 

**Sustainability Commission**

**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: The Groton Center

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Sue Fitterman, Ken Horton, Linda Loren, Alison Dolbear Peterson, Pat Parker-Roach, Jim Simko, David Southwick, Ginger Vollmar, Charlotte Weigel

Absent: Phil Francisco

**Minutes:**

Called to Order – 7:16 pm

**1. Planning for the Autumn Tire Recycling Day [Bruce]**

Bruce confirmed that the Autumn Tire Recycling Day is Saturday October 26th from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm at the Transfer Station. Notices will be posted on the town’s website, the Commission’s website and Facebook page, Groton Channel TV, and twice in the Groton Herald. Pat will help and Charlotte will be there with surveys for the Climate Action Working Group. Based on the number of tires collected that day, Bruce and Commission members will later decide to hold either two or four recycling events each year. A motion was made and seconded to authorize Bruce to write a letter to the Groton Herald describing the tire recycling program. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Pollinator Corridor Project Intern Status [Bruce]**

Bruce emailed and called staff at Groton-Dunstable Regional High School, the Groton School and Lawrence Academy about an internship opportunity for a student to develop plans for additional pollinator corridors on town-owned land in Groton. The start date of the internship will be January 25, 2025. Interviews of potential candidates need to be completed by December 15th. The internship will last approximately 17 weeks.

**3. Update from the Climate Action Working Group and Climate Action Subcommittee [Charlotte, Ken]**

Charlotte stated that the Climate Action Working Group has met with the following: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Building Inspector, Police Department, Fire Department and Groton Electric Light Department (GELD). In the coming weeks they will meet with Groton-Dunstable Regional High School Environmental Club, Groton Business Association, Council on Aging, Capital Finance, School Committee, and the Recycling Committee. GELD has provided a letter of support and the working group will ask others to do the same. Regarding the October 11th article in the Groton Herald about the working group’s September 24th meeting with the Conservation Commission, Charlotte suggested that Sustainability Commission members watch the video recording of the meeting to get more details. The working group has also completed an Expression of Interest for a grant from the state to cover planning assistance if the town agrees to create a Climate Action Plan. The working group is also reviewing the 100+ Climate Action Surveys completed by Groton residents during GrotonFest. Paper copies of the survey are available at the Council on Aging, the Groton Public Library, and at the October 26th Tire Recycling Event at the Transfer Station. The survey is also available on the Sustainability Commission’s website.

**4. Update from the Education Subcommittee: Plans for autumn Education Series events in October (23rd), November (13th), and December (4th) [Linda, Jim]**

A Heat Pump Event is planned for Wednesday October 23rd at 7:00 pm at the Groton Center. The Commission’s heat pump coaches (Charlotte and Ken) will be joined by several heat pump coaches from other towns for a presentation. Following that will be a chance for audience members to break into small groups for more discussions. Notices to promote the event will be put on the Commission’s website and Facebook page, the town of Groton Facebook page, and in the Groton Herald Events section.

A Climate Action Forum will take place on Wednesday November 13th at 7:00 pm at the Groton Center. There will be an introduction to the work of the Climate Action Working Group, a listening session to hear attendees’ support and concerns, and a chance to complete a Climate Action Survey.

A presentation on “Pivoting From Plastics” will be held on Wednesday December 4th at 7:00 pm at the Groton Center.

**5. Update of Sustainable Groton website [Pat, all]**

Pat asked Commission members to continue to send him information about events to post on the website. He’ll post notices about the October 23rd Heat Pump Event, the October 26th Tire Recycling Event, and the November 2nd Advocacy Meetup. David and Pat had a discussion about RSVP’s for events being posted on the website. David suggested starting a monthly newsletter for the website with updates from each subcommittee about what they’re working on.

**6. Update from Energy Coaching Workgroup [Charlotte and Ken]**

Charlotte and Ken have five active leads for energy coaching from attendees at GrotonFest.

**7. Update from the Sustainable Groton Advocates Program Subcommittee [David]** David will hold an Advocacy Meetup on Saturday November 2nd at 8:30 am at The Groton Center. The event is for existing Sustainable Groton Advocates (about 30 people) and anyone interested in becoming one. It will be a chance for Advocates to meet each other, network, learn about Sustainable Groton initiatives and volunteer opportunities, and take a tour of the Pollinator Garden. Advocates will also receive a certificate and a lawn flag. David asked each Commission member to attend the event and bring along anyone who may be interested in becoming an Advocate. The event will be posted on the Town website and the Commission’s website and Facebook page.

**8. Discuss Prescott Center educational seminar partnership**

The Prescott Center has asked if the Sustainability Commission is interested in partnering with them in 2025 on two educational seminars: one on electric vehicles, and one on how to make your house more sustainable. The group discussed the pros and cons of this idea. A motion was made and seconded to cooperate with the Prescott Center to put on two educational seminars as part of the Commission’s seminar series. The motion passed with nine votes in favor and one vote opposed. The Education Subcommittee will work with the Prescott Center to determine speakers and dates.

**9. Discuss CPA grant opportunity**

Bruce stated that Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant applications are due next week on Thursday October 24th. The group discussed possible projects that are recreation-focused and within the Commission’s scope. No consensus was reached on what to apply for, and the group felt that more time was needed to prepare an application. One suggestion was to apply for a CPA grant in 2025 to create new pollinator corridor gardens on town-owned land, based on the research and reporting that will be done by an intern in early 2025.

**10. Other Subcommittee / Workgroup Updates, as appropriate**

Pollinator Corridor Habitat Subcommittee

Alison reported that she and Sue have completed most of the work on the new Pollinator Pathway except for planting two more native shrubs which will happen in late October. Work on the Pollinator Garden is also complete for the year. Most of the plants will be left standing over the winter to provide habitat for insects and seeds for overwintering birds. Alison and Sue will work on getting plant tags made (with both the common and botanical names) to identify key plants in the Pollinator Garden. A motion was made and seconded authorizing Alison to spend no more than $350 on plant name tags and stakes. The motion passed unanimously.

Grants Subcommittee

Charlotte said that the Commission was not awarded the $12,000 Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant that it applied for from the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in August. She will follow up with DOER to learn why the application was denied.

She also reported that the public schools in Groton are undergoing a five-year capital planning process to update school buildings (for example, the roof of Swallow Union Elementary School needs replacing). She was approached to see if the Commission’s Grants Subcommittee could help with getting and managing grants for design studies that would be funded through state programs such as Green Communities or Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants. Tom Delaney from the Department of Public Works is also interested in getting grants for design studies to decarbonize certain town buildings such as Town Hall. The group agreed that the Grants Subcommittee could help by identifying grant opportunities, meeting with people well in advance before projects are planned, pairing up decarbonization plans with capital spending plans, navigating the funding application and paperwork, and reporting on projects that receive grants. Charlotte and Bruce asked if any other Commission members would be interested in joining the Grants Subcommittee to help with this upcoming work.

**11. Review receipts from GrotonFest**

A motion was made and seconded to reimburse Phil for two expenses from GrotonFest: $47.96 for name badges and lanyards and $169.13 for posters and printouts of upcoming events. The motion passed unanimously.

**12. New Business**

Pat met a retired Groton resident with extensive experience in facilities management who is interested in helping by either becoming an Advocate or possibly joining the Commission. Pat and Charlotte will meet with this individual and report back to the group.

**13. Review/approve Minutes of the September 17th Commission meeting [Sue, all]**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 9/17/24 minutes as drafted. The motion passed unanimously.

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn at 8:44 pm passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 7:00 pm at The Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Fitterman