



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: Thursday May 21, 2013
Meeting Date: May 28
Meeting Time: 7:30 PM
Meeting Location: Selectman's Meeting Room Groton Town Hall

Meeting Type: Regularly Scheduled Commission Meeting

Agenda:

1. Review of Action Items
2. Leo - Debrief and forward planning resulting from Groton Climate Action Day – invited guests Brenna Mayer and/or Tim Svarczkopf includes discussion of Risk Assessment report to town.
3. Carl F. – Local emergency Preparedness Committee Liaison report
4. Lisa/Carl F. – Status report on “Pollinator Protection” initiative
5. Michael/Jane – Status of fund raising program
6. Carl C. – Status of West Groton Dam actions
7. Chris Christie – Energy Waste assessment
8. New Business not foreseen at the time of posting.
9. Adjourn

Next meeting June 25, 2013

Meeting Minutes for May 28, 2013

Commissioners Present: Michael Roberts, Chm.; Carl Canner, Chris Christy, Carl Flower, Leo Laverdure, and Lisa Wiesner. Jane Morriss was also present, serving in the role of communications liaison and Tim Svarczkopf, chairman of the Climate Action Group (CAG) and a member of the Art and Climate Transition Group (ACT) was also in attendance.

“Climate change is occurring at such a rapid rate that changes to species and ecosystem function may occur in a disruptive way resulting in loss of species and ecological values.”

Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report, September, 2011, p. 34

With a quorum present, the meeting officially convened at 7:40 p.m.

1. **Review of minutes:** The minutes of the April 24th meeting were accepted by unanimous vote.
2. **Climate Action Day Review by Leo, Mike and Lisa:** The two-day festival planned by the Climate Action Collaborative to begin to educate people about climate change was held Friday, May 10th, and Saturday, May 11th. Although the weather did not cooperate, people did show up and participate, including a number of high schoolers. This might be considered one of the first steps leading to the introduction of a bylaw similar to the one adopted by the Lexington Town Meeting in March calling for the town to “include climate change in all its decisions and planning processes,” and to take actions to make the community “truly sustainable.”

Mike showed the movie *Economics of Happiness*, and led a discussion after the Community Dinner held at the First Church, Groton, Friday evening. His program received positive reviews (“very powerful presentation” . . . “struck a good note”) by those who attended which indicated it was an effective introduction to our campaign to promote these values.

The next day, the festival and a World Café was held in and about Lawrence Academy to initiate discussion about the issues involved in Climate Change. The Sustainability Commission asked for questions during the day and the Collaborative presented questions to be asked at the Café seeking answers. (see addendum). Leo said that the Café seemed to work very well and that he is very anxious to have a chance to study the information that was written on the paper tablecloths by the six groups who participated in the event which Jane transcribed.

- Mike suggested that the information could be used to form “affinity groups” to tackle the myriad concerns spawned by the changing climate.
 - SC members were asked to check out the website 350.org and then ask people and groups to sponsor showings of the film ***Because the World Needs to Know***. Just so you know, for humans, the “safe” limit of CO2 in the atmosphere is 350 parts per million, and the CO2 level is now at 400 ppm, and rising!
 - Carl C. suggested that we can play a vital role in educating the public about energy efficiency.
 - It was suggested that GELD may not be entirely supportive of the move to develop alternative energy sources and that the SC needs to think about work-arounds to educate people about what they can do and to go ahead and initiate the investigation of alternative sources on our own.
 - Tim S. said that Ann Bottan is in charge of recruiting new members for the Climate Action Group (CAG), and that they will be meeting on Wednesday, June 5th for a debriefing session. Leo agreed to attend this meeting, as he has been put in charge of the SC Climate Action working group of the Sustainability Commission.
3. **Local Emergency Preparedness Committee Report by Liaison Carl F.:** Carl reported that the LEPC is in the process of compiling a list of items that every household needs to have on hand as we head into hurricane season. On the list are such things as flashlights with extra batteries, extra prescription drugs, and cash. The LEPC is working on identifying people who are home alone and who may need assistance should there be an emergency. They are also in the early stages of identifying “street captains” who would be in place to monitor the well-being

of those residing within their assigned areas. Much of this is being handled through the town's police and emergency preparedness departments. During Carl F's presentation the SC made many suggestions for Carl F. to share with the LEPC that included:

- Inviting John Balco to make a presentation to the LEPC,
- Making certain that the list of vulnerable people not only includes the elderly and those with disabilities, but also children who may be home without an adult.
- Making sure that people are "allowed" to stockpile a supply of Rx drugs for use in the event of an emergency.
- Being aware that not all people are able to have a stash of cash on hand to see them through a protracted emergency.

4. Report from the Pollinator Protection Group, Lisa and Carl F: Lisa said that she has not yet finished compiling a list of sources of "safe" seeds that are not contaminated with chemical and biological toxins. Nor has she and Carl F. met to investigate the federal monies that may be available to encourage the planting for pollinators. However, she said that Mountain Laurel and Rhododendrons are poisonous to pollinators, and despite all of the efforts to suppress the proliferation of dandelions, they are loved by pollinators and they are also packed with beneficial nutrition. She referred us to an article that appeared in the NY Times on May 21: [Dandy Uses of Dandelion | Taste For Life](#) www.tasteforlife.com > [Eating Well](#)

5. Report on dam in West Groton, Carl C.: Carl C. reported that he is concerned about the effects the accelerated erosion that is happening along the Squannacook and Nashua Rivers in West Groton and Groton. He and Carol moved to West Groton in 1970 and between 1970 and 1985 the course of the Squannacook was stable and there were no obvious signs of erosion.

However, between 1985 and now there have been a series of extreme floods, and the river is rapidly changing course and Carl is afraid that if nothing is done to stabilize the river banks, the changing course of the river could threaten the road, the bridge, the dam and potentially the assisted care facility housed in the old Leatherboard Mill and even his house.

In addition to the erosion along the Squannacook River, Carl called our attention to the erosion that is occurring along the Nashua River in the area of Sabine Woods where trees that have been growing along the banks for the last 100 years or so are now being threatened by the forces of erosion that have washed the ground out from under the trees and have exposed the roots so that the trees are no longer stable and will certainly come down in a stiff wind. A discussion about how to proceed ensued with a cast including (but not limited to) the towns of Groton and Shirley and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The SC considered this situation as "The canary in the mine" here in Groton to illustrate things happening now related to Climate Change and identifying the who, what, why, when, where and how much is involved to mitigate the effects of this erosion and protect the river courses of Groton in the face of increased stream flows resulting from Climate Change. The Commission also noted that trying to affix blame is a nonproductive exercise. Climate Change is now a fact and adapting to it is imperative. All agreed that one of the things needed is better up to date data to increase the validity of flood prediction. (note: It has come to our attention that Bruce Easom of the Groton Conservation Commission, has collected and analyzed data for the Squannacook and they will be made available to the Commissioners).

There was a general consensus that we could develop a narrative that would illustrate how climate change is happening in our own back yard and to expose the complexity of addressing these issues that comes not only from climate change itself, but from the bureaucratic complexity that can impede efforts to adjust to change. The SC decided to begin work on this

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project immediately and Carl, Leo, and Jane agreed to meet on a nice day in the near future to kayak down the rivers and then meet to write down what they think the major story elements are. As a preliminary guide, the SC thought it might use the Governor's Report on Adapting to Climate Change to guide the narrative about how climate change is playing out in the microcosm of our own back yard, and to provide a quantitative context for our findings.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Next meeting to convene at 7:30 p.m. on July 23, 2013