

TOWN OF GUILDERLAND

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MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM # 1

TO: Peter G. Barber, Supervisor
& Town Board

FROM: Mansi Parmar, Senior Planner/GIS Analyst

DATE: March 12, 2026

SUBJ: Climate Smart Community

Background

The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program is an interagency initiative of New York State, initiated in 2009, that brings together coordination from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Department of State (DOS), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Health (DOH), Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), the Power Authority (NYPA), and the Department of Public Service. The CSC program supports participating local governments throughout New York State in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, and thrive in a green economy. Participating municipalities sign a voluntary pledge to advance environmental planning using the CSC framework, which presents opportunities for free technical assistance and access to grant funding from state agencies.

In the CSC framework, municipalities can move through a tiered classification system - "Registered," "Bronze Certified," or "Silver Certified" - based upon completion of specified priority actions. Guilderland became a "registered" CSC community in August 2019.

One of the mandatory action items to achieve a bronze certificate is to create CSC Task Force. The task force would serve as a central body of leadership that promotes and supports climate mitigation and adaptation in the community. The CSC Task Force would act as an advisory board that advises and collaborates with the Town to accomplish plans, programs and activities that are part of the CSC Certification Program.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

The Town Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan Update after a 3 ½ year intensive and publicly driven update process at their November 18th, 2025 meeting. The recommendations in the draft comprehensive plan reflect the vision residents have for the Town. There are a number of

recommendations in the draft comprehensive plan that would support the efforts to achieve the bronze certification in Climate Smart Community:

Recommendation C-1 Build on Guilderland’s designation as a registered Climate Smart Community (CSC) in the State of New York by completing the criteria for bronze-level CSC certification by 2030. Criteria include the formation of a CSC Task Force for Guilderland, the designation of a CSC Coordinator, as well as three (3) or more of the following priority actions:

- a. Government Operations GHG Inventory
- b. Community GHG Inventory
- c. Government Operations Climate Action Plan
- d. Community Climate Action Plan
- e. Government Building Energy Audits
- f. Comprehensive Plan with Sustainability Elements
- g. Complete Streets Policy
- h. Alternative-fuel Infrastructure
- i. Natural Resources Inventory
- j. Climate Vulnerability Assessment
- k. Evaluate Policies for Climate Resilience
- l. Climate Adaptation Plan
- m. Climate Change Education & Engagement

In addition to becoming an officially registered Climate Smart Community, the Town of Guilderland has already begun taking steps to implement energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. In partnership with National Grid, the Town has converted more than six hundred street luminaries to LED to conserve energy. The Town has also installed free electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to incentivize use of vehicles with no tailpipe emissions. In terms of renewable energy generation, Guilderland is a partner in a Community Choice Aggregation program and receives credits for a solar facility located near Amsterdam, NY.

C-3. Encourage and incentivize climate resiliency through Town practices, procedures, rules, and regulations wherever practicable.

Given the substantial amount of land that the Town controls in the form of parks, municipal buildings, rights-of-way along Town roadways, Western Turnpike Golf Course, and other facilities, it is recommended that the Town work to ensure that its policies and practices are in alignment with the high-priority goal of environmental protection and resiliency throughout Guilderland.

Resiliency measures include but are not limited to:

1. Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements
2. Wetland Protection
3. Creation of a Town alert system for extreme weather events
4. Preservation of open space
5. Improving environmental education and outreach at Town parks
6. Pledge elements and certification actions of the NYS Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program, of which Guilderland is a registered member community

C-4. Reduce Guilderland’s collective contribution to climate change by decreasing community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with forward-thinking environmental, transportation, and energy planning.

As expressed in public input throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process, the Guilderland community has a desire to mitigate the hazards of a changing climate through resiliency measures coupled with proactive steps to reduce the Town’s collective contribution to climate-warming pollution. Actions to reduce the community’s collective greenhouse gas emissions are inclusive of but not limited to the following:

1. Wherever feasible, encourage and incentivize clean energy production, including rooftop solar/PV collection systems on new and/or existing structures, where practicable.
2. Encourage low of no-GHG producing transportation options in Guilderland by supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles, cycling, walking, and public transportation.
3. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices that sequester carbon such as forest pastures and no-till seeding.
4. Encourage the use of energy efficient lighting and fixtures such as LED, where such applications can reduce ambient light pollution as well as energy consumption.

Recommendation

Based on the mandatory requirements of the New York State Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Bronze Certification, and in alignment with the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan Update, it is recommended that the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) be formally designated as the Town of Guilderland’s Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Task Force.

Given the CAC’s existing advisory role in environmental stewardship, and natural resource protection, the Council is well-positioned to serve as the CSC Task Force. Designating the CAC would satisfy the CSC program requirement to establish a task force while leveraging the Council’s expertise to advance climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency efforts within the Town.

At its March 9, 2026 meeting, the CAC discussed the potential designation of the CAC as the Town’s CSC Task Force, including the responsibilities associated with supporting the Climate Smart Communities Certification program. The CAC expressed its support to serve in this role and to fulfill the responsibilities of the CSC Task Force.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Town Board formally designate the CAC as the Town’s CSC Task Force in order to support the Town’s efforts to achieve Bronze-level Certification.

RESOLUTION TO IMPLEMENT A CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITY TASK FORCE AND APPOINT A CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

WHEREAS, the Town of Guilderland adopted the New York State Climate Smart Communities Pledge by Resolution on March 17, 2026; and

WHEREAS, the Town wishes to obtain Certification under the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program by taking proactive steps towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change; and

WHEREAS, a Climate Smart Community Task Force serves as a central body of leadership that promotes and supports climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies within the community and will act as an advisory group to the municipality on any community issues related to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the CSC Task Force will meet at least twice a year and maintain meeting minutes and attendance records for each meeting; and

WHEREAS, the CSC Task Force will consist of community members, municipal representatives, and other relevant stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, a CSC Coordinator is responsible for convening and managing the task force as Chair, serving as a liaison between the CSC task force and the chief executive officer and other officials, and interfacing with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on the CSC program as needed.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that a Climate Smart Community Task Force be initiated with the initial membership list below; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Guilderland appoints Mansi Parmar, Senior Planner/GIS Analyst as the Climate Smart Community Coordinator.

Initial Membership List for CSC Task Force:

Name	Affiliation
Caitlin Ferrante	Chair, Conservation Advisory Council
Cody Arana	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Brigitte Fortune	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
James Gaughan	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Chad Hansen	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Elizabeth Markham	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Matthew Minniefield	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Sindi Saita	Member, Conservation Advisory Council
Steven Sawicki	Member, Conservation Advisory Council