



# Sustainability Commission

## Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 16, 2024

Meeting Time: 7:01 PM

Meeting Location: Virtual ZOOM Meeting

Attendees: Phil Francisco, David Southwick, Ken Horton, Alison Dolbear Peterson, Pat Parker-Roach, Charlotte Weigel, Ginger Vollmar, Andrew Scott, Bruce Easom, Sue Fitterman

Absent: Jim Allen, Jim Simko, Linda Loren

### Minutes:

Called to Order– 7:02 pm

#### 1) Review the status of the NRWA's MVP "Nature Based Solutions" grant project [Charlotte]

Charlotte reviewed the highlights of the MVP grant awarded to the NRWA for “Nature Based Solutions”, which covers multiple municipalities and recommended those interested join the forums that NRWA and the MVP teams are holding to solicit inputs on types of projects and locations with a focus on enhancing resilience. NRWA will host a forum at their Groton offices on Thursday evening, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 5:30pm.

#### 2) Potential to coordinate with Groton Public Library on Summer sustainability education series [Ginger]

Ginger related to the Commission that Deb Dowson of the Groton Public Library had approached her in December to ask if we would be interested in helping frame and deliver some Sustainability education topics for young adults (Middle School to High School) this summer. The Commission was very enthusiastic about this – we now need to decide which topic(s) we can glean from our educational seminar series to use; the initial thought was to begin framing thinking around the Climate Action Plan. *[Action: Education Subcommittee and others]*

Members also were enthusiastic about using this as a springboard to connect to a more youthful audience for our mission – both the young adults and their parents. We talked about incorporating aspects of the Sustainable Groton Advocates program into the class, some sort of social hour, and even to use this to help tap into the Volunteer Hours that every high school student is required to participate in.

#### 3) Review draft "annual report" materials for report to the Select Board & Town Meeting - DUE by February 5th [Phil]

Phil reviewed the Draft Annual Report with the Commission. The commission suggested several edits to the original draft and Phil made them to the document in the meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the annual report document, as amended. **The motion passed by a vote of 8 yes and 1 abstention (Andrew).**

**4) Review & discuss draft presentation for Select Board regarding next steps on Greenhouse Gas Inventory / Climate Action Plan - SCHEDULED on 29th January [NetZero by 2050 Subcommittee]**

Charlotte reviewed the updated draft presentation on “next steps” toward a Climate Action Plan (CAP) to be presented to the Select Board on January 29<sup>th</sup>. Based on positive movements with GELD, the presentation now includes more information about specific programs that could or must be part of a CAP, if the Town decides to pursue it. A motion was made and seconded to approve the updated presentation for the Select Board. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**5) Review status of current available FY2024 funding (expiring 6/30/24) [Phil]**

Phil reviewed the status of available FY2024 funds and the expected upcoming expenditures. Bruce is planning the next Tire Recycling Day in the Spring (est. costs are \$900) and Alison stated she will need all the remaining funds allocated to the Pollinator Garden in the FY24 budget to incorporate plant replacements and other items to complete the garden in the Spring.

Phil suggested we should consider using them in ways to reduce the scope of our FY2025 request while we have funds available now to do so. This could “estimate” lines for things such as website launch via MassEnergize (see next agenda item), new banner signage for our Sustainable Groton event booth, and additional Advocate program flags, certificates, and stickers.

David asked for clarification on whether remaining FY2024 would be lost at the end of the fiscal year and that was confirmed by Bruce and Phil. Any unused allocated FY24 funds will be returned to the Town as of July 1, 2024.

**6) Discuss and authorize options and costs for website development with MassEnergize [Pat] (Including adjustment of FY2024 funding allocations, as necessary)**

Pat went over some of the key benefits and limitations of using MassEnergize to accelerate our website design and presence. The key strengths being the community of similarly focused municipal groups from our region and the state along with the tools to rapidly bring up a website and link other tools to it (e.g., HubSpot). He is still waiting on a final quote but believes the initial cost in this fiscal year will be \$3,000, with the follow-on subscription beginning next year at \$1,500.

We deferred a vote on this until we have the quoted costs from MassEnergize.

**7) Brainstorm and draft initial FY2025 funding request – FINAL DUE BY TBD (Feb) – to be brought to Town Manager [Phil/all]**

Phil reviewed the current draft FY2025 funding request status with the Commission and stated that our total request is now at \$15,000 – and that’s how the Town Manager’s draft Warrant article is written.

Phil sent this table encapsulating the initial draft request shortly after the meeting ended:

Category	Budget Request	Notes
Digital Media & Presence	\$2,000	MassEnergize (\$1500) + ancillary costs
Tire Recycling Program	\$3,600	Four cycles @ \$900
Pollinator Habitat Garden	\$500	Signage + ancillary costs
NetZero 2050/Climate Action Plan	\$2,500	Messaging, advertising & printing for Climate Action Plan session
Energy Coaching Efficacy	\$750	Five energy surveys @ \$150
Education & General	\$2,700	FY2024 Run Rate + add'l expenses for flags & certificates
Education & General - advertising	\$900	Three Rounds of Groton Herald ads @ \$300
Outdoor Event (Fall 2024)	\$2,050	Fall Walk at Williams Barn with post event beverages & snacks
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	

Bruce made a motion to approve the draft funding request, and Andrew seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Even with the draft budget request passing, Phil suggested that we need to look to be more frugal with our FY25 request because of the extremely tight Town budget this year and the extremely emotional discussions surrounding a potential Proposition 2 ½ override. We discussed some of them, including shifting funds into FY24 to reduce our request (see above). Phil said he would continue to work on this for further discussion and will try to get better data from Mark Haddad on the timeframe needed to finalize our request. *[Action: Phil]*

**8) Update on upcoming Sustainability Education seminars [Education Subcommittee]**

Charlotte and Phil reviewed the upcoming educational seminars – Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Next Steps (February 7<sup>th</sup>), Stormwater and Snow Removal Issues (March 5<sup>th</sup>), Sustainable Food Choices (April 3<sup>rd</sup>). The session they highlighted was the “EV Petting Zoo”, planned for May. The Education Subcommittee is currently looking for a venue – e.g. Williams Barn, Groton Hill Music Center parking lot, etc. – to hold the event on either Sat. May 4<sup>th</sup> or Sat. May 18<sup>th</sup>, with a “rain-date” the following Sunday.

Bruce agreed to bring the topic of us potentially using the Williams Barn to their next committee meeting.

**9) Review and Approve Meeting Minutes from 1/4/24 (Phil) — ALL**

We reviewed the minutes for the 1/4/2024 meeting, including a few edits and amendments. A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 4<sup>th</sup> minutes, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**10) New Business**

- Bruce and Phil reviewed a bill sent to Bruce regarding the November Tire Recycling Day. A motion was made and seconded to approve payment of the \$285 to Bruce (Groton Herald advertising expenses). **The motion passed unanimously.**

**11) Adjourn** Motion to adjourn at 9:19pm passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> 2024, 7pm at the Groton Center.**

Respectfully submitted,  
**Phil Francisco**

Minutes approved by the Sustainability Commission, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024.