



The Village of Briarcliff Manor

Sustainability Advisory Committee

- and -

Environmental Advisory Council

January 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our winter newsletter!

The Sustainability Advisory Committee and the Environmental Advisory Council have had a busy and productive first year. Briarcliff Manor is now a proud member of the Climate Smart Communities as well as the Clean Energy Community. Over the past year, SAC organized a number of events to promote a zero-waste approach to everyday activities, and helped raise awareness of clean energy sources for home heating/cooling, demand response programs, electric vehicles, and sustainable landscaping. The EAC has been working behind the scenes, providing advice and guidance regarding Village trees, pollinator plantings, green spaces, and more.



We are planning an equally eventful and productive second year during which we will continue to focus on community engagement to promote a range of sustainability initiatives.

We wish you all a very healthy, happy, and sustainable 2024!

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Message from the Board of Trustees

Just over a year ago, the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) became official components of our Village government. The enthusiasm, experience, and demonstrable knowledge of our committee members are greatly improving our little corner of the world.

The Board had chartered SAC to develop recommendations to improve sustainability and to promote “reduce, reuse, and recycling” initiatives. Part of the mission of SAC is to effectively communicate everyday ways that residents can choose to lead a greener life. Through education and explanation, SAC has led the drive for environmentally beneficial changes that often have the added benefit of saving money. Through digital postings and fun in-person events, SAC has improved our understanding of recycling, energy smart homes, grid rewards, e-vehicles, composting, and sustainable landscaping practices. This past fall, more residents chose to “Leave Leaves Alone,” limiting the use of noisy gas-powered leaf blowers, embracing the natural, fertilizing power of leaves for lawns and gardens, reducing the expense of DPW leaf pickup for all.

EAC has become a valuable resource when evaluating the environmental impact of potential Village projects. Over the last year, they have contributed to the ongoing review of several large parcels facing redevelopment, redesigned a plan for a large tree planting along the Village right-of-way, and pushed for increased use of native species and best practices for planting projects throughout Briarcliff. These efforts provide more than local beautification; proper design and inclusion of appropriate plantings reduce ongoing maintenance costs, promote pollinator pathways, and create a healthier, more robust greenway for our community. This year, we expect EAC’s input to play a major role as we improve or replace several local environmental laws that the Board of Trustees has targeted for updates.

Briarcliff thrives on the many volunteers who contribute to our community. As we formed, and then expanded, these committees, we were fortunate to attract far more qualified residents beyond the limited committee positions available. All interested residents are always welcomed and encouraged to attend SAC meetings, which are generally held at 7:00pm in the Court Room at Village Hall. SAC meets on the first Thursday evening of each month; EAC meets on the fourth Thursday evening of each month. Always check the Village calendar at www.briarcliffmanor.gov, since meeting times are subject to change, and there’s no paper calendar since, well, you know.

Much more to come in 2024, all of which should be less wasteful, more sustainable, and Earth friendly! We wish you the happiest, healthiest new year ever.



Briarcliff Manor is a Clean Energy Community

The Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program is a \$16 million NYSERDA program which was launched in 2016 and encourages local governments to implement clean energy actions, save energy costs, create jobs, and improve the environment. In order to achieve these goals, the CEC program provides flexible grant funding with no local cost share, free coordinator support, and technical assistance to complete pre-specified high-impact clean energy actions. The program recognizes and rewards communities for completion of these goals. For more information about the CEC program, visit [NYSERDA](#).

Briarcliff Manor achieved CEC designation in July 2022. To date, **Briarcliff Manor has earned a total of 1600 CEC points and \$15,000 grant money** by completing the following high impact actions:

Community Campaign (Level 1 Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign): [The Energy Smart Homes](#) program helps residents learn about cleaner ways to heat and cool their homes, helps connect them to vetted contractors, and provides information about rebates and financing options. **During the Level 1 campaign, Briarcliff Manor earned certification points and grant money for 10 Briarcliff households who installed new clean heating/cooling systems.**

Community Campaign (Demand Response Campaign): [Grid Rewards](#) is a free app that connects to your Con Edison account and tells you when and how to reduce your energy usage. Con Edison pays you to reduce electricity at peak times to help maintain system reliability in your community. You can reduce your energy usage while earning cash rewards. **During this campaign, Briarcliff Manor earned certification points and grant money for 10 Briarcliff households who signed up with Grid Rewards.**

LED street lights: Replacing conventional streetlights with energy saving LED lights is an important way to reduce energy usage. LED lights require minimal maintenance, last up to 100,000 hours, and provide a well-lit and safe community. As of October 2022, **Briarcliff Manor has replaced approximately 80% of all streetlight fixtures to LEDs.**

Briarcliff Manor is a Clean Energy Community



Most of the high impact CEC actions also satisfy the requirements of one or more certification actions of the Climate Smart Communities program (CSC)

Briarcliff Manor became a Climate Smart Community in November 2022 by passing a pledge to reduce emissions and implementing actions to adapt to climate change. Briarcliff Manor is now one of 369 registered CSCs in the state. The CSC program supports municipalities by providing 50/50 competitive grant funding to implement projects to reduce emissions and build resilience to extreme weather. Implementing CSC certification actions can help our community achieve cost savings through greater efficiency, greater energy independence and energy security, improved air quality, and reduction of future flood risk through climate change adaptation policies.

As of winter 2023, the Briarcliff Sustainability Advisory Committee began working on two new CEC campaigns.

Drive Electric Briarcliff Level 1 campaign: This campaign will educate Briarcliff residents about EV ownership and the full driving experience through EV meetups, test drives, and events with local EV dealers.

Clean Heating and Cooling Level 2 campaign: Like the Level 1 campaign, this campaign will help residents learn about cleaner ways to heat and cool their homes, help connect them to vetted contractors, and provide information about rebates and financing options. This will be done through a variety of means including webinars, community events like the Earth Day event, and other informational material like flyers, newsletters, and pamphlets.

Electric Vehicles

The transportation sector accounts for 29% of all greenhouse gas emissions in New York State, leading to an accelerated push towards zero-emission vehicles. All new passenger cars and trucks sold in New York will need to be zero-emissions by 2035. Electric vehicles can either be powered entirely by electricity from the battery (BEVs), or they can be plug in hybrids (PHEVs) which are a hybrid between a gas engine and electric motor. EVs use regenerative braking where energy is recovered during the braking process and transferred back to the battery to improve efficiency.

EV batteries have long lives and most are covered by 100,000 mile warranties. There is a relatively small number of EVs nearing the end of their lives and there is an intense focus on developing efficient battery recycling technologies which will keep hazardous materials from entering the waste stream. Read more about EV batteries [here](#).

The exponential increase in the number of electric vehicles on the road today is changing the way people think about “filling up” their cars, and creating an urgent need for charging stations where people can “top off” their batteries. Here are some useful links if you would like to [find charging stations](#) near you or information about Con Ed’s [charging incentives](#) for EVs.

New York State residents can take advantage of the [Drive Clean rebate](#) which is a point-of-sale rebate towards the purchase or lease of a new EV. With the Drive Clean rebate, a discount of up to \$2000 will be applied when you purchase a qualifying EV from a participating dealer. This can be combined with a \$7500 Federal Tax Credit.

If you are car shopping and wondering whether an EV makes sense, some important factors to consider include increasing battery ranges, decreasing EV prices, lower tailpipe emissions, discounts on tolls, and the tax credits/rebates/incentives. If you have “range anxiety”, you are not alone! But studies have shown that the median driving range of an all-electric EV was 234 miles for the 2021 model year, which is just above the average weekly driving distance of New Yorkers (228.3 miles).

