Town of Princeton

Environmental Action Committee

Meeting Minutes – September 11, 2023

* Meeting held virtually due to extreme weather emergency
* Meeting called to order at 7:03 pm
* Members present via GoToMeeting: Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH,) Gerry Pellegrini (GP,) Claire Golding (CG,) Kaitlin Kohberger (KK,) Richard Bisk (RB,) Forrest Iwanik (FI)
* No public present
* No advisory liaison present
* Review and approval of 8/14/23 meeting minutes:
  + Motion to approve minutes as written made by FI, RB second, unanimous
* Updates:
  + Compiled update document reviewed
  + FI brought up the idea of sustainable giveaways (i.e. stainless steel bottles, straws) for event tables. *Action item: FI to investigate costs and report back.*
  + CG to attend Hey Day at Wachusett Meadow Audubon Sanctuary as EAC representative.
  + Deb Cary is the lead on this fall’s planned Open Space Committee’s nature walks and is still waiting to solidify the roster of walkers and presenters.
    - GP suggested tying in with the Worcester downtown historical walk. Dovetailing on this idea, CG will check into the Princeton Historical Society’s groundwork for a nature walk. FI also suggested a walk through a sugar maple grove for foliage and talk of the history and future of sugaring in New England regarding climate change.
  + Master Plan Steering Committee: CBH to circulate the three new chapters to EAC members for comment by October meeting.
  + Ecotourism: RB to apply to the newly forming town committee as EAC liaison.
* Old and New Business:
  + CG suggested a water use dashboard on the town website for water use guidelines.
  + Fall Topic: Waste and Recycling
    - Recycling event:
      * Textiles: Plan to host another in-person recycling collection event. *Action item: FI and CG to plan event, deadline to schedule 10/1, tentative date Sunday 10/15*
      * Mattresses and batteries: outreach and information sharing only, in person event not feasible
  + Winter Topic: Night Sky
    - GP suggested applying for Princeton Cultural Council Grant for the night sky celebration. *Action item: GP and KK to come up with a grant proposal with financial outline.*
    - GP also proposed teaming up with the Parks and Recreation Department’s Winter Carnival. CG will be meeting with Jaime Greenland later this week and will ask preliminary questions along that line.
    - FI suggested adding a teaser block to the fall Green News Brief for the night sky celebration.
* Next meeting scheduled for 10/16/23.
* CBH drafted the yearly update letter to the Selectboard and shared with EAC members. Members unanimously approved the letter for submittal to the Selectboard.
  + A flyer of the upcoming year’s topics to be amended and printed for Hey Day.
* Membership: CBH to draft up an advertisement for distribution through town news.
* Agenda items for next meeting:
  + Change from “finalize” to “update” in the Old and New Business section’s first bullet point.
* CG made a motion to adjourn at 8:38 pm, FI second, unanimous approval.

Documents reviewed at meeting:

* EAC Compiled Updates (see attached)
* 2024 Topics and Activities Leadership Spreadsheet
* 2023-2024 EAC Outreach Campaign Flyer
* Draft Letter to Selectboard from EAC advising re: FY2024 EAC activities

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Iwanik

**EAC Updates for Review and Discussion at EAC September Meeting:**

**Green Communities (CBH)**

In August, Ian McElwee of CMRPC presented Princeton’s Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) to the WRSD School Committee. Adoption of an ERP Amendment to include TPS--by the WRSD--will allow for TPS to be included in the ERP and for funding for energy upgrades to be utilized at TPS. Ian reports that a full ERP Amendment will be submitted to them for consideration at the School Committee’s September meeting. In order TPS to be eligible for Green Community funding upgrades, the School Committee would also need to adopt a district-wide fuel efficient vehicle policy –and the committee wants more information from district staff on numbers and what vehicles would be impacted by such a policy before considering such a policy adoption. Ian intends to continue to work with the Superintendent. (Ian’s work is being funded by Green Communities grant awarded to Princeton.)

**MVP (CBH)**

Sherry Patch asked CBH to attend a Zoom meeting on 8/10 hosted by the MVP Coalition (a partnership of regional non-profits the goal of which is to increase the funding available for MVP grants to $100M/year). This meeting is with Representative Ferguson with the intent of the MVP Coalition to ask for an increase to MVP funding. Princeton was invited by the MVP Coalition since it’s received planning grants but no action grants. The meeting was rescheduled to 8/15 and CBH could not attend and Sherry did not think it necessary for another EAC member to attend. Rather she planned to share CBH’s thoughts. CBH prepared the following thoughts:

“Unquestionably, increasing MVP funding for Massachusetts communities to prepare for climate resiliency should be paramount. Locally, this summer has made clear the critical need to prepare for the flooding that comes with increased precipitation--including through infrastructure upgrades. Nationwide we can also see the economic and health effects of extreme heat, wildfires, and drought. Preparing for climate change now will not only help to protect our communities, infrastructure, and residents, but will also save the state money in the long-term. It is much better to avoid the wound than to keep replacing the bandage...

