

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **January 21, 2021**

**Meeting called to order** at 7:05pm

*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.  
Also present: Anna White (potential student EAC member interest); Matt Charpentier (potential EAC member interest); Rick Rys.

#### **Review & Approve Minutes from December 17, 2020 Meetings:**

- EAC members briefly discuss the draft meeting minutes. PG suggested an amendment to portion on discussion on Waste Incinerators, and suggested editing of “PG and CC discussed idea that waste-related toxins would exist in landfill anyway.”
  - o **MOTION** to accept as amended.  
Motion: CG; 2d: CS; Vote: 6-0

#### **EAC Member Interest**

In attendance at EAC meeting were two individuals with potential interest in joining the EAC: Anna White (Wachusett Regional High School Junior) and Matt Charpentier (Field Botanist/Environmental Consultant). Anna and Matt introduced themselves, and EAC members introduced themselves and provided a brief statement on background/reason(s) for joining EAC.

#### **Student Member Interest**

- CBH provided update.
  - o Following EAC discussion at last meeting about student interest in joining EAC, CBH reached out to Karen Cruise, Chair of Selectboard, to inquire about option/protocol for student EAC member interest. Selectboard voted to allow a non-voting EAC student member. Selectboard instructed that EAC would have to post the opportunity to town residents so as to open the opportunity to all potentially interested students. CBH suggested that EAC should decide: (1) if want to accept student EAC member; (2) if so, what the public notice about the opportunity should say.
    - **Motion** to accept student EAC member:  
Motion: CG; 2d: CBH; Vote: 6-0.
    - EAC members discussed age range to advertise for EAC Student Member and agreed on High School Junior and up. EAC members discussed term for EAC student member and agreed on 1-year term.
    - EAC members discussed and agreed that Public Notice of EAC Student member opportunity would include information on emailing interest to EAC Chair CG, filling out online Town of Princeton committee application; and suggestion to read Environmental Action Plan (EAP) (including link to EAP). EAC members agreed on student application deadline of 2/15/21.
    - **ACTION:** CBH will draft public notice on EAC Student Member Opportunity to be sent via Town News and NextDoor Princeton week of January 25.

## **Green Communities Designation Application**

- CBH provided update.
  - o Kelly Brown from Department of Energy Resources emailed CBH, Town Administrator Sherry Patch, and Sarah Adams from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), noting “good job” on Green Community Designation Application, and requesting more information be submitted/clarified by January 29, 2021. The information sought included: provide missing street light data; update vehicle inventory for consistency; revise language in Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) to reflect energy reduction as derived from “retro-commissioning” of Public Safety Building; and copy of Town Clerk Certification of Town Meeting Vote adopting the Stretch Energy Code.
    - **ACTION:** CBH to follow-up with Sherry and Sarah prior to 1/29/21 deadline to check on status of response to Kelly Brown request for additional information for Green Community Designation Application.

## **Potential Warrant Article Fossil-Fuel Moratorium**

PG reported that town resident Richard Chase is asking if EAC would consider supporting a Town Meeting Warrant Article that would be a resolution to encourage the State Legislature to “Mandate the De-Carbonization of All New Construction of Buildings in the Commonwealth” by amending the State Building Code to restrict fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction statewide and adopt a Zero Net Energy Stretch Code. PG understood from Richard Chase that this would be non-binding. CBH noted that since Princeton adopted the Stretch Energy Code, if that code was amended to restrict fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction, that would be binding in Princeton—unless Princeton un-adopted the Stretch Energy Code (thereby losing Green Community Designation). CBH noted that while she supported actions to reduce greenhouse gases, she was hesitant about the potential costs associated, particularly as may relate to being prohibitive of affordable housing development. CBH suggested that EAC do its due diligence before deciding whether or not to support this proposed Warrant Article. Rick Rys noted that there would not in reality be a total de-carbonization in new construction given that alternatives to heat would be electricity, which is produced in part with the burning of fossil fuels. PG also noted concerns about costs and about whether there would need to be a backup (fossil) system in a home that is not super-insulated.

- **ACTION:** EAC members PG, PM, and CBH to research proposed Zero-Net Energy Code and de-carbonization of new construction, including related costs-benefits, and report back to EAC at next meeting.
- **ACTION:** PG to respond to Richard Chase that EAC will respond when EAC has more information on the topic.

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

- PG provided update.
  - o PG reviewed the draft MVP Report written for the Town of Princeton by CMRPC following the Town’s MVP workshops. PG gave some feedback to CMRPC with regard to both formatting and substantive comments. PG noted that the report will be revised and then posted for public viewing, and then a future Selectboard meeting will host a public listening session on the Report.
- Helga Lyons offered her opinion on the MVP Report. EAC members suggested that she might effectively provide that feedback by participating in the upcoming public listening session.

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

- PG provided update.
  - o Mitsubishi heat pump rebates have now been extended through 2021.
  - o With regard to used transformers stored by PMLD, the number being stored is below the maximum allowed, and those being stored will be brought indoors to avoid weather-related deterioration.
  - o With regard to electric power sources under Nextera contract, PMLD has learned that it is getting more from coal than previously realized and none from hydro (see page 88 of EAP which provides previously understood electric power source breakdown).
- Rick Rys (Light Commissioner in attendance at EAC meeting) noted that PMLD was re-negotiating strategies for revisions on the PMLD-Nextera contract, as well as analyzing long-term plans regarding energy savings and objectives.
- EAC members briefly discussed recent discussion in NextDoor Princeton and resident concerns and possible misinformation on rates. Rick Rys (a Light Commissioner) noted that Richard Chase (a Light Commissioner) was drafting answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” and PMLD hoped to share that soon. EAC members agreed that a timely topic for the next EAC Green News would be “Electricity 101” and “Energy-Saving Tips.”