For more insight into the EV experience, [read our EV spotlight article](#) where a resident of Briarcliff Manor describes his reasons for driving an EV, the charging process, long drives, maintenance, and his favorite features of the car.

EV Spotlight

Charging Forward with Peter Romanoff (Briarcliff Manor resident)

B-SAC: Why did you decide to buy an EV?

PR: Primarily for their environmental impact—EVs produce zero tailpipe emissions, which reduces air pollution and helps combat climate change by lowering my carbon footprint. Also, EVs have lower operating costs over time, fewer moving parts (meaning less maintenance), and electricity is often cheaper than gasoline, leading to significant savings in fuel costs over the vehicle's lifespan. Plus, they're a blast to drive!

B-SAC: What EV do you have? When did you buy it?

PR: I have a 2022 Tesla Model 3 Long Range Dual Motor.

B-SAC: What are your top 3 favorite features that you like in your car? What don't you like?

PR: Things I like:

- Real-world range – On a full charge, I get a range between 285-300 miles.
- The Supercharger network – Tesla's vast network provides fast charging, making it easy to take long trips without worrying about running out of power.
- Extremely fun to drive – With its quick and smooth acceleration, and tight handling, driving a Tesla is a thrilling experience.
- Software updates – Tesla's vehicles improve over time with each update, which happens 3-4 times a year, adding new features and refinements. For example, a recent update improved the sharpness and perspective of the car's many cameras.

Some things I'm not crazy about, but they were by no means dealbreakers:

- The Model 3 has a firm ride, not ideal for rough or poorly maintained roads.
- Build quality issues – Teslas, being high-tech and from a relatively new manufacturer, tend to have a few more creaks and rattles than I'm used to from more established brands.
- Lack of Android Auto or Apple CarPlay support. However, the user interface is very intuitive, and over time I found I didn't miss these features as much as I thought I would.

B-SAC: How do you charge your car at home, including average charging costs?

PR: I charge my car at home with a Tesla Wall Charger. It's super easy—just plug it in, and it starts charging at the set time. I'm currently paying about \$0.27 per kWh. However, one major benefit for New Yorkers is the SmartCharge New York (SCNY) program, which rewards EV drivers for charging during grid-friendly times. SCNY offers a rebate of \$0.10 per kWh for all off-peak charging done within Con Edison's service area between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m., daily.

B-SAC: Please describe a long-distance drive that you made in your EV.

PR:

- Last summer, we drove to Niagara Falls in Ontario, Canada.
- Miles Driven: About 785 miles round trip.

EV Spotlight

Charging Forward with Peter Romanoff (Briarcliff Manor resident)

- Recharging Stops: We stopped to charge once on each leg of the trip. The advanced navigation system in the car made it easy to find charging stations and notified me when and where to charge. Additionally, the car preconditions the batteries for high-speed charging, which is much faster (about 10-15x faster) than home charging.
- Charging Costs vs. Gasoline: The trip cost about \$18 per charge (at \$.41 per kWh). The same trip in a gasoline-powered vehicle would have been twice the cost.

B-SAC: What maintenance have you done on your car?

PR: One of the best things about owning a Tesla is how little maintenance they need. In the first year of owning mine, all I've had to do is add windshield washer fluid, replace the wiper blades, and I replaced the cabin filter, all of which I did myself. However, setting up a service appointment for a Tesla is a smooth and hassle-free experience, largely due to the convenience and technology involved. You typically schedule your service appointments through the Tesla mobile app, which allows for a streamlined process without the need for phone calls or in-person scheduling. The app not only enables the scheduling of service visits but also provides service alerts, allows owners to follow the repair progress, and receive updates from the Tesla Service Center. Additionally, Tesla has mobile technicians who can perform many repairs wherever the vehicle is parked, bringing the service to the customer rather than the other way around.

B-SAC: What advice do you have for anyone considering buying an EV?

