**Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date:Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM

Meeting Location: Groton Center

Attendees: Alison Dolbear Peterson, Andrew Scott, Bruce Easom, Charlotte Weigel, Jim Simko, Ginger Vollmar, Phil Francisco

Visitor: Pat Parker-Roach (late)

# Minutes:

Called to Order– 7:05 pm

* The minutes from the March 16th 2023 Commission meeting were **approved unanimously** after edits from Ginger Vollmar were incorporated.
* **New Commission Member Candidates Discussion**: The Commission discussed three interested community members, Pat Parker-Roach, Adam Burnett and Pete Jeffrey, who have reached out in different ways. Members to follow up with Adam and Pete to gauge interest as possible. Pat Parker-Roach gave a summary of his background and interest in sustainability. Commission welcomed him with introductions from group members. Pat is attending to see where he can help with Commissions objectives. Phil noted the need to grow the Commission to be able to advocate for sustainability with other groups in town.
	+ The group also acknowledged that we cannot advertise for a Commission clerk position through the town.
* **Town Meeting Warrant Articles Results and Discussion**: The Commission discussed the successful approval of both warrant articles at April 29th town meeting, including the approval to modify the Commission’s charge. The group noted that we should take our time with this, and discussed the ideal size of the group, including a change from 10 to 12 members. This was tabled to have a longer discussion and decision at a later time (see agenda item below)
* **Changes to our Commission Charter Discussion**: Flowing from the previous agenda item, members provided background that the original 2008 Commission Charter, which includes the number of members, is outdated needs to be changed. **Action item:** Phil and Ginger will integrate the mission statement into a draft of a new charge and send out to members to consider for a discussion and vote at June 20th, 2023 Commission meeting.
* **Education Subcommittee Update**:
	+ The Commission reviewed thoughts on May 5th panel discussion. Overall there was good conversation. Audience was engaged in asking questions, and panelists responded with thoughtful answers. Members agreed that introductions were too long, and we need to be more thorough in getting attendees to sign in. **Action item:** Andrew will ask the Groton Channel if they can tell us the number of live remote viewers.
	+ The Commission discussed the upcoming May 25th seminar. Phil has purchased an ad with his own money in the Groton Herald. **Action item:** Charlotte will ask Moison Ace Hardware if they will donate a programmable thermostat to give away in drawing. **Action item:** Ginger will submit a letter to the Editor to the Groton Herald to advertise as well.
* **NetZero 2050 Planning Subcommittee**:
	+ Charlotte updated that she is working on completing the waste portion of the town-wide GHG inventory. She also mentioned that a member of the Invasive Species Committee, Jonathan Basch, has agreed to verify parts of the completed town-wide GHG inventory. Andrew and Bruce both agreed to also help with verification. **Action item:** Charlotte will meet with Andrew and Bruce to hand off parts of the verification to them.
	+ The group also discussed the need to calculate carbon sequestration from conserved land in Groton. Phil proposed the idea of state-level grants that could be awarded based on town conservation efforts that contribute significant carbon sequestration towards the state goals for natural and working lands. Charlotte mentioned that she would be happy to work towards calculating carbon sequestration once the GHG inventory is completed and verified. An analysis of available sequestration calculation methods will need to be done to arrive at the most relevant and practical methodology to use. Harvard, MA is the only local town she is aware of who has calculated and integrated annual carbon sequestration into a town-wide inventory.

* **Letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and Town Planner regarding Groton Farms 40B project landscaping plan comments:** Andrew had sent a draft letter for review. After discussing edits, Phil moved to approve the edited letter. Ginger seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the edited letter and for Andrew to submit it on behalf of the Commission to the ZBA.
* **Letter to the Conservation Commission regarding partnering to plan, seek grant funds, and develop a contiguous habitat for pollinators**: Alison provided some background on similar work done in Lincoln, MA. The Commission discussed and integrated edits to the letter. Andrew moved to submit the edited letter to the Conservation Commission. Ginger seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved to submit the edited letter to the Conservation Commission.
* **Letter to the Town Manager and Select Board regarding making the most sustainable decisions possible in building infrastructure upgrades and vehicle purchases approved at April 29th Town Meeting:** Charlotte and Ginger both submitted edits to this letter before the meeting that Phil integrated into the letter and he read them out loud to the group. Charlotte added a mention in the letter to lagging progress towards the Green Communities program goal of 20% reduction in energy use within five years, as well as the mandate to consult updated Green Community vehicle purchasing requirements before purchasing new municipal vehicles. Discussion occurred about the severity of word choice in Charlotte’s edits. Phil noted the heavy emphasis on vehicle purchasing versus building infrastructure in the letter. Charlotte agreed, but also noted that the letter was getting too long to comprehensively address sustainability considerations in both types of capital investments. Andrew moved to approve and submit the edited letter. Bruce seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved submission of the edited letter.
* **Discussion of “Lights out Night” in 2023 and aligning with global “Earth Hour” plans in March 2024.** Member David Southwick brought this item to the Commission but was not present for the discussion. In his absence, the group discussed what would be required to participate in the two initiatives, but agreed the Commission is already spread too thin to take these on. This might be something that the high school groups would want to spearhead, and they may be better positioned to succeed with implementation. **Action item:** The discussion concluded that the group would pass this on to David to relay to the high school to gauge their interest.
* **Any other business:** Several members attended the GDRHS Sustainable Living Program’s Sustainability Fair. The teachers there discussed their idea to work on rainwater collection in the upcoming school year. Finally, the Commission discussed the desire for a partnership with the school district for reducing emissions, given their large contribution to overall municipal energy use.

Adjourned – 9:18 pm

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 20, 2023, 7:00pm, at the Groton Center**

Respectfully submitted,

- Charlotte Weigel

Approved by Groton Sustainability Commission, June 20, 2023.