 

**Sustainability Commission**

**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: The Groton Center

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

Other Attendees: Mary Jennings, Jim Moisson

Absent: Phil Francisco, David Southwick

**Minutes:**

Called to order at 7:00 pm

1. **Education Seminars at the Prescott Community Center**

Mary Jennings from the Prescott Community Center told the group they are interested in partnering with the Sustainability Commission to present some educational seminars in 2025. Possible topics discussed were: energy coaching sessions; MassEnergize presentation on how Groton can become a Climate Leader; water use and native lawns; and a panel discussion about the Climate Resolution on the Spring Town Meeting warrant. The Education Seminar subcommittee will meet to discuss next steps.

1. **Water Commission Pumping Article**

Ginger and the group discussed the Groton Herald article about how much water was pumped last year. Ginger agreed to attend a Water Commission meeting to ask about their policies on water restrictions and then report back to the group. A discussion was held about educating residents that water should be treated as a limited resource.

1. **Review of meeting with Stewardship Committee and next steps on Pollinator Corridor**

A joint Zoom meeting was held in December between the Stewardship Committee (a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission) and six members of the Sustainability Commission to discuss planting pollinator corridors on conservation property. Topics included: a) work will be coordinated with the Stewardship Committee/Conservation Commission, Groton Conservation Trust and Conservation Administrator Charlottee Steeves to prioritize a list of potential properties (possibly the newly acquired Palmer land near the Ice Line Trail in West Groton); planting and maintenance plans will be developed and approved by all; plans will limit soil disruption; native plants appropriate to the areas will be used; and no tree cutting will occur. The Sustainability Commission recently awarded an internship to two Groton Dunstable Regional High School students to research what pollinators are in decline in Groton and what town-owned land could be used for pollinator corridors. The interns will meet and work with the Stewardship Committee and Charlotte Steeves. The Sustainability Commission will meet again with the Stewardship Committee in June 2025 to discuss the findings of the research work and talk about next steps.

1. **Update on Shared Energy Manager Grant**

Charlotte stated that Harvard, Shirley and Ayer have agreed to apply together with Groton for the Municipal Energy Manager grant offered by National Grid and Eversource. The grant is for a three-year period at $120,000 for each year. Town Manager Mark Haddad agreed that Groton will be the primary applicant. If awarded, Groton will hire a Municipal Energy Manager whose time would be evenly split between the four towns. Charlotte is working with the other three towns to complete the application by the January 31, 2025 deadline. Application results will be known by the end of February, and a person would need to be hired within 90 days. Work done by the Municipal Energy Manager would include energy assessments, energy management plans, and municipal decarbonization plans.

1. **Review of Climate Action Working Group meeting with Select Board and next steps**

Ken met with the Select Board to present the Climate Action Working Group’s findings after meeting with 14 boards and committees and groups in town about Groton having a Climate Resolution. Ken stated that about 80% of the people he met with were in favor of the resolution. The Select Board voted yes to having a Climate Resolution on the Spring Town Meeting warrant. Having a Climate Resolution is one of the steps that Groton must take towards its goal of being a Climate Leader community which allows the town access to more state and federal funds. The Sustainability Commission will work on educating residents about the Climate Resolution before the Town Meeting in April 2025.

1. **Review of 2024 work from Walk-On Workgroup**

Ginger reported that she worked on writing and having the Select Board sign a resolution to Governor Healey saying Groton is against private jet expansion at Hanscom Field in Bedford, MA.

1. **Prioritization of 2025 work**

Climate Action Plan/NetZero 2050 Subcommittee

Members: Charlotte (chair), Phil, Ken

- Outreach for Climate Resolution for Spring 2025 Town meeting vote - goal of passing resolution

- Specialized stretch code outreach for goal of passing specialized stretch code

- Continue to attend Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) meetings

- (if awarded) Assist with hiring and management of shared Municipal Energy Manager with Town Manager and in consultation with GDRSD administration and School Committee

- Assist with assessment of solar potential at GDRSD

- Municipal Decarbonization Plan - stretch goal if Energy Manager grant not awarded; leverage state technical assistance to complete

Education Seminar Series Subcommittee

Members: TBD (chair), Linda, Pat, Jim

- Evaluate merging with other committees - Communication and Advocacy – first meet to determine how to move forward

- Get a chair for the subcommittee

- Minimum of four events (possible topics are heat pumps, plastics use reduction, climate resolution, specialized energy stretch code, water use/native lawns, Jon Patterson/GELD). Consult with Prescott, Zoom

Grant and Fiscal Development Subcommittee

Members: Phil (chair), Bruce, Charlotte, Rosanna Casavecchia

- Complete shared Municipal Energy Manager application

- Assist GDRSD with grant applications and administration as needed

- Continue to monitor and apply for new grant opportunities for Groton municipal, residential and commercial benefit

Pollinator Garden & Pathway Subcommittee

Members: Alison (chair), Sue

- Palmer property: planting and maintenance plan to Stewardship Committee by June

- Install plant identification tags for existing Pollinator Garden

- Finish planting for new Pollinator Pathway

- Continue maintenance of existing Pollinator Garden

- Generate intern report by July 1 (grant funded research)

Communications and Social Media Subcommittee

Members: Pat (chair), David

- Evaluate consolidation with Education and Advocacy subcommittees

- Integration of contacts into one system

- Protocol for subcommittees to use website for outgoing communications

- Track MassEnergize platform changes

- Establish goal for increasing outreach contacts

Tire Recycling Workgroup

Members: Bruce (chair), Phil, Pat

Hold three events in 2025

Energy Coaching Workgroup

Members: Charlotte (chair), Ken

- Update SustainableGroton.org with changes to incentives

- Goal of 2-3 outreach events - Grotonfest and heat pump seminars or other events

- Goal of 25 coaching clients

- Goal of adding at least one new coach

- Goal of talking to GELD of financial model for incentives

Sustainable Groton Advocate Program Subcommittee

Members: David (chair), Charlotte, Ken

- Four events per year

- Evaluate consolidation with Education and Communication subcommittees

"Walk-on" Workgroups for Study/Analysis/Recommendation

Ginger (overall chair)

- In-Town Restaurant Composting Study – Ginger, Lisa Bohne (owner, Lavender Flower Shop)

- One-off comment letters on sustainability issues that arise

A motion was made and seconded to approve the list of goals for 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

1. **New Business**

Jim Moisson has joined the Energy Coaching workgroup and will begin training to become an Energy Coach.

1. **Review/approve Minutes from the December 9th Commission meeting**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as amended from the December 9, 2024 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as drafted from the December 18, 2024 joint Zoom meeting with the Stewardship Committee. The motion passed with five yes votes from attendees at that meeting (Alison, Sue, Linda, Bruce and Pat). Other Commission members not present at the meeting abstained from voting.

**Adjourn:** The motion toadjourn at 9:12 pm was seconded and passed unanimously.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00 pm at the Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Fitterman