As for Princeton, and other small communities like ours with limited staff, in order to successfully implement our MVP Plan, we not only need funding for the project, but also additional funding for an MVP grant administrator position and/or a more simplified MVP action grant process. The MVP grant is extremely detailed and the administrative requirements for grant implementation are also detailed and time consuming. While larger communities may have staff positions dedicated to implementing grants, smaller communities do not. MVP funded projects can only succeed in small communities if these factors are taken into consideration.”

CBH asked Sherry for an update from the meeting but has not yet heard back.

**PFAS Information Sharing (FI)**

The Town shared an update on August 29 with regard to PFAS. *No further updates.*

**Communications/Newsletter/Website (CBH) (CG)**

Still need to make **website** corrections/updates/rearranging. CBH reached out to the Town Clerk again in early September to ask for a time to be trained so that CBH can make changes to the EAC page.

Next **Green News Brief** is planned for mid-October with publication by Nov. 1 on Waste & Recycling/Sustainable Living.

EAC will host a table at **Hey Day**. Currently CG is the only EAC member confirmed to host. CG has already coordinated with Wachusett Meadow folks about EAC presence. Rick Gardner has suggested EAC, Open Space Committee, Princeton Land Trust, and Princeton Hikes set up info tables near each other, and CBH agreed with him that was a good idea.

**Public Safety Building Committee (CG)**

The Selectboard has created a new Public Safety Committee. The charge of the new committee can be found here: [Public Safety Building Committee | Princeton, MA](https://www.town.princeton.ma.us/public-safety-building-committee)

The Committee will consist of 7 members, one of which is “a representative from the Environmental Action Committee.” CG has applied to be the EAC Member on the Committee.

**Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) update** **(CG)**

MPSC met on August 30, 2023.

All three chapters—Economic Development, Land Use, and Natural Resources and Open Space—have been reviewed and amended by CMRPC and the committee now. The next step is to offer all Town committees the opportunity to review the chapters and offer comments. The documents total about 150 pages; the proposed deadline for response from committees is Thanksgiving. It is unclear at this time when a committee will be formed to create Phase II of the Master Plan, but Phase II grant funding announcements are expected around Thanksgiving. Princeton has applied for $100K.

**Waste and Recycling Committee Update (CG)**

WRC last met on July 6, 2023.

Since then, TA Sherry Patch has met several times with TAs of Rutland and Hubbardston to discuss a possible regional transfer station. Just as was the case in Princeton, Rutland is trying to determine the original site assignment of their former landfill, now the town’s DPW barn, on Pomogusset Road. There are regionalization grants that the towns could apply for to offset costs, if the transfer station goes ahead.

The WRC needs to reform, as nearly all our members’ terms have expired. Richy Bisk has chosen not to continue with the committee. The next meeting will probably occur in late September/early October.

**Princeton Solar Farm Committee (CBH)**

- The Solar Farm Warrant Article passed at Town Meeting. The Selectboard has chosen to transition the SFWG to a Princeton Solar Farm Committee. Selectboard member Robert Cumming will be the liaison on the new committee. The SFWG met on 8/10 to discuss a draft charge for the new committee, and Chair Richard Chase was to submit that to the Selectboard. CBH applied to serve on the new committee. GP will be signing up to seek appointment to serve as EAC liaison to the committee.

**Open Space Committee / Nature Walks (FI) (CBH)**

CBH reported to OSC Chair Rick Gardner that EAC—with CBH and FI as the liaisons—is happy to lend efforts where we can with future Nature Walk programming. On September 5, Rick notified CBH and FI that Deb Cary was organizing the fall Nature Walks. Deb intends to provide us with an update soon. If EAC has ideas for additional Nature Walk leaders, please share. CBH will be helping with the promotional materials for the events.

**Ecotourism Economic Development Plan Committee**

In September 2022, at Town Administrator Sherry Patch’s application, the Town received a $33,425 grant from the state to create an Ecotourism Economic Development Plan. On 9/7, Sherry shared with CBH that she is in the process of drafting a charge for the Ecotourism Committee for the Selectboard’s review at its 9/20 meeting. Once that’s approved she will start accepting applications via the online volunteer application. RB has indicated interest in serving as EAC liaison on that committee.

GP had sought to invite CMRPC’s Emily Glaubitz (who will be spearheading the Ecotourism planning) to an EAC meeting, but per Sherry Patch, we will hold off on such discussions until an anticipated October kickoff meeting.

**Earth Month Working Group (CG) (CBH)**

Will resume planning in early 2024 for April activities.

**PMLD (GP)**

**Housing Production Plan Implementation Committee (RB)**

**CMRPC Regional Emissions Reduction Planning (GP)**