



# Sustainability Commission

## Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 15, 2022  
Meeting Time: 7:00 PM  
Meeting Location: Groton Center, 163 West Main Street, Groton, MA

Attendees: Alison Dolbear Peterson, Jim Allen, Bruce Easom, Phil Francisco, Andrew Scott, Jim Simko, Ginger Vollmar, Charlotte Weigel

### Minutes:

Called to Order– 7:02 pm

- **Minutes:** The meeting minutes from November 1<sup>st</sup> were reviewed. Alison had provided some edits to Katrina which she had made in the version emailed to the commission on 11/15. Phil stated that he had not remembered the Commission voting to publicly support the Prescott Elevator initiative on the Fall Town Meeting warrant, but was corrected by the group that we had.

Jim Allen moved to approve the amended minutes, seconded by Phil. The Commission voted UNANIMOUSLY to approve the minutes, as amended.

- **Tire Recycling:** Bruce and Phil provided an update on the tire recycling day held at the Town Transfer Station on November 5<sup>th</sup>. In total, 145 tires were collected.
  - Combined with the first tire recycling date in October, we have now collected 210 tires to be recycled from Groton residents. Many of those collected were exactly what we were hoping to get – tires that had been sitting in yards collecting rain and mud and providing a home for mosquito propagation.
  - We decided that we would hold up on doing a third tire recycling day until after winter (perhaps March or April). And we might alter which weekends we offer it, so that residents don't become too complacent with the scheduling.
  - Bruce brought up the estimated 200+ tires on private land awaiting proper approvals for removal and it was suggested that when we do schedule their anticipated removal in the spring, we could look to enlist help from Lawrence Academy students, who each have a requirement for community service during the school year. The costs for recycling would be borne by the residents of the two homes where these tires are located.
  - There are also many tires (over 100?) that have been discovered in the grounds around the Groton Center that are being remediated by the EPA. This could be another clean-up area for us to focus on in the spring, coordinating with the Highway Department, but would not be covered by our tire recycling funds.
- **Education Subcommittee:** Phil, Andrew, Charlotte and Jim S. provided an update on the Education Subcommittee progress.
  - We reviewed the DRAFT curriculum with the Commission. Alison suggested adding “Solar-powered Greenhouses” to Land Use session (#5) and she will provide the information for that. Charlotte recommended adding “Forest Protection” to session #5 and “Where Groton stands relative to the average American municipality and average global municipality” to the “Big Picture” session (#1). Jim S. recommended adding “Free GELD Energy Audits” to the “In Home” session (#2).

- The Subcommittee is planning to launch these sessions in the Spring, around the time of Earth Day. Theoretically, each one will be about 45 minutes to 1 hour in duration, with about 1/3 of the time allocated to Q&A. We want to provide them free of charge in a public location with in-person attendees, and have them recorded on video by Groton Channel TV for citizens to be able to play them back at their leisure.
- Phil said he had made contact with several people who have said that they would be willing to lead/contribute to leading individual sessions, including David Black (Groton School), Stacey Chilcoat (NRWA), Ed McNierney (Conservation Trust, among others), and Keith Bergman (fmr. Littleton Town Manager & one of the leaders of the local Boston chapter of VP Al Gore's [ClimateRealityProject.org](https://www.climate-reality-project.org/)). The more local experts that we can line up to lead or participate in various sessions, the greater the overall public engagement is likely to be.
- Ginger recommended sending out a request (via Groton Herald and other social channels) to the townspeople with our intended curriculum, soliciting feedback and/or other specific topics we would like to cover. This seemed like a great idea for us to pursue early in 2023.
- We also noted that there are several topics in the curriculum that would also benefit from having abbreviated coverage in the Groton Herald and/or social channels. Jim S. had done an excellent job of highlight which of them he felt would be appropriate – and the Education Subcommittee felt that Ginger, as the point person on communications, could be the person we would work through to align those topics (and content) when the time comes.
- **Pollinator Habitat:** Alison provided an update on the Pollinator Habitat at Groton Center.
  - The gardens are largely completely done for the year now, but there's been great progress – largely accomplished by her nearly daily hard work and several generous donations of plants, time, materials, and labor.
  - Alison plans on starting plugs for native ground covers in her home over the winter/early spring, for planting in the spring 2023.
- **Meeting with Select Board:** Alison and Phil led a discussion regarding the presentation for the Groton Select Board on December 12<sup>th</sup> (7pm meeting start time, we do not yet know when the Sustainability Commission time slot will be on their agenda).
  - Given the very limited time (15-minutes) we will look to cover each of our topics [as follow] with approximately one (max. two) charts.
  - Charlotte reviewed some of the early data she is preparing for the Select Board based on models and Commonwealth carbon footprint commitments. The group discussed ideas for how to best consolidate the most important information for the limited time we will have with the Select Board on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December.
  - Rather than asking for a workshop session with the entire Select Board – which would be highly unlikely to make possible, we decided that we should instead request a workshop with one or two of the Select Board and the Town Manager to discuss the other projects we would like to pursue – covered in our brainstorming/multi-voting session and our last meeting.
  - Phil will provide a common PowerPoint template for all the presenters to use to prepare their charts.

- We will use the December 6<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting as a “dry run” for the draft charts, to review and edit them so that they can be submitted to the Select Board before Friday morning (December 9<sup>th</sup>).
  1. Alison will cover 2022 progress on Pollinator Habitat
  2. Bruce will cover early progress & success on Tire Recycling
  3. Phil will cover progress and plans on Sustainability Education
  4. Charlotte will cover a comparative energy assessment for Groton to meet the MA Commonwealth’s Net-Zero objective timeline
  5. Phil will finish by making our two requests – (1) for a specific workshop or working session(s) with a member of the Select Board and Town Manager to align on larger intended projects; and (2) support from Select Board on funding (\$15K, divided about equally for pollinator habitat, tire recycling/mosquito remediation, and communications costs.
- New Business
  - Alison brought up an article that she had seen in the *Harvard Gazette*; “New England forests, new strategies can offset most regional emissions over 30 years, report says” which is about a recent report from the Highstead Project, titled: “New England’s Climate Imperative: Our Forests as a Natural Climate Solution”. The paper makes a case that New England’s forests can play a major role in reducing the region’s carbon footprint. The links will be provided to the Commission members.

Adjourned – 8:55 pm

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 6, 2022, 7:00pm, Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

- *Phil Francisco*

Approved by Groton Sustainability Commission, January 17, 2023.