## **Waste and Recycling**

- CG provided update.
  - o The Waste and Recycling Committee (WRC) recently sent out a survey in the Town Census. The survey can also be completed online.
  - o Over the next several weeks, the WRC will be working on a Request For Proposal to waste haulers.
  - o WRC is also looking to get some questions answered regarding the Town’s contract with Wheelabrator, as those answers are needed before moving forward
  - o WRC needs an alternate member.
    - **ACTION:** CG asks EAC members to share WRC need for alternate member with those who may be interested and encourage them to consider applying.

## **Communications/EAC Webpage Updates**

- CS provided updates.
  - o CS posted the WRC survey to the EAC website.
  - o CC, along with graphics from CS and edits from CG, created a flyer with information on the EAP (plus link and ways to get a hard copy), the Green News (and how to subscribe with link), and ways to get residents involved and aware of EAC activities. CC has been hanging flyers around town.
    - **ACTION:** EAC members can advise CC of ideas on where to hang EAP/EAC info flyers.
  - o CS looked at Selectboard’s Communication Plan and determined may be too difficult/complicated given Open Meeting Laws etc. to attempt to create EAC Facebook page or other social media page.
  - o CS fixed Green News links on website.
  - o CC and CS are interested in creating list of how residents may be helpful in implementing EAP. CBH and CG noted that residents can’t act on behalf of EAC/Town unless an EAC member; they suggest residents might get involved with public action projects like Earth Day Cleanup, or perhaps background research on topics that can then

- be presented to EAC.
- The February issue of the EAC Newsletter: “The Green News” will include information on electricity and energy savings opportunities.
  - **ACTION:** PG to draft article on electricity: “Electricity 101”. CG to draft article on energy savings ideas. All EAC members are welcome to send tips to CG on energy savings ideas, and all EAC members can send related links to CS for sidebars of newsletter. Deadline: ASAP.
  - **ACTION:** All EAC members to send ideas to CS for future Newsletter topics.

### **WPI Project Updates**

- CC provided updates.
  - CC and PG continue to work with WPI students on analysis of the supply of available wood as a sustainable energy source. 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. He reported that students are adjusting their research plan and retargeting.
- CG reported that she and CBH will soon be working with a group of WPI students on another project related to Light Pollution in town, including inventory/mapping of light pollution, analysis of best practices, recommended strategies, development of draft language of an Outdoor Lighting Bylaw.

### **LCC Grant Opportunities**

- CBH reported that there has been no follow up from the Princeton Cultural Council on the EAC’s grant application, which sought funds for an EAC Speaker Series. CBH hoped EAC might hear back in February.
  - **ACTION:** CBH, CS and CC to begin planning first two speaker series.

### **Fitchburg-Westminster Landfill**

- CBH reported that the State Secretary of the Environment issued a Certificate on Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the ENF filed for the Fitchburg/Westminster Sanitary Landfill proposed expansion. The Town’s Selectboard had asked the Secretary to require the project proponents file an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The requirement for the EIR was at the discretion of the Secretary, and she determined it was not needed. Her Certificate made note of mitigation factors she’d like to see for the landfill expansion project, such as litter fencing and odor control. It was CBH’s understanding that the project would still need DEP permitting, which would include conditions.

### **Town Draft Snow and Ice Policy**

- CBH reported that she had noticed a “Draft Snow and Ice Policy” on a recent Selectboard agenda and had reached out to the Selectboard to note that the EAP contains an action item of drafting such a policy with consideration of the balance of public safety with environmental concerns—including of sand and salt impacts to the environment. The Selectboard agreed that now would be a good time to include environmental impacts. EAC members agreed that it would be timely for EAC to work with town on this policy.
  - **ACTION:** CBH to reach out to Sherry Patch and Karen Cruise regarding timeline and

- other considerations. CBH and PM to research and provide information to town for suggested inclusion in Snow and Ice Policy.
- Helga Lyons noted that the Town is considering Highway Department's request for construction of "Salt Barn" for the mixing of sand and salt. She asked whether it was possible there would not be salt used in the future given environmental concerns, and thus the expense for the barn would be moot. CBH noted that she thought salt would be continued to be used into the future, and that the Salt Barn would allow the town to meet environmental regulations for the storage of salt.

### **Budget Request for FY22**

- CG explained that she had submitted the EAC budget request for FY22 in the amount of \$1,000, which is the same as FY21.

### **EAC Annual Report**

- CG is drafting the annual report due soon. She has received feedback/content from CS, CBH.
- **ACTION:** PG to provide MVP summary to CG for EAC Annual Report.
- **ACTION:** CG to complete and submit EAC Annual Report.

### **Agenda Items for Next Meeting (February 18, 2021 at 7p via online forum)**

- Public Comment
- Review and Approve Minutes of January 21, 2021
- EAC Member Interest/Applications
- Green Communities Updates
- MVP Updates
- PMLD Updates
- Waste and Recycling Updates
- Communications Updates
- EAC Town Webpage Updates
- WPI Project Updates
- LCC Grant/EAC Speaker Series Updates
- Draft Snow and Ice Policy Updates
- Updates/Information on Costs/Benefits of Proposed Fossil Fuel-Free New Construction Mandate
- Agenda items for Next Meeting

**Meeting adjourned** at 8:49 p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn.

Motion: PG; 2d: PM; Vote: 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard