

**To:** Guilderland Town Board & Guilderland Planning Dept

**From:** Guilderland Conservation Advisory Council

**Date:** March 12, 2026

**Subject:** Climate Smart Community Designation

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**Meeting Attendees:** (March 9, 2026) – GCAC Members Elizabeth Markham, Sindi Saita, Steven Sawiki, Brigitte Fortune, Chad Hansen, Cody Arana, and Caitlin Ferrante, Chair. Mansi Parmer, Assistant Planner/GIS Analyst & Peter Barber, Town Supervisor

**Background:** The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program is an interagency initiative of New York State initiated in 2009. 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. One of the mandatory action items to become certified is to create a 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.

**Recommendation from Planning Dept:** Based on the mandatory requirements of the New York State Climate Smart Communities 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 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 the March 17, 2026 Town Board meeting, the Board will consider designating the CAC as the CSC Task Force.

**Discussion Points from GCAC:** While the CAC is very supportive of the Town's desire to apply for Bronze Certification within the Climate Smart Communities program and the CAC looks forward to the work that will go into this designation, there were a few areas where the CAC would like for additional information regarding the ask of the CAC to take on the roles and responsibilities of the CSC. The CAC would like for the Planning Department to provide us with the additional information at our April 2026 meeting, if not before:

- *A detailed list of what is expected of us as the CSC for the Town of Guilderland.* An outline of our roles and responsibilities as CSC, and what will be required of us throughout the year, in addition to our current roles as the Town's CAC and CERB (Conservation Easement Review Board). It would be helpful to know what reports we may need to generate, the frequency of our needing to meet, and overall what is expected of us as the CSC task force.

- ***An updated and accurate accounting of where Guilderland currently stands in regards to the Climate Smart Communities Certification Action Checklist.*** It would be helpful to know just how many of the action items the Town has already completed, what is being considered “low-hanging fruit” in terms of next options, and what are some long term goals for actionable items on the checklist.

**Additional areas of concern and suggestions:**

- 1) The timeframe of the entire process is a bit problematic. Again, while CAC supports the initiative the Town is taking to apply for Bronze certification, the quick turnaround/timeframe in which a designation is being made, without the full array of information being presented to the CAC, is a bit unreasonable. The CAC wants to ensure that the CSC Task Force’s work is thorough, well thought out, and not cursory. While the CAC also serves as the Town’s CERB, we want to ensure our work as the CSC Task Force is complete and not rushed.
- 2) Our committee members agreed to serve on our current committee understanding what time commitments, responsibilities, and compensation would be required. If taking on additional responsibilities and commitments will be expected in the new organizational structure, members of our committee should understand what any extended responsibilities might be required in terms of time commitments and deliverables. If additional responsibilities are untenable for some committee members, they should be allowed to step down without any negative repercussions. If anyone chooses to resign from the committee, replacement candidates should be sought with full requirements for membership outlined as part of the recruitment process.
- 3) An idea floated by the CAC is to include representatives from different units/committees within the Town who bring a range of expertise and perspectives. Having that broader representation would help ensure the task force can address issues that arise comprehensively.

**Conclusions:**

After taking into account the recommendations of the Planning Department and the points discussed at our March 9th meeting, the GCAC approves the recommendation for the CAC to serve as the Climate Smart Communities Task Force for the year of 2026. The CAC would like for the Town Board to designate the CAC as the CSC Task Force for the year, and would recommend the Town Board, in coordination with the CAC and Planning Department, evaluate the progress in early 2027, reflecting on if any changes need to be made regarding the composition and roles of the CSC Task Force.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit recommendation on behalf of the GCAC.

**Submitted by:**



Caitlin P. Ferrante – GCAC Chair, 03/12/2026

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