



**East Hampton
Environmental Coalition**

2017 Environmental Survey of East Hampton Town Board and Supervisor Candidates

2017 Green Guide Participating Members

CONTRIBUTORS

Accabonac Protection Committee

Amagansett Springs Aquifer
Protection

Concerned Citizens of Montauk

International Dark Sky Association
– New York Chapter

Long Island, Businesses for
Responsible Energy (LIBFRE)

NYLCV Education Fund

Northwest Alliance

Renewable Energy Long Island

Quiet Skies Coalition

SUPPORTERS

Defend H₂O

Ditch Plains Association

Friends of Georgica Pond
Foundation

Group for the East End

Peconic Baykeeper

Perfect Earth Project

Surfrider Foundation: Eastern Long
Island Chapter

Third House Nature Center

OVERVIEW

As non-profit, nonpartisan environmental organizations concerned about the future of the East End, we have decided to once again become active in the upcoming election by raising awareness of the importance of these issues and will be collectively engaging the public in various ways.

The purpose of this activity is not to implicitly or explicitly support or oppose any candidate or political party, but to educate voters on local environmental issues and encourage them to be civically-active environmental advocates.

GUIDELINES

This questionnaire is designed to elicit your commitment to and ideas on addressing the important sustainability issues facing East Hampton.

Responses should be considered public. Complete, unedited responses will be reproduced and distributed publicly.

If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite.

For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, we will note as much in our public materials.

TIMELINE

- Questionnaires are due by October 11, 2017
- Completed questionnaires must be submitted via e-mail as Microsoft Word file or PDF to: Joshua Klainberg, NYLCVEF - jklainberg@nylcv.org
- Questions or extension requests may be directed to: Laura Tooman, CCOM - LTooman@PreserveMontauk.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide us with the following information:

Candidate Name: **Kathee Burke-Gonzalez**

Position Sought: **Councilwoman, East Hampton Town Board**

EXPERIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 1) Please share with us accomplishments or experiences that would indicate your commitment to advancing an environmental agenda for East Hampton. These may be professional or personal.

When I took office in January 2014, I volunteered to be the Town Board liaison to the East Hampton Airport. Many folks thought I was crazy to volunteer to take on an assignment as ambitious as East Hampton Airport in my first year of elected office, but I believed that the Town Board had a public policy responsibility to protect residents from the adverse effects of aircraft noise. As noise from aircraft operations was having a profoundly negative impact on the health and welfare of Town residents and our wildlife and their habitat -- diminishing the quiet enjoyment of our homes and properties and compromising the ability to enjoy the woodlands, beaches, fields, and preserved lands that define our community and sense of place.

In my role as liaison to the Airport, I led a thoughtful process that engaged community members with conflicting interests – the noise affected community, who were seeking meaningful relief from aircraft noise, and the local aviation community, who wanted a safe and properly maintained airport – and brought them together to find common ground on the issues of airport restrictions, capital improvements and finances. Following a very methodical and transparent process, we listened to public comment in a civil and respectful manner during some of the largest public hearings in town history. And went on to adopt three restrictions in April 2015. Although the restrictions were struck down by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, I am still driven to provide meaningful noise relief to our community.

As liaison to the Human Services Department, I was supportive of their purchasing five electric vehicles for their staff members.

During my tenure on the Town Board I have supported all of the environmental initiatives that have come before the Board.

- 2) What do you believe is the role of town government regulation and enforcement in maintaining a natural, sustainable environment? What, if any, changes are the most important?

The Town plays a critical role and makes a significant contribution to the management and protection of our natural resources. We are committed to good science and forward planning to address some of our most pressing issues, such as water quality, coastal erosion and energy sustainability.

Areas the Town needs to focus on include: strategic planning, acquisition and land management of open space including buyouts of threatened properties, septic system upgrades, community wastewater systems, drinking water and surface water testing/monitoring, individual watershed plans, natural resource restoration plans, shellfish enhancement, and storm water management.

The Town needs to continue to encourage inter-departmental coordination and communication. We also need to lead by example.

Enforcement is critical. In some cases we have community members that are bad actors, while in other cases folks just aren't informed. A more concerted effort of outreach and education is definitely warranted.

- 3) What resources, experts or opinions will you consult when making decisions that affect East Hampton Town's environmental resources?

My first stop is always Kim Shaw.

We have a wealth of resources to tap into including...

- Town's Natural Resources Department
- Town's Planning Department
- Town's Land Acquisition and Management Department
- Town's Aquaculture Department
- Town advisory committees
- Local and regional environmental organizations
- Knowledgeable and highly informed community members
- Our elected body of Trustees
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Stony Brook University
- Recognized experts and their published studies
- US Fish & Wildlife
- NYSDEC
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services

Over the last four years we have demonstrated that members of our community play a valuable role when they are given the opportunity to participate, collaborate and assist in problem solving. Which in turn, leads to more informed decision-making.

ISSUE QUESTIONS

The 2017 East Hampton Green Guide details opportunities and approaches to persistent environmental sustainability challenges facing the town. The following subjects come straight from the agenda where action items of critical importance to the environmental community can be found.

- 4) On Long Island, our economic prosperity, public health and safety, and quality of life rely upon a clean and sustainable supply of drinking water. Similarly, as an island blessed with bays, harbors, and beaches on every shore, the quality of our surface waters defines our outdoor experience. The consequences of over-development on a small ecosystem have been devastating to not only our groundwater but also our surface waters.

What actions will you take to protect groundwater and surface water?

Our #1 priority is to protect pure drinking water, surface waters and harbors and bays. As we need to ensure the health and vitality of our aquifer and coastal waters that are being threatened by nitrogen, phosphorus, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, pesticides, and household and industrial chemicals.