PR: When considering the purchase of an EV, keep the following in mind:

- Research Incentives: Investigate available local, state, and federal incentives or tax credits, which can significantly reduce the cost.
- Assess Your Driving Habits: Consider how you'll use the car. Range anxiety is less of an issue than most think, but it's important to choose a vehicle that fits your driving distances.
- Charging Infrastructure: Make sure you have access to charging at home or nearby, and check the availability of public charging stations.
- Total Cost of Ownership: Look beyond the purchase price. EVs often have lower maintenance and operational expenses.
- Resale Value: Research the EV's resale value since the market is rapidly evolving.
- Test Drive: Always test drive several models to assess performance, comfort, and features.
- Future Proofing: Consider if the vehicle can receive software updates.
- Brand Reputation and Reviews: Read reviews and ratings of the vehicle and manufacturer's customer service.



Parks and Trails Corner

Buttermilk Hill Loop, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Jason Sendek (Briarcliff Manor)

Let me paint the picture: you're a Rockefeller regular who walks every morning at 7 am with your golden retriever named Cookie. Cookie is fairly young, and he needs consistent exercise or else he is a nuisance for the rest of the day. You personally have been dealing with lower back issues for the past decade caused by the pains of raising a family. Rockefeller is your sanctuary. A place where you can detach from the craziness of the world and your immature son. A time where you can put your phone on Do Not Disturb, send your mother-in-laws calls straight to voicemail and enjoy the sounds of nature. Life is good in Rockefeller, but the trails have become unchallenging. Cookie's cardio has been improving and he needs more of a workout. As for you, any excuse to spend more time on the trails is better than being home, re-learning Algebra with your middle school son at the kitchen counter, banging your head, questioning where all your intelligence went.

Let me introduce the Buttermilk Hill Loop. The start, located at Union Church (555 Bedford Road, Tarrytown NY), is the challenge you've been trying to find. The first two miles are gradually uphill, the perfect gradient to get you warmed up for the big boss. This is where you lock in. Despite those beautiful sounds of the leaves rustling, it's time to throw in AirPod Pros on silent mode and blast some Springsteen to focus on the obstacle in front of you. We've got a half mile of up. Don't expect it to end cause it keeps going for a lot longer than you'll think. Focus on your breathing, head down, one foot in front of the other, just you and Cookie that's all that matters for the next fifteen minutes. When [if] you get to the top, you'll get a new wave of walker's high. After catching your breath, enjoy the nice stroll down emerging into the rolling hills of Stone Barns.

P.S. Bring water for Cookie and keep him on leash.



Embracing Sustainable Practices for a Greener Holiday Season

Riya Raina, 11th Grade, Briarcliff High School



David Malan/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images

As the holiday season approaches, there's an opportunity for us to incorporate sustainability into our celebrations, blending traditions with eco-friendly practices. One impactful way to practice sustainability is by choosing locally sourced food for festive feasts. Supporting local farmers not only reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation but also supports our community. Incorporating seasonal, locally grown produce into holiday meals promotes sustainable agriculture and also ensures a fresher and more flavorful dining experience for everyone at the table.

Another avenue to practice sustainability during the holidays is through mindful gift-giving.

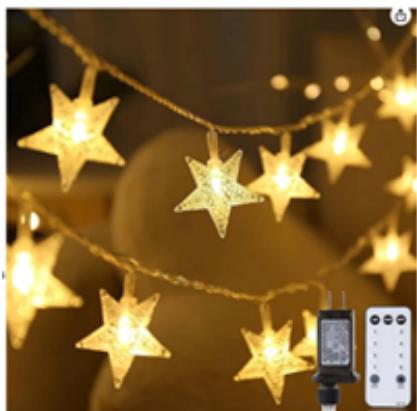
Consider opting for handmade gifts or DIY projects that showcase thoughtfulness and creativity while minimizing the environmental impact of mass-produced items. This spirit of giving was brought to a whole new level by the Sustainability Advisory Committee's holiday gift swap, which was held on December 2nd.

Participants generously donated an array of gifts, and anyone could pick up them up, not only minimizing the environmental impact of gift-giving but also fostering a sense of togetherness and a shared commitment as a community to a greener future.



Getty Images

Furthermore, when decorating for the holidays opting for LED lights over traditional incandescent ones can significantly reduce energy consumption. LED lights are more energy-efficient, longer-lasting, and emit less heat, making them a safer and greener choice. By making these small but impactful changes in our holiday traditions, we can collectively contribute to a more sustainable and eco-friendly celebration, ensuring that the joy of the season is shared with the planet we call home.



Native Plant Spotlight

Woody Plant: *Ilex verticillata* (Winterberry holly)



Image credit: Gardenia.net

This native shrub brings festive color and cheer to the winter season! Though winterberry sheds its leaves in late fall, it retains its bright red berries, creating a striking scene against the snow. Because the fat content of the berries is lower than that of other native red-berried shrubs, birds tend to leave the berries until later in the winter when food resources are scarce. At that time, it is a valued resource, and will attract winter songbirds to your yard. Winterberry grows 6-12' tall in medium to wet soils, in full sun to part shade. As a dioecious shrub (male and female flowers are on separate plants), a male shrub, which does not produce the ornamental berries, needs to be planted nearby for maximum fruiting on female shrubs.

Grow winterberry in your yard this spring and take gorgeous cuttings during the winter holidays!

Herbaceous Plant: *Symplocarpus foetidus* (Skunk cabbage)

Skunk cabbage is a botanical marvel! Through a remarkable chemical reaction called *thermogenesis*, the strange-looking flowers produce their own heat, allowing them to melt through ice and snow in late winter. And true to its name -- yes -- skunk cabbage has a distinctive odor! The flowers mimic the smell (and mottled appearance) of rotting flesh, attracting flies who are even further deceived by the self-generated warmth of the plant. The flies "think" they are laying their eggs on carrion, but are actually being tricked into pollinating the skunk cabbage flowers!

After flowering, green leaves resembling cabbage appear. Skunk cabbage can be found in wetlands and along forested streams. See if you can discover it towards the end of February!



Image credit: NatureTreasureHunt.com

Winter Blues? Think Green!

If cold days and dark nights have you dreaming of spring, perhaps it's a good time to start planning your greener, more sustainable spring yard!

Conventional landscaping practice, with its expanses of botanically boring turfgrass and dime-a-dozen boxwoods, has led us to believe that our yards should be treated as an extension of the indoors -- sterile, tidy, and not much more than an outdoor carpet. But our yards are full of so much potential, and can easily become spaces of rich ecological and cultural value.



The veggie/wildflower garden of an EAC member

An approach many find useful is adding plants to our yards that are either native and provide food/resources for birds and pollinators, or ones that are otherwise edible and provide food for you and your family. Maybe this is a native wildflower garden in your front yard, a border of native berry-producing shrubs, a trellis adorned with coral honeysuckle, a charming vegetable garden, or a backyard food forest. There are many trees and shrubs that grow edible fruit in our region: raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, peaches, plums, and pears, for example. Raspberries, in particular, spread quickly and fruit profusely.



Image credit: JoeGardener.com

This time of year is perfect for winter seed sowing. Many native flower species require that their seeds be exposed to cold temperatures for a period of time in order to break dormancy and germinate in the spring. Such seeds can be sown on bare ground now, or even sown in trays or empty milk jugs filled with soil and placed outside. Simply transplant seedlings from trays and jugs into your garden space later in the growing season.

Winter Blues? Think Green!



