 

**Sustainability Commission**

**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: Monday, December 9, 2024

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: The Groton Center

Attendees: Phil Francisco, David Southwick, Sue Fitterman, Linda Loren, Alison Dolbear Peterson, Ken Horton, Charlotte Weigel

Absent: Bruce Easom, Jim Simko, Ginger Vollmar, Pat Parker-Roach

**Minutes:**

Called to order at 7:02 pm

1. **Update on October 26th Tire Recycling Day**

Seventy-seven tires were collected on October 26th. The group reviewed the number of tires collected at each event over the past few years and agreed that two tire recycling days each year would be enough. A motion was made and seconded to approve payment of $216 for two weeks of ads in the Groton Herald. The motion passed unanimously.

1. **Grants Subcommittee Updates**

Update on the Pollinator Corridor internship and grant.Phil reported that he and Bruce met with two candidates from the high school who are interested in sharing the internship money and work. The application deadline for other candidates to come forward is December 15, 2024. A motion was made and seconded to allow Phil and Bruce to offer the internship to these two candidates if no others apply. The motion passed unanimously.

"Municipal Energy Manager Grant" discussion and Commission decision to support moving forward or not.Charlotte stated that National Grid and Eversource have 16 grants available in Massachusetts for a three-year period (at $120,000 for each year) to fund a Municipal Energy Manager. She met with Ellen Sachs Leicher (Chair of the Harvard MA Climate Initiative Committee) to talk about partnering with them and possibly one or two other towns such as Ayer and Shirley to apply for the grant. The application deadline is January 31, 2025. Ellen and Charlotte talked to Town Managers and school Superintendents from Groton and Harvard, and will meet with Ayer and Shirley school district personnel to explain the program and ask about their interest. One town would have to take the lead and hire a Municipal Energy Manager for three years who would focus on the schools as well as clean energy projects and electrifying municipal buildings. Phil suggested talking again with Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad before asking other towns to work together. A motion was made and seconded to support the effort to apply for the Municipal Energy Manager grant. The motion passed unanimously.

General discussion on the Commission's commitment to assist schools with grant identification, writing and management. Facilitate between necessary stakeholders across Town to maximize funding opportunities for GDRS.Charlotte stated the Groton schools have a goal to create a five-year capital plan for their buildings. They are committed to executing upcoming projects in a sustainable way but have limited capacity to research, apply for and manage grant money that could help with this. They’ve reached out to the Grants Subcommittee for help with identifying grants, writing applications, and managing any grants that are awarded. Charlotte will put together some information for the group to review at the January Commission meeting to see if any members are willing to join the Grants Subcommittee and help with this work.

1. **Climate Action Workgroup Update and Discussion on Town resolution and Climate Action Plan**

Ken reported that over 300 Climate Action Surveys were completed by Groton residents. Most were positive and in favor of a Climate Resolution to establish a Net Zero goal for the town by 2050, and to create a Climate Action Plan.

Town Resolution: Ken will meet with Town Manager Mark Haddad and the Select Board next week to talk about presenting a Climate Resolution at the Spring 2025 Town Meeting to develop a Municipal Decarbonization Plan and establish a Net Zero goal for the town by 2050. No money will be requested at the Town Meeting. A Municipal Decarbonization Plan is required to be a Climate Energy Leader, which is a goal for the Town of Groton.

Climate Action Plan: Ken and Charlotte met with several groups and boards and committees in town, and while there is support for a Climate Action Plan, the cost of creating the plan (possibly $80,000 to $100,000) was a concern to many. External grant money is available to develop a Climate Action Plan, but implementing the plan will incur costs to the town. The work to develop a Climate Action Plan could take up to a year, and a Climate Action Workgroup would need to be established with members from many groups in town.

1. **Sustainable Groton Advocates Program Update**

David is proposing to rename the program to“Sustainable Groton Advocacy” and to have a working subcommittee for the program. The Facebook Page that David created for the Commission has been successful with 177 members and many active posts. There are currently 30 people who’ve agreed to be Advocates. David wants to work on getting Advocates to attend Commission events/meetings and to get involved in Commission work. The Advocates who attended the November 2nd “meet and greet” event were enthusiastic about learning what the Commission does and excited to discuss ways to get involved.

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

Communications/Social Media: A motion was made and seconded to approve an invoice for$254.98 for the annual subscription for HubSpot. The motion passed unanimously.

Pollinator Habitat and Pathway: Alison reported that all work scheduled for 2024 for both the Pollinator Garden and the new Pollinator Pathway has been completed. See item number 6 below for details.

