

# **Town of Princeton Environmental Action Committee (EAC)**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **December 17, 2020**

**Meeting called to order** at 7:11pm

*Committee members present (via remote):*

Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH), Charlie Cary (CC), Claire Golding (CG), Phil Gott (PG), Phoebe Moore (PM), Chris Samoiloff (CS)

**Public Comment:** None. Helga Lyons (HL) present as liaison from Advisory Committee.

#### **Review & Approve Minutes from November 16, 2020 and December 3, 2020 Meetings:**

- EAC members briefly discuss the draft meeting minutes and offer minor edits.
  - o **MOTION** to accept as amended with minor edits  
Motion: PM; 2d: CC; Vote: 5-0 (CS abstained.)

#### **Student Member Interest**

- CBH received an email from the mother of a Princeton resident teen, expressing the teen's potential interest in joining the EAC. EAC members briefly discuss and agree to: (1) invite teen to attend the next EAC meeting as a member of the public; and (2) CBH to inquire with Selectboard regarding protocol for student members on committees.

#### **Fitchburg-Westminster Landfill**

- CBH reported that as authorized by EAC, CBH drafted and sent letter from EAC to Selectboard expressing concerns regarding proposed expansion of the landfill. That letter was attached to a letter sent by the Selectboard as a comment to MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office) on the landfill's Environmental Notification Form (ENF). CBH reported that a Certification on the ENF (i.e., determination by the Secretary of the Environment) was expected on December 23.

#### **Green Communities Designation Application**

- CBH provided update.
  - o Sarah Adams from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) filed Princeton's application for Green Community Designation. Since applications were being accepted this year on a rolling basis, it was unclear whether decisions on the applications would also be made on a rolling basis. CBH noted that the Town would likely hear news on its application by March or April.
- HL noted that the Advisory Committee has met and heard capital plans. She wondered if Green Community grants would fund an analysis of heating systems such as in the library. CBH noted that either Green Community funds or META (Municipal Energy Technical Assistance) funds might pay for such energy analyses.

#### **Municipal Vulnerability Planning (MVP) Program**

- PG provided update.
  - o There have been no updates.
  - o PG did draft an article on the MVP process in Princeton and forwarded it to CMRPC, which planned to share it.

- PG discussed the timeliness of the MVP analysis given recent power outages in town, which highlighted the vulnerability with a single transmission line coming into town. Still, PG noted that a second transmission line would be costly, and that perhaps other alternatives might be analyzed. The MVP for Princeton recommended a feasibility study on this issue.

### **Princeton Municipal Light Department (PMLD)**

- PG provided update.
  - The new manager has been brought up-to-speed on policies, etc. New manager wants to communicate to the community, and PMLD has started a Facebook page.
    - CS asked if PMLD will also post to NextDoor.
      - **ACTION:** PG will ask PMLD about plans to post information to NextDoor as well.
  - MMWEC (Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company) is now operating Princeton's windmills 24/7. PG asked Light Commissioners how much more power is now being generated by the windmills. The answer was that no one knows; the data exists but is not tracked/analyzed. Given the southern turbines mechanical failures, the amount of power has likely been steady (and not increased significantly with the MMWEC operation).
  - PG plans to bring to the Light Commissioners information that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is allowing municipal light departments (MLPs) to participate in the Municipal Action Plan to meet 2050 Greenhouse Gas Emissions goals, where DOER will work with municipalities. CBH wondered if this was an alternative to Green Communities for municipalities served by MLPs. CG wondered if it was a legislative mandate.
- PG noted that the Environmental League of Massachusetts and Massachusetts Communities Action Network were working to get climate activists on municipal light boards. PG shared MCAN's "opportunities to engage".

### **Waste and Recycling**

- CG provided update.
  - The Waste and Recycling Committee (WRC) has been meeting weekly.
  - The WRC completed a resident survey, which includes details on a preferred hauler program. The survey will go out with the census.
    - HL asked if using Survey Monkey allowed for double filling of the form. And CBH asked if survey could request addresses in order to address that potential issue.
      - **ACTION:** CG to look into it.
    - **ACTION:** PM will make the survey electronic so it is online too.
  - Eventually the WRC plans to do a Request For Proposal to haulers.
    - PG suggests a trash audit as trash amounts could impact the RFP responses.
- CC asked EAC member thoughts on waste-to-energy facilities. PG and CC discussed idea that waste-related toxins would exist in landfill anyway. Members discussed. CBH noted that her understanding was that waste-to-energy was still better for the environment than landfill. Members agreed best solution for waste is reduce, reuse, recycle, including education on those options. CG also suggested the need to lobby for legislation requiring manufacturers to reduce waste.

## **Communications Updates**

- CS provided updates.
  - o The January issue of the EAC Newsletter: “The Green News” will include information on food waste and waste reduction.
    - **ACTION:** CBH to send to CS language in EAP about composting.
  - o **ACTION:** CS to ask Selectboard about EAC hosting a Facebook page as a means of communication.
- CC noted that a goal of the EAP (Environmental Action Plan)/EAC is to create greater sustainability. He advocated for reaching out and getting more folks involved. Members discussed that actions for Town (as entity) would need to be led by EAC members, but agreed to encourage public participation in activities such as MVP, Street Cleanups, Green Community ideas/actions, as well as to distribute and communicate the EAP.
  - o **ACTION:** CC and CG to write blurb sharing information with residents on how to obtain copy of EAP.
  - o **ACTION:** CC to get 3 copies of EAP to the library.
  - o **ACTION:** CG will check with new library director about option to circulate EAP.

## **EAC Webpage Updates**

- CS provided updates.
  - o CS thanked members for providing updates on various actions.

## **WPI Project Updates**

- CC provided updates.
  - o CC met again with WPI students via Zoom. The plan is for the students’ first 7 weeks of the project to focus on methodology for research, and the second 7 weeks to focus on research. CC found that the students’ proposal expanded beyond the analysis of the supply of available wood as a sustainable energy source. He attempted to redirect their focus.
- CG reported that, starting in January, she and CBH may also likely work with WPI on another project related to a possible Town Outdoor Lighting Ordinance/Bylaw.

## **LCC Grant Opportunities**

- CBH completed the LCC grant application, seeking funds for an EAC Speaker Series. She expected the EAC might hear back in February. Members discussed whether EAC should begin planning speakers, and agreed to at least begin planning the first two speakers.
  - o **ACTION:** CBH, CS and CC to begin planning first two speaker series.

## **Agenda Items for Next Meeting (January 21, 2020 at 7p via online forum)**

- Public Comment
- Review and Approve Minutes of December 17, 2020
- Student Member Interest
- Fitchburg-Westminster Landfill Proposed Expansion Updates
- PMLD Updates
- Waste and Recycling Updates
- Communications Updates
- EAC Town Webpage Updates
- WPI Project Updates
- LCC Grant/EAC Speaker Series
- Agenda items for Next Meeting

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:10 p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn.

Motion: CBH; 2d: CG; Vote: 5-0. (PM left meeting at 8:30p.)

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard