidelines

- Holly provided a brief overview of proposed amendments and changes to the CAC Bylaws and the addition of Policy Guidelines, noting that the primary intent is to address how the CAC will manage quorums, voting and communications electronically. Additional discussion was raised about the location of the CAC 'office', and how changes to the office address would be handled in the future.
- David Miller (NY League of Conservation Voters Environment Fund) provided historical context to the significance of two office locations and made a friendly amendment to the Bylaws to include language allowing non-substantive updates without requiring an amendment procedure. Motion carried.
- ***Article VII, Section 2: Non-substantive updates to maintain accuracy, such as office address changes, shall be made as needed without an amendment proceeding.***
- Amendments to bylaws require approval by a two-thirds majority (24 of 36 member organizations). A motion to approve the bylaws, as amended, and the operating (policy) guidelines, with a roll-call vote of present members and an electronic vote over 48 hours from absent members was made by David Miller and seconded by Carl Harvey (Menunkatuck Audubon). 17 present CAC members voted in favor, with one abstention. The vote will remain open through a 48-hour electronic voting period. Holly will work with Judy to collect electronic ballots.

Management Committee Meeting: Overview

- Nancy Seligson (CAC NY Co-Chair, Town of Mamaroneck) recounted the "open and productive discussion" that took place at the two-day LISS Management Committee



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meeting that took place on Long Island in October, noting that the Management Committee agreed with the CAC priorities, and appreciated the need for tracking accomplishments and communications.

- Nancy reiterated the important priorities noted by the CAC, including building capacity within the LISS, which has seen an increase in budget and workload; sustainability and the need to bring more municipal partners to the table; and the need to address climate change and environmental justice.
- Nancy and Holly both emphasized the need for revisiting the public perception survey to assist with communications about LIS, and the need for communications to stand on its own as a separate and cross-cutting program area within the CCMP. They also emphasized the need for additional assistance, possibly from other federal agencies to help complement what the LISS wants to accomplish, including lending an employee for certain tasks.
- At the Management Committee meeting a new work group for Sustainable and Resilient Communities was formed, to be overseen by the directors of the CT and NY Sea Grant offices. The CAC wants to be involved; anyone interested should contact Nikki Tachiki at the LISS office: Tachiki.Nicole@epa.gov.
- It was also noted at the MC meeting how important the LIS Citizens Summit is. Nancy and Holly volunteered to have the CAC identify possible groups that would have an interest in administering and conducting future Citizen Summits.

Management Committee Meeting: Recommendations for Proposals and Next Steps: Mark Tedesco, LISS Director, EPA LIS Office

Mark [outlined](#) the 2017 – 2019 LISS project investments with the increased budget :

- investigating nutrient impact to embayments;
- improving nutrient load estimates;
- expanded open water assessments;
- land acquisition and habitat restoration;
- marsh migration;
- expanded Futures Fund.

He reviewed the FY20 budget process timeline, and displayed the needs, and possible needs, for the primary CCMP theme work groups.

Discussion

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- Continuous funding is key when working in watershed implementation; is this possible? The Unified Water Study is an example of ongoing commitment to provide funds for specific efforts.
- There is the potential option to use funds to support additional EPA staff to build capacity; the need exists, for example, to accommodate tracking and reporting, including the level of implementation for every action in the CCMP. This should include development of a more extensive online database, including the use of visuals, for the next 5-year period.
- The Nitrogen Strategy work is progressing. EPA is working with Tetra Tech to revise the draft technical reports in response to public and external expert reviews.
- Interest and concern was expressed about LISS working on implementation and restoration, not just monitoring, particularly now that more funding is available. It is important to keep moving in this direction and do more than just managing nitrogen. Paul Stacey, Footprints in the Water, noted the importance of focusing on the health of the watershed. Denise Savageau noted that there is no management plan, for example, for the Connecticut River main stem.

Sustainable CT – A Voluntary Municipal Certification Program for Planning and Action: Alyssa Norwood, Program Manager, Institute for Sustainable Energy, Eastern Connecticut State University

Alyssa introduced the two-year old [Sustainable CT](http://www.sustainablect.org) program www.sustainablect.org info@sustainablect.org, noting that it is based at ECSU, although it is active throughout the state of CT and is part of the [Sustainable State Network](#) operating in 14 states. It is a highly collaborative program that lays out a roadmap of voluntary actions from nine categories that a town needs to adopt for certification. There are different levels of adoption (bronze, silver) depending on the number of actions implemented. The focus includes environment, economy, and equity, with a total of 55 broad actions defined to address sustainability, and an emphasis on what happens at the local level.

Discussion

- Perhaps an action item for the LISS sustainability work group could be to have all coastal towns be certified through the Sustainable CT program.
- Suggestion to connect sustainability actions to LIS.

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- Are there exemplary sustainability actions that could be shared with other communities? There are success stories, but the program is not at the point of being able to share these meaningfully with other towns.
- How is networking done? Sustainable CT uses [Datahaven](#), a community wellbeing survey. [New Jersey](#) is one of the most mature states in the Sustainable State Network and may be a good reference.
- How is Sustainable CT funded? The program is funded completely through private, philanthropic sources. On a regional level, foundations provide support. In CT there is no state involvement in this program because towns might not participate for fear of regulation. NY's Climate Smart Communities certification program is state funded.
- Could there be a LIS toolkit? Alyssa: we're all about shared ownership of ideas.

Green Connections – Resilient and Equitable Planning in Bridgeport: Drew Goldsman, Urban Conservation Director, The Nature Conservancy, CT

Bridgeport is part of the Connecticut Urban Conservation Program Eco-Urban Assessment that strives to transform the ways that Connecticut cities and their residents experience nature. The Nature Conservancy worked in Bridgeport by imagining the city's forest (although there is no forest plan for the city). The project used spatial analysis of air quality, tree canopy, and asthma rates in low to moderate income children, looking for strategic ways to fill in the tree canopy; it also looked at flood risk stats (claims from the national flood insurance program), and impervious cover. In addition, the project assessed opportunities for additional green spaces by evaluating park access and connectivity. You can view the story map of this project [here](#). The project identified sites within the city for tree planting, infiltration bio-swales, and other green infrastructure.

Discussion

- Is there any thought to institutionalizing the use of green infrastructure associated with city streets and sidewalks that have to be torn up, for example, when sewer lines fail? Or working with public utilities? Unfortunately, there is still a lot of misunderstanding and fear about the alternative technology of LID/GI, particularly among city maintenance crews. Buy-in remains a challenge.
- Are low maintenance plants being used? Yes: [NY City Parks](#) has lead the way on this. The larger issue is trash and long-term maintenance. Geotextile material degrades over time, and inlet sedimentation needs to be addressed.



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- Did the project look at any sequestration studies for trees in Bridgeport? [iTree](#) (USFS) provides some data, but planting small trees is a long way from being a significant carbon sequestration tool, especially when cities are tough on trees in general. Sidewalk heaves are often the complaint about trees, along with limbs coming down.
- Are homeowners catching on about the benefits of greenery by adopting tree planting? In Bridgeport it is more commercial ownership of properties; less private home ownership.

Policy Subcommittee Update: Tracy Brown, Save The Sound

Tracy reported on the CAC Policy Committee agenda for 2020, which includes the following:

- The Army Corps agreed to hold a public meeting on October 24 in Nassau County, Long Island, about the NY/NJ Harbor Throgs Neck proposal to construct a barrier to protect the harbor from storm surges (one of five alternatives provided by the Corp). A plan has tentatively been selected, to be presented in May. Through a research award from CT Sea Grant, Jim O'Donnell (UConn) is currently investigating impacts from this proposal. Bill Lucey (Save the Sound) will follow up with Jim about his timeline for completion.
- Denise Savageau (CT Association of Conservation Districts) reported that Christine Cohen, CT state senator and chair of the environment committee from Guilford, CT has created a coastal caucus. Policy committee members will provide information about the LISS and CCMP to this caucus.
- It was suggested that the next Washington trip be planned for late February or early March, 2020. Tracy will be coordinating; George Hoffman (Setauket Harbor Task Force) will investigate transportation.
- State budget goals include funds for community-based water quality monitoring, marine debris related bans (Styrofoam in NY; plastic ban variety pack in CT); stream and wetlands protections in NY, and, in CT, a storm water "rain tax" and support for the Blue Plan.
- Tracy read talking points developed for the Blue Plan; Nathan Frohling, CT TNC has requested a letter of support for the plan from the CAC to the CT legislature. Some groups have expressed opposition and general mistrust about perceived restrictions associated with the plan, although it is a non-regulatory planning document to guide decision making through existing regulatory mechanisms. The CAC gave consensus for



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a letter supporting legislative adoption of the Blue Plan. The co-chairs will draft a letter and circulate to members.

Marty Garrell (CAC Secretary, Adelphi University) passed around a handout illustrating past and projected rates of global sea level rise with the warning that “Things are going to happen a lot sooner than we think.” The key is the rate of warming in the Arctic. The **doubling time** for the rate of rise is **ten years**. Marty warned that “All this sustainability planning should be including this information,” to which he added: Merry Christmas, everybody.

Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the CAC will be held in New York (location to be determined) on March 12, 2020.

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