



# Sustainability Commission

Economy • Environment • Society

Think long-term, act now

“Community Sustainability is the commitment to adopt practices that support and balance the social, economic and environmental aspects of our region, now and into our future.”

Groton Sustainability Commission, Winter 2010

## Meeting Notice

Meeting Notification Date: Friday March 1, 2013  
Meeting Date: Tuesday March 5, 2013  
Meeting Time: 7:30 PM  
Meeting Location: Selectman's Meeting Room Groton Town Hall  
Meeting Type: Regularly Scheduled Commission Meeting

Now that our obligations relating to the Master Plan have lessened it is time we began setting goals for the Commission for the next few years. Accordingly this meeting will be devoted to goal setting around short and medium term goals related to addressing climate change by supporting Groton's "Climate Action Day" and Groton's response to the recently released Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report. Long term goals will relate to the development of the "Groton Sustainability Plan" and how the new language of Sustainability can be integrated into our plan. Period of Performance for these goals is 2013 – 2014. If time permits, other goals recommended by commissioners and/or visitors will be discussed.

-----

## Meeting Minutes

This meeting was originally scheduled to convene on Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, but had to be re-scheduled because meeting room was not then available.

Commissioners Present: Michael Roberts, Chm.; Carl Canner, Leo Laverdure, Carl Flowers and Lisa Wiesner. Jane Morriss was introduced as a new addition to the team serving in the role of communications liaison.

Audience: George Barringer, Chairman of the Groton Planning Board; and Pierre Comtois, Reporter for the Lowell Sun.

---

***"It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!"*** Upton Sinclair

(From: *I, Candidate for Governor: And How I Got Licked* (1935), [ISBN 0-520-08198-6](#); reprinted by University of California Press, 1994, p. 109. Quote courtesy of Leo Laverdure)

---

With a quorum present, the meeting officially convened at 8:05 p.m.

1. West Groton Dam discussion – Carl Canner Lead Discussant

Carl Canner presented a draft of a letter addressed to the Groton Board of Selectmen. The letter is intended as a formal reminder that the West Groton Square Dam continues to be in serious need of repair, and as a reminder that funding was appropriated during the 2011 Fall Town Meeting for this purpose. Carl Canner said that additional money to address the dam repair may be available from the state. Michael Roberts recommended that the Sustainability

Commission advocate for the repair of the dam and for taking another look at the hydroelectric potential of the West Groton Dam. Flood control was another area of concern and if the dam were operational, then it could be used to help mitigate the “wicked floods” that have become commonplace as our weather becomes more extreme. The members agreed that the issue of dam improvement was something the Sustainability Commission should get behind, and as a first step, the letter would be put in final form and presented to the Groton BOS.

Michael Roberts agreed to write a paragraph that would be included in the final draft stating that the project has the support of the Commission, and Leo Laverdure agreed to provide Carl with a citation from a recent Massachusetts report that would support a paragraph adding information about state regulations regarding dam safety.

2. Michael Roberts introduced Jane Morriss and said that she has agreed to keep the minutes of the meetings and help with preparing press releases and community outreach. She will be paid \$16.10 per hour for her services which will be paid out of the Commission’s budget.

Jane Morriss was cordially welcomed by the members of the Commission and they each introduced themselves in turn and explained their involvement in the Commission.

3. Groton Response to the Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report – Leo Laverdure Lead Discussant (guests can be invited)

Leo Laverdure requested that the members of the Sustainability Commission read the *Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report* which was commissioned by Gov. Patrick and prepared by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Adaptation Advisory Committee. (This was emailed to the Commissioners by Mike Roberts on February 19, along with the agenda for our February meeting.) “The time to address climate change is now,” he said, quoting from the 121-page report. According to the report, climate change is the most important challenge facing us, and as a Commission, we are in a position to assume a leadership role in preparing the town of Groton to meet the challenges changes in the climate will bring. We need to be tuned into global strategies while we help put in place local strategies to cope. The first thing we need to do is to recognize the problems the community will be facing and then come up with specific strategies for coping with the changes. While we are reading the report, we need to be asking ourselves how the report pertains to Groton and this region.

It was generally agreed that climate change is something that the Commission needs to keep on top of, and the changes are not far-off. We already have to deal with the serious consequences of these changes.

Leo agreed to send out copies of the report to members of the committee, and the members agreed to read through the Executive Summary of the report. Michael Roberts said that he would invite John Balco, who is involved with the Oxbow Wildlife Refuge and who has an understanding of the local impacts of climate change to talk to the commission about what we can do as a Commission to prepare Groton and the region to cope with the changes that loom before us.

Lisa agreed to ask the Groton Public Library if we could establish a Sustainability corner and post a few copies of the Governor’s report there.

The members also talked about the possibility of performing a risk assessment of Groton and taking the lead to begin updating the town bylaws and building codes in response to the changes that we are going to be seeing. Our Massachusetts infrastructure was built with the assumption that we have one climate pattern. But that is an outdated assumption. For example, according to the Climate Change Adaptation report (p. 19):

By 2050, Boston could experience the current 100-year riverine flood every two to three years on average and, by 2100, the current 100-year riverine flood is expected to occur every one to two years under both the low- and high-emissions scenarios.

It was generally agreed that climate change is the most challenging issue facing us, and that dealing pro-actively for these changes is going to engender significant push-back by those who do not believe that climate change is a real issue.

4. Groton Climate Action Day – Lisa Weisner Lead Discussant (guests can be invited)

Lisa asked if the Commission would be willing to provide some funding for the Groton Climate Action Day planned for May 11<sup>th</sup>, and at the Commission's urging, Lisa agreed ask Brenna to present a formal proposal outlining how \$500.00 from the Commission would be used to support the Climate Action Collaborative. It was suggested that it could be submitted on a form like the one that is used by the Groton Commissioners for Trust Funds. Michael Roberts said he would come up with a suitable form.

5. Groton Community Well Being Plan – Mike Roberts Lead Discussant

Michael Roberts lead a discussion about the International Happiness Day celebration March 20<sup>th</sup>, and the Commission agreed to invite the town to take an on-line survey to establish a happiness baseline for the town. Jane was asked to prepare a press release that would make people aware of the movement and involve them in thinking about happiness issues. Michael Roberts agreed to approach GELD about publishing the results in the Groton Electric Light Department's newsletter that is sent out with the bills.

### **FUTURE BUSINESS**

1. The Commission will prepare a risk assessment plan for Groton and present the report to a future Town Meeting (target this fall). As part of the risk assessment, we will also talk about how to raise the community's awareness of issues tied to climate change.

Carl Flowers said that he is very concerned about the plight of bees and other pollinators that are dying off due to disease and lack of the kinds of vegetation that support them. This is a mounting crisis and is directly related to climate change, the use of pesticides, the lack of supporting vegetation and other factors, some of which are unknown. The Commission urged Carl to work with Lisa and the schools to develop a plan for promoting the planting of flowering vegetation and planting non-GMO and organic seeds. Lisa said that she would provide a list of appropriate organic and non-GMO seed sources and the commission discussed the importance of identifying plants that attract and support pollinators and of looking into the availability of Federal Grants to promote planting them in Groton.

The members of the commission agreed that it needs to be more pro-active in the area of raising funds to pay for communications and educational out-reach. This will be the topic of discussion during following meetings.

2. Energy Waste Assessment – Chris Christie Lead Discussant. Tabled until later date t.b.d.

Next meeting Mar 26, 2013