

TOWN OF JAY

P.O. Box 730, 11 School Lane
Au Sable Forks, NY 12912
www.townofjayny.gov

Telephone: (518) 647-2204

Fax: (518) 647-5692

2024 Town of Jay Climate Smart Communities Annual Progress Report October 11, 2024

The Town of Jay informally initiated its climate smart efforts in 2021, taking some small initial steps in the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program. Progress was slow, with the first initiative being to replace our streetlights with LED Cobra Head Street Lights, followed by Energy Code Enforcement training, and then adopting the Unified Solar Permit in 2021.

In June 2023, the Town of Jay made a firm commitment to the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program and the New York State Climate Smart Communities (CSC) programs by adopting the New York State Climate Smart Community Pledge. We appointed a CSC Coordinator and established a Climate Smart Communities Task Force. Current taskforce members include:

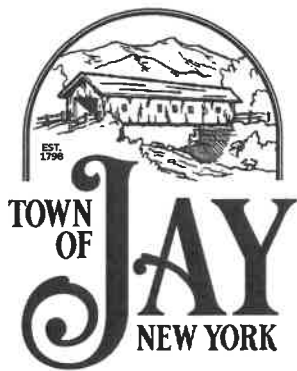
- **Knut Sauer** (Chair, Town of Jay CSC Taskforce, Town Councilor)
- **Olivia Dwyer** (Chair, Town of Jay Parks and Open Space Committee, Town Councilor)
- **Wally Walters** (Chair, Town of Jay Comprehensive Plan Special Board)
- **Lana Gokey**
- **Tyler Eaton**
- **Robin Licari**
- **John Culpepper**
- **Katie Culpepper**
- **Barbara Tam** (Liaison from the Town of Keene CSC taskforce)
- **Matt Stanley** (Town Supervisor, ex-officio member and alternate to the taskforce)

We collaborate with organizations like the Ausable Fresh Water Center, Compost for Good, and ADK Action, drawing on their expertise, guidance, and project support. The taskforce is supported by the Adirondack North Country Association, with Nancy Bernstein and Carlie Leary as advisors and NYSERDA representatives.

In 2023, the taskforce focused on organizing, understanding the NYSERDA CEC and NY State Climate Smart Communities programs, and prioritizing initiatives. We completed additional CEC initiatives like Advanced Benchmarking and the Municipal Fleets Inventory, earning enough points for a free Energy Audit of the Community Center and a \$10,000 NYSERDA grant for energy efficiency improvements.

The Town of Jay, with support from our Highway, Parks, and Water & Sewer departments, acquired battery-operated landscaping equipment. Staff are impressed with the new tools, and we plan to continue replacing gas-powered equipment over time.

The Community Center has been signed up for a community Solar (CDG) subscription, though placement with a project is pending due to a long waitlist. Based on the energy audit recommendations, we used the \$10,000 NYSERDA grant to insulate steam pipes and convert lighting to LED in the Community Center and highway garage, reducing energy costs and improving the work environment. These upgrades have resulted in a slightly more than 10% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from our buildings.



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To improve the climate in our Senior Room, which is also used for town board and committee meetings, we installed a heat pump using NYSERDA grant funds. This allows us to designate the Senior Room as a cooling center during heat waves, with extended hours open to the community.

On September 14th, we held the inaugural annual joint Town of Jay and Town of Keene Sustainability and Energy Fair. It was a great success, featuring over 23 vendors, four seminars, and music, food, and entertainment.

The taskforce has initiated three community campaigns: Clean Heating & Cooling (Heat pumps), Community Solar, and Electric Vehicles. While tracking community solar subscriptions has been challenging, and electric vehicle purchases have been limited, our heat pump campaign has been very successful. We achieved tier 1 and tier 2 in the NYSERDA CEC program, earning \$15,000 in grants, and expect to submit for tier 3 soon, which should earn us an additional \$20,000 grant.

To date, the Town of Jay has earned over \$80,000 in grants from NYSERDA. Of that, \$50,000 has been allocated to installing a 60kW solar system on our highway garage in early 2025. The total cost is estimated at \$160,000, with \$15,000 in NYSERDA rebates, \$58,000 in Federal Investment Tax credits, and the \$50,000 NYSERDA grant, leaving the town with an out-of-pocket cost of roughly \$37,000 and an estimated payback period of five years for a system with a 30-year life.

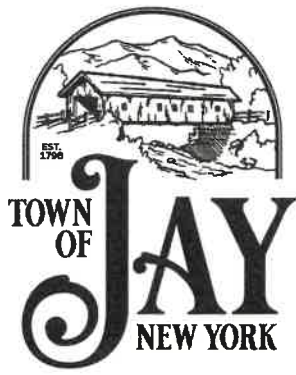
In late 2022, we successfully applied for a ZEV (electric vehicle charger) Infrastructure grant with the DEC, securing funding for two locations (Upper Jay and Jay). We are currently in the contract stage with DEC and expect to go out for bid soon, with installations complete by early spring.

Waste reduction and organics management is a key focus area. The taskforce is evaluating initiatives, including establishing a food scraps drop-off location for residents. The food scraps would be picked up by a third-party organization for composting, and potentially include discounted food scraps bins for residents. Diverting food scraps to a compost facility significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions and produces valuable compost.

While many initiatives overlap between the NY State Climate Smart Communities and NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities programs, the NYSERDA program awards points towards grants, and the CSC program awards points towards different certification levels. The Town of Jay is working towards Bronze Certification in the CSC program and expects to submit an application by the next deadline in early January. An update to this progress report will be made in early 2025, outlining the details of the initiatives completed for Bronze Certification. Achieving Bronze certification would be a significant milestone for the Town of Jay.

With ongoing initiatives, we aim to qualify for an additional \$200,000 in NYSERDA grants by mid-2025.

While the Town of Jay started its climate smart efforts with small, but impactful steps in 2021-2022, in 2023, when the taskforce was established, the efforts were turbocharged and have been quite successful. However, there are always challenges for a small municipality, as resources including staff time and finances are limited, and gaining community buy-in can take time and effort. We are lucky to live in an area where volunteerism is



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very high, and our small towns are highly supported by many volunteer and non-profit organizations. However, this also puts a strain on volunteers and creates high competition for their time. Without our great volunteers and committed taskforce members who spend so much time and effort on our climate smart initiatives, and the support and buy-in by our town employees & the town council, as well as the guidance and support by ANCA (our NYSERDA representatives), the Town of Jay would not be nearly as successful as we are. With great gratitude, thank you to all of you!

If you are interested in getting involved, we would love to hear from you. It is very rewarding to be part of such an energized team! The committee holds regular meetings, and agendas & minutes can be found on the Town of Jay website <https://www.townofjayny.gov/meeting-minutes/> where you can also find information on our initiatives, community campaigns, and a benchmarking report.

Knut Sauer

Town of Jay Climate Smart Communities Taskforce
k.sauer@townofjayny.gov