Energy Coaching: Ken held three energy coaching sessions last month and the response from clients has been very gratifying.

1. **Each subcommittee/workgroup chairperson to review activity highlights and accomplishments from 2024, as well as ongoing activities heading into CY 2025.**

Each subcommittee chairperson gave a review of its 2024 accomplishments. Plans and priorities for 2025 will be discussed at the January Commission meeting.

Education Seminars

The following were held between December 2023 and December 2024:

12/06/23 - Waste Stream

02/07/24 - Greenhouse Gas Inventory

03/13/24 - Stormwater & Snow Melt

04/03/24 - Sustainable Food Choices

05/19/24 - EV Petting Zoo (GrotonFest Spring)

06/20/24 - Presentation on town-wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory at Groton Public Library

09/28/24 - GrotonFest Fall booth

10/23/24 - Heat Pump Event

11/13/24 - Climate Action Forum

12/04/24 - Pivoting from Plastic (postponed)

Tire Recycling

Three Tire Recycling events were held during 2024 and a total of 214 tires were collected:

April 6, 2024 - 60 tires

June 22, 2024 – 77 tires

October 26, 2024 – 77 tires

Advocates

David reported that the Facebook Page he created for the Commission has been very successful and currently has 177 members **(**78 were active members in November, and there were 37 posts in the last 28 days). There are currently 30 Advocates who are interested in various activities such as volunteering at Commission events, doing Education Seminar presentations, and working on subcommittees. A “meet and greet” was held on November 2nd to gather Advocates together and talk about work going forward.

Pollinator Garden and Pathway

Alison reported that the Pollinator Garden is fully planted and is in maintenance mode. There is now a shed set up next to the garden that can be used to store tools and other garden items. The shed was obtained from grant money awarded to the Council On Aging. The Groton Trails Committee purchased and installed an informative colorful sign at the garden with information about pollinators and why habitat gardens for them are so important. Sue posted over 50 photos on the Commission Facebook page showing plants blooming from April through November. She also contributed photos and content for the Commission website and created a plant list for the garden.

Work done for the new Pollinator Pathway includes: received funding of $3600 in May 2024 from the Community Preservation Committee; had property lines surveyed; installed a wire fence; rototilled soil and added compost; planted approximately 90 native plants including shrubs, vines, groundcovers, perennials grown from seed and perennials purchased from Native Plant Trust. Planting for the pathway is approximately 50% complete. The rest of the planting will be from native seedlings grown by Sue and Alison over the winter, and additional plants to be purchased in May 2025.

Communications/Social Media

Pat reported the following highlights regarding the Sustainability Commission website: successfully launched the website in September 2024; implemented about 70-80% of the available features that MassEnergize offers in the site; the platform now supports announcements of events/seminars and tracks RSVP of those events when asked for; and there are 26 actions currently online to track carbon offsets.

Regarding Hubspot: there are 421 contacts; we are tracking seminars and events attended for each contact; we are tracking committee membership, advocacy status,and mass email subscription; there were 25 mass emails sent.

Climate Action Workgroup

Charlotte and Ken met with the following groups to assess support for a Climate Action Plan and for putting forth a Climate Resolution in the spring of 2025 to establish a Net Zero goal for the town by 2050: Conservation Commission; Planning Board; Building Inspector; Police Department; Fire Department; Groton Electric Light Department (GELD); Department of Public Works (DPW); Groton Business Association; Council on Aging; Capital Planning; School Committee; Select Board; Town Manager; and Recycling Committee.

Grants

The Commission received a $3600 grant from the Community Preservation Committee for the new Pollinator Pathway. The Commission applied for two grants (the $12,000 Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant from the Department of Energy Resources and the NVP action grant) which were not awarded.

Energy Coaching

Charlotte will tally up the energy coaching sessions done by her and Ken in 2024 and will present that information at the January meeting. She plans to have another in-person energy coaching seminar in 2025.

“Walk-On” Projects

Ginger was not present to give an update about walk-on projects.

1. **New Business**

Phil said the Education subcommittee will follow up about an email from Mary Jennings at the Prescott Community Center asking if the Commission is interested in partnering with them in 2025 for two educational seminars.

Linda and Sue are working together to list the Commission’s Pollinator Habitat garden on the national Pollinator Pathway website.

1. **Review/approve Minutes from the October 16th Commission meeting**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the October 26th meeting as drafted. The motion passed unanimously.

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn at 8:49 pm passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 7:00 pm at the Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Fitterman