 

**Sustainability Commission**

**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2024

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting – held via Zoom

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Sue Fitterman, Phil Francisco, Linda Loren, Pat Parker-Roach, Alison Dolbear Peterson, David Southwick, Ginger Vollmar, Charlotte Weigel

Absent: Ken Horton, Jim Simko

**Minutes:**

Called to Order – 7:02 pm

1. **DOER Grant Application Status – “Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant”:** A grant application to the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) was submitted last week along with a letter of support from the Council on Aging (COA) and Groton Electric Light Department (GELD). Funds from the grant will be used to provide 20 cost and efficiency comparison analyses for Groton residents to compare vendor quotes for heat pumps; technical assistance to residents considering installing heat pumps; and public outreach to fixed and lower income residents in the form of mailings, a banner displayed over Main Street, and presentations at the Council on Aging. Decisions on the grant applications are expected by the end of 2024.
2. **Pollinator Corridor Project - Intern Status and update from Alison on Pollinator Pathway work:** Bruce announced that the one person interviewed for the internship was unavailable this summer. He will advertise again for the internship and will interview any interested candidates. Alison reported that the area for the new Pollinator Pathway was surveyed and a wire fence put up along the back. The area was rototilled and compost was added to the soil, and four native shrubs were planted. The area will be planted with shrubs, perennials and vines purchased from the Native Plant Trust, along with the 50+ seedlings grown by Alison and Sue over the winter.
3. **Preview of Sustainable Groton website, with discussion and feedback:** Pat walked the group through the “sandbox” version of the website. The group discussed what the website goals should be, and Pat asked each Subcommittee Chair to provide content and photos to populate the website. The final content of the website will be reviewed at the September 17th Commission meeting, and the plan is to launch the website in September.
4. **Update on planned September launch of Sustainable Groton Advocates Program:** David announced there are 143 members of the Sustainable Groton Facebook group, and he will be the one person who accepts or declines new member requests in the future. He asked all Commission members to post events, photos, articles, etc. on the Facebook page. David also created a PowerPoint deck for the official launch of the Advocates Program. A motion was made and seconded to put the PowerPoint deck on the Sustainable Groton Facebook page. The motion passed with eight yes votes and one abstention.
5. **Update from Climate Action Working Group and Climate Action Subcommittee:** Charlotte announced that Town Manager Mark Haddad has created a Climate Action Working Group. Members are Charlotte Weigel and Ken Horton from the Sustainability Commission, Alison Manugian from the Select Board, and Conservation Administrator Charlotte Steeves. The Climate Action Working Group is interested in partnering with and meeting with various Town boards, commissions and committees. Ken has already talked to GELD about their long-term plans to support an increase in demand for electricity.
6. **Energy Coaching Workgroup report:** This workgroup has met several times since June and has done 13 energy coaching sessions to date. Charlotte and Ken will have an area within the Commission tent at GrotonFest on September 28th to talk to attendees about the energy coaching program. They are also planning a Heat Pump Seminar for October.
7. **Planning for Fall GrotonFest:** The Commission will have a tent at GrotonFest on Saturday September 28th from 10:00 to 4:00 at the Legion Common. There will be a free drawing for a rainwater collection barrel.
* Authorization of drawing give-away: A motion was made and seconded to allow Phil to spend approximately $160 to purchase a rainwater collection barrel give-away for GrotonFest. The motion passed with eight yes votes and one abstention.
* Confirmation of principal topics to cover in booth: The group agreed on the topics of home energy consultation, climate action planning, and Sustainable Groton Advocates.
* Confirmation of booth contents and attractions: David will have a table with the Sustainable Advocates Program poster, the “sustainability” wheel, stickers, flags and certificates. Ken and Charlotte will have an area to talk about home energy consultations and climate action planning. There will also be a poster to advertise the Heat Pump Seminar in October.
* Coverage (setup, event/booth, tear-down): Phil will send all Commission members a sign-up sheet for people to staff the booth and help with setup and tear-down.
* Plans for advance promotion: There will be posts on the Sustainable Groton Facebook page, the Groton Facebook page, and the Commission website once it’s launched. Ginger will help with other promotional materials.
1. **Education Subcommittee report:** Charlotte will be stepping away from this Subcommittee to focus on the Energy Coaching Program and the Climate Action Plan. Phil presented a list of possible topics for upcoming Education Seminars. A heat pump seminar is being organized for October.
2. **Budget Overview:** Final Report on FY2024 Budget: The Sustainability Commission returned approximately $600 in unspent funds to the Town of Groton. Initial Look at FY2025 Budget: The FY2025 budget is $9600. Phil will track expenses as they are incurred.
3. **New Business:**
* Jim Allen resigned from the Commission in June. There are now 11 members and one vacancy.
* Charlotte stated that Groton can apply to be a Green Community in the spring of 2025.
1. **Review/approve Minutes from the June 18th and August 9th Commission meetings:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the June 18, 2024 minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously. A motion was made and seconded to approve the August 9, 2024 minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Adjourn**. Motion to adjourn at 9:34 p.m. passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 17th at 7:00 pm at The Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Fitterman

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