Ways forward include:

- Land preservation – The Town Board has been aggressive in acquiring properties along our water bodies. Through our Lake Montauk Outreach we have acquired 30 parcels and through our Springs Outreach we have acquired 38 parcels, with CPF monies to-date.

- In anticipation of the November 2016 CPF Extension/Water Quality referendum and it's eventual passing, the Town has ...

- 1.) Adopted the Water Quality Improvement Plan
- 2.) Appointed a Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee with 14 members
- 3.) Adopted legislation calling for septic system upgrades to low nitrogen sanitary systems for new construction/substantial renovation. East Hampton is leading on this as these are the strictest standards in Suffolk County
- 4.) Adopted a rebate program to incentivize homeowners and businesses to upgrade

- Drinking water and surface water testing/monitoring

- Individual watershed plans such as permeable reactive barriers, micro algae projects and oyster gardens. The Town has received \$650k in grant monies for watersheds in Springs alone, including Pussy's Pond, Accabonac Harbor and Three Mile Harbor.

- Developing a wastewater management plan for Downtown Montauk

- Education and outreach

- 5) Beaches, water-based tourism and the most productive fishing port in New York State anchor East Hampton's economy. Erosion, sea level rise, and more frequent catastrophic storms are reshaping East Hampton. A sustainable, thriving community requires protecting natural buffers such as beaches, bluffs and wetlands and upgrading and adapting our infrastructure.

What actions will you take to achieve coastal adaptation and resiliency planning?

Climate change poses a real and increasing threat to our coastal community, which includes 131 miles of coastline. It is critical that we raise awareness of and begin planning for a rising sea level, coastal erosion, a warmer ocean and more extreme and frequent weather events so we can strive towards a sustainable and resilient future for our community.

The Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan (CARP) addresses the short- and long-term impacts along our shoreline of erosion and flooding from more frequent storms, long-term erosion trends, climate change and sea-level rise.

Protection strategies to be examined and evaluated include:

- Natural resource restoration
- Land acquisition
- Flood-proofing structures including sanitary systems, power substations, railroad and airport infrastructure
- Elevating or relocating buildings
- Buyouts of threatened properties

- 6) Wetlands, woodlands, grasslands, dunes, fresh water ponds, kettle holes, creeks, bays, and beaches abound in East Hampton, but are becoming increasingly rare nationwide. These ecosystems are not only a major draw for tourism and the area's economy, but are also valuable and vulnerable habitats that provide food, shelter, and breeding grounds for a wide array of creatures. Because of new development, the incursion of invasive species, the use of chemicals for fertilizers, pest and weed control, and increasing stresses of extreme weather and rising water levels, our native flora and fauna are stressed and in decline.

What actions will you take to address habitat stewardship?

I'm in agreement with the action plan that you have specified, including:

- Educating the community about the significance and complexity of healthy habitats and how to best maintain them.
- Assessing how climate change and sea level rise will impact local habitats and species.
- Utilizing CPF monies to maintain the diversity of habitat.
- Enforcing restrictions to protect, preserve, and restore natural habitat.
- Creating a standing panel of expert advisors that Town Board members can rely on to inform them on complex environmental issues. Which is being done now on a more informal basis.

- 7) The State of New York has recognized the urgent need for action to mitigate climate change by dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. Additionally, the state has directed electric utilities in the state to provide at least 50% of its electricity supply from renewable energy sources. In recognition of these mandates, the Town of East Hampton, in 2014, adopted a goal to meet 100% of community-wide electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 and further set a goal to meet the equivalent energy consumption in all sectors (electric, heat, transportation) 100% from renewable sources by the year 2030. At the same time, our grid is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and from time to time the siting decisions for the generation of power and its distribution have been incompatible with the government's mission to protect public health and safety.

What actions will you take to create a 21st century sustainable energy policy and grid?

The Town has been progressive and has demonstrated leadership as it promotes and encourages clean, renewable energy. Moving forward we need to continue to substantially reduce energy consumption through conservation and energy efficiency while significantly increasing the use of renewable energy technologies. Including supporting the construction of the South Fork Wind Farm to ensure operation by 2022 and seeking opportunities for large-scale solar arrays.

- 8) The Town enacted an outdoor lighting ordinance in 1984 in order to preserve the nocturnal environment, community character, and quality of life from the effects of misdirected, excessive, unnecessary and inefficient outdoor lighting. There have been updates to the code but more are needed. Also the code needs to be fully enforced for new and existing installations and the municipality itself needs to conform to the standards set by the code.

What actions will you take to improve outdoor lighting policies to make our skies darker?

I support working with the Planning Department to continue to revise and update the current 2006 Smart Lighting Code and Planning Board Guidelines to address new technologies and innovations as well as coordinating with the Buildings & Grounds Department to renovate town lighting facilities to improve energy conservation, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness. And we can certainly provide access at night to selected public properties for astronomical observations via the special events permit process.

- 9) In order to ensure the peaceful enjoyment of East End residents' homes and properties; and the reduction or elimination of harmful noise and avgas emissions on protected wildlife and their habitat, further action is needed.

What actions will you take to reduce aircraft noise which will result in quieter skies?

As the Town Board liaison to the East Hampton Airport, I hope to help oversee the preparation of the Part 161 application to the FAA. So that the Town will have the ability to manage the Airport in the best interests of the community and provide meaningful relief from aircraft noise to East End residents.

Stakeholder groups will be engaged as the Town determines the proposed restrictions. And a very public, very transparent process will unfold just as it did in 2014 and 2015.