Image credit: Jonathan Boy; bloy.net



Image credit: AccentNatural.com

If you've left standing dead flowers and grasses over the fall and into the winter -- kudos to you! Leaving dried stems and seeds provides a critical service to wildlife. Winter birds like juncos rely on stands of dead flowers, whose tall stems hold the seeds above snow-level. And hollowed flower and grass stalks are refuges for overwintering pollinating insects. Please don't be in a rush to "tidy up" these spaces in the spring -- wait until temperatures are consistently above 55 degrees to allow overwintering insects time to emerge. Native wildflowers whose stems have hollow piths make particularly preferable habitat for cavity-nesting pollinators. These include purple coneflower, anise hyssop, joe pyeweed, wild bergamot, goldenrod, and mountain mint. These can be sown on the ground now!

Feel free to reach out to the EAC (eac@briarcliffmanor.gov) for guidance to help turn your winter yard into a greener space in spring.

Cool Nature Fact!

If you have rhododendrons, you might notice their curled leaves when temperatures are especially cold. This is a phenomenon called *thermonasty* (you're welcome for this fantastic vocab word), and reduces the amount of leaf surface area exposed to freezing temperatures. It also allows ice and snow to easily slide off, further protecting its evergreen leaves.



Image credit: Mike Dunn, Roads End Naturalist

B-SAC Activities Recap

Halloween Costume Exchange



The Sustainability Advisory Committee partnered with the Briarcliff Recreation Department to organize a Halloween costume swap event on October 14th at the William Vescio Community Center. Briarcliff residents were overwhelmingly generous with donations, and people were able to choose from **more than 120 costumes and more than 80 masks, hats and accessories**. All leftover costumes were picked up by OPrime, the Community School Hub for the Ossining School District. People were excited to **save time and money while promoting sustainability** in Briarcliff.

Movie Event



The Sustainability Advisory Committee partnered with the Briarcliff Public Library to organize a movie event on October 20th at the library. The Clean Bin Project is an award-winning, light hearted documentary about a couple's journey to live a zero waste lifestyle for a year. BHS Environmental Sciences students turned out on a rainy Friday evening to enjoy the movie. Refreshments were generously provided by the Briarcliff Public Library!

B-SAC Activities Recap

Holiday Swap

The Sustainability Advisory Committee partnered with the **Briarcliff Recreation Department** to organize a Holiday Swap event on December 2nd and 3rd at the Youth Center. People donated holiday items including gift wrap, greeting cards, ornaments, holiday linens, indoor and outdoor decorations, and even Christmas trees. Donations were accepted on 2nd afternoon and 3rd morning. Despite the pouring rain, the Youth Center filled up with donated holiday items, and the event “sold out” within half an hour of opening on 3rd afternoon. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of Briarcliff residents, and were very happy to divert hundreds of holiday items out of the landfill.

We are grateful to Cindy Cassuto (Corcoran Legends Real Estate) who sponsored the event.



Briarcliff residents were incredibly generous with their holiday donations



There was free “shopping” on December 3rd afternoon. The event sold out within half an hour.



This lucky shopper snagged an almost new Christmas tree!



B-SAC committee members at the swap

Upcoming Events

Stay tuned for announcements about:

- **Energy Advisor Event with Sustainable Westchester -Spring 2024.** This virtual event will be an opportunity to interact with a clean energy advisor, as well as with clean heating/cooling contractors about specific needs for your home.
- **Drive Electric Briarcliff Event with Electric Vehicle Association-Spring 2024.** This will be an event to learn about new EV models, and rebates and incentives currently available for EV purchases. You will be able to test drive some EVs at the event.



Join us at our meetings to learn what we are working on, and to see how you can contribute to making Briarcliff cleaner and greener!

SAC meetings: First Thursday of every month. 7:00 pm

EAC meetings: Fourth Thursday of every month. 7:00 pm
Village Hall, Court Room

For more information, email us at
SAC@briarcliffmanor.gov or EAC@briarcliffmanor.gov
Visit us at

[Sustainability-advisory-committee](#) and
[Environmental-advisory-council](#)

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Stacey Winnick
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Jennifer Sendek
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EAC

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