**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date:Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: Groton Center

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

Visitor: Annika Kuchel

# Minutes:

Called to Order– 7:05 pm

* The minutes from the May 16th 2023 Commission meeting were **approved unanimously**.
* **New Commission Member Candidates Discussion**: A discussion of candidates who have recently submitted member interest forms on the town website was moved to an executive session at the end of the meeting.
* **Review and vote on updated Commission Charter Discussion and proposed maximum size:**
  + The Commission discussed an update in the text of the Commission Charter with edits from Ginger and Charlotte. Final edits were made to the text.
  + The Commission discussed the ideal number of Commission members for updating the Charter. The current number in the Charter is 10. Ginger raised the issues to consider in changing the number including the impacts on quorum number and the length of meetings. A lower number of members should be fine if everyone contributes more equally to the work we agree to do. However, several members mentioned that we have much work to do, and currently do not have the support within the group to equitably make substantial progress; therefore we should increase the number of members to at least 12. Andrew raised the idea of an attendance requirement to discourage membership for people who cannot more fully contribute to the group’s work. Phil highlighted the importance of being selective about who joins based on a combination of knowledge base and willingness to contribute beyond just attending meetings.
  + Andrew made a motion to amend the charter with a member attendance requirement: A member missing three meetings in a row without an excusable reason allows for dismissal from the Commission. A member must attend at least 50% of meetings per year. Phil seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved submission of the the amendment to the Charter.
  + Charlotte moved to accept all of the edits to the Charter, including an increase in the number of members to 12 and the approved attendance amendment. Jim seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved submission of the Charter.
* **PFAS issue raised by Selectboard member Alison Manugian:** Phil relayed a conversation he had with Alison Manugian over her concerns about continued use of products with PFAS that amplify the remediation there already is to do for PFAS in our water supplies. She asked the Commission to look into state level efforts to abate the use of PFAS in consumer goods, and what we can do on a local and regional level to support these efforts. Phil spoke about this with April Nichols, a representative for Margaret Scarsdale, at Rep. Scarsdale’s recent office hours in Groton. April has passed on to Phil 10-12 pieces of pending legislation that are currently being weighed at the state house related to PFAS. Most are addressing remediation but Phil thinks there are at least a few that address stopping the use of PFAS.
  + **Action Item:** Phil will circulate the list of current legislation being considered at the state house regarding PFAS for the other Commission members to learn about.
  + **Action item:** The Education Subcommittee will consider moving the seminar on PFAS sooner in the schedule of upcoming seminars after the summer break due to the importance of the issue, both from a public health and economic viewpoint.

Michelle Collette from the Groton Board of Health has already agreed to participate in this seminar. Tom Orcott from the Groton Water Department would be great to add as a speaker. The Commission discussed other potential speakers who can speak to the state-level legislation including sponsors of relevant bills, or people from neighboring towns involved in the work to install PFAS mitigation systems for town water supplies, including Ayer and Littleton, as well as potentially Sue Thomas of Westford.

The Commission also mentioned the PFAS issue at GDRHS, which requires bottled water to be supplied by the district for anyone on the campus. Charlotte noted that the state is reaching out to neighbors of the high school offering to test wells for PFAS.

* **Town-wide GHG Inventory Updates**:
  + Charlotte reviewed the reasons for completing a town-wide GHG inventory, the process of completing an inventory, and provided a progress report on this effort. Phil and Bruce reinforced the importance of a town-wide GHG inventory. Charlotte noted that the process cannot be completed without the help of volunteers. Jim Allen and Annika Kuchel volunteered to help finish the inventory. **Action item:** Charlotte will follow up with Annika and Jim to hand off remaining parts of the inventory verification. The goal is to complete the inventory and have a prepared presentation for the Commission to review at the August meeting.
* **GELD meeting updates**
  + Charlotte updated that preparation for Kevin Kelly’s impending retirement was discussed at the June 5th regular GELD Commission meeting. Eric Fisher proposed a reconsideration of the responsibilities and performance metrics for the new manager of GELD considering the fast evolving landscape of electrification, electricity supply and grid resilience. This conversation will continue at the July meeting.
  + Phil updated the group on a follow up GELD meeting on June 14th that was held to discuss changes to Time of Use (ToU) rates. The decision of the Commission was to change the Time of Use rate from an off-peak/peak generation charge from 7cents/43cents to 5cents/50cents starting next billing cycle. This ToU will continue to be optional for three months and then become mandatory for residential customers at the end of September. GELD will work to educate customers on how to effectively use ToU rates to save money, including promoting energy efficiency. GELD will also pursue implementation of a home battery program. They are interested in talking to the Sustainability Commission about our recent seminar on energy efficiency to see if we can help with education. **Action item:** Phil will meet with Kevin Kelly to discuss this.

* **Additional Sustainability/Decarbonization Organizations’ Meetings Updates:** Charlotte briefly updated the group on two recent meetings she attended, the Building Electrification Accelerator - Building Retrofits working group and MCAN’s MLP advocacy group. She highlighted that GELD is one of few MLPs to implement time of use rates. Other MLPs are interested in doing the same. She also noted that several towns, including Wellesley and Middleborough are working to have a dedicated person who works between the MLP and the town to assist residents directly with energy efficiency. This person will also be capable of heat pump coaching through the HeatSmart Alliance program. Charlotte was unclear on whether this is going to be a paid position or volunteer, although HeatSmart Alliance is all volunteer-based. She thinks a similar resource could be very useful for Groton residents, and will continue to gather more details from the other MLPs as these programs evolve.
* **Commission reorganization – clerk, vice chair, chair**: This agenda item was skipped and could not be returned to after the executive session.
* **New Business:** 
  + Bruce announced that the next tire collection event will be on July 1st from 7am-5pm. It will be advertised in the Groton Herald, and on the town website. Residents can drop off up to four tires per household.
  + Phil discussed the response the Commission received to our letter submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals regarding the permit for 500 Main St development (Groton Farms). The Commission discussed that our request that the builder consider the use of solar hot water was misunderstood. **Action item:** The Commission will submit a follow up letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals to further explain the request so that the builder can re-formulate a response.
  + The Commission discussed participation in Riverfest. They noted that traffic was lighter than last year. The position of the our tent was not ideal to capture traffic. The event was not as well publicized as in years past.
  + The Commission captured feedback on recent “Sustainability in Groton: What you can do” seminars. Jim Allen said feedback he has heard from friends has been positive. Phil or Andrew reported on the number of views from on demand videos on the Groton Channel so far. Ginger recommended spacing the next seminars wider apart (3 weeks minimum, 4 weeks ideal) starting in the fall. Phil recommended the use of a visual similar to the one page pdf created for the June 15th and June 29th seminars be included in all social media postings.
  + The Commission discussed participation in Grotonfest in the fall. The fee for a table is $150. Bruce moved to authorize the use of $150 of Commission funds for a table at Grotonfest. Ginger seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion. **Action item:** Charlotte will reach out to the teachers/students of the GDRHS Environmental Club to let them know about Grotonfest and offer them space in our tent to promote their program, or pass on information for them to get their own space at the event if that is what they prefer.

Phil introduced a motion to move the Commission meeting into Executive Session without a return to the open session. Bruce seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Open meeting session adjourned at – 8:30 pm

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 18, 2023, 7:00pm, at the Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

- Charlotte Weigel

Approved by Groton Sustainability Commission, July 28, 2023.