

Town of Princeton Environmental Action Committee (EAC)
Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2021

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm

Committee members present (via remote):

Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH), Charlie Cary (CC), Matt Charpentier (MC), Claire Golding (CG), Chris Samoiloff (CS)

Phil Gott (PG) joined at 8:13p

Student Committee members present: Anna White (AW), Paul Fuch (PF)

Associate members present: Caitlan Davis (CD)

Also present: Helga Lyons (HL) present as liaison from Advisory Committee- joined at 8:10p

Public Comment: None.

Review & Approve Minutes from March 18, 2021 Meeting:

- **MOTION** to approve as written with minor typo corrections.
Motion: CG; 2d: MC; Vote: 5-0

Natural Resource Inventory Presentation

- MC has proposed a Natural Resource Inventory in town. He explained that what is living on the land informs how we manage it. Such an inventory would find what is on property so that it can be managed; provide information that could lead to interactive trails; lead to possible obtainment of grant funding such as for invasive species management.
 - o CS inquired as to whether this would be a paid-for service or fundraising venture. MC responded that he thought it might be performed by volunteers but thought the fundraising option was an interesting idea.
- MC noted that the Conservation Commission had pointed to the issue of adopting a solar bylaw in town to protect land in town. CBH noted that a solar bylaw had been under consideration by the planning board, although not on this year's Town Meeting Warrant.
 - o **ACTION:** CBH to reach out to MC regarding planning board solar bylaw considerations.

Shared Streets/Complete Streets Programs—Lighting

- CBH provided update.
 - o As authorized by EAC at last meeting, CBH drafted a letter on behalf of the EAC to the Selectboard and Sherry Patch expressing EAC's interest in being involved in discussions on lighting and advocating for dark sky-conscious options related to possible future Shared Streets and Complete Streets projects. Sherry Patch responded that EAC would be kept in the loop, and noting that there was no expected lighting with any of the proposed projects.

Green Communities Designation Application

- CBH provided update.
 - o In April 2021, Princeton was informed that it had been awarded Green Communities Designation from the Department of Energy Resources(DOER), with an award of \$130,869. The Town must, within 90 days designate how those funds will be spent. The Town will work with Sarah Adams from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), and a meeting has been set with interested stakeholders for April 26.
 - o CBH drafted press release on Green Communities designation and shared it to various outlets.
- CBH and PG reported that Richard Chase has been in discussions with a potential vendor that is interested in working with the town to upgrade the energy efficiency of all town buildings as part of a “large scale demonstration project.” The vendor’s claim is that the total operating and capital equipment costs of their system will be less than the current operating costs of existing equipment. Richard Chase took them through a walk-through of municipal buildings. Richard Chase proposed this to Karen Cruise who reportedly said she was open to hearing the proposal. CBH noted her hesitations and questions with regard to this opportunity: that the Town only had a set amount of funds (Green Community funds) available to upgrading buildings and likely could not financially upgrade all equipment in all buildings at once; wanting to know what equipment would be utilized and whether it would be approved by DOER; noting the need for energy efficiency upgrades to go through the public bidding procurement process; and not understanding the benefit to the Town of working with this particular vendor (CBH reported that Richard Chase noted the benefit of having an interested vendor and that the company was willing to perform detailed energy audits for free.)
- CS asked whether the new S.9 law would provide any funding opportunities for the Town with regard to energy efficiency. CBH was not aware of new funding opportunities but offered to look into it.
 - o **ACTION:** CBH to look into whether S.9 offered new funding opportunities for energy efficiency upgrades in town.

Municipal Vulnerability Planning (MVP) Program

- PG provided update: No new updates.

Princeton Municipal Light Department (PMLD)

- PG provide update. He did not attend last PMLD meeting, but reported that at that meeting the auditor’s report was presented and summarized that PMLD’s financial situation was “well in hand” and gave kudos to the office staff’s organizational efforts.

Waste and Recycling

- CG provided update.
 - o The Waste and Recycling Committee (WRC) continues to work on Requests for Proposals (RFP) for waste haulers. WRC will be meeting with MassDEP’s Irene Congdon to work to answer questions in order to finalize RFPs. RFP would be then be sent to Town Counsel for review, and then back to the WRC, and then released.
 - o CG explained that the RFP is more complicated than required by law in order to ensure the WRC does its due diligence before making recommendations to residents.
 - o RFP timeline to release is approximately 1 month.

Communications /EAC Webpage Updates

- CS provided updates.

- Webpage:
 - CS has received updates from EAC members regarding various EAC actions, and has made those updates on the EAC webpage.
 - **ACTION:** CS to add sidebar link from newsletter to EAC webpage
- Newsletter:
 - April Newsletter: MC wrote article; CG to edit it; and CS and MC to provide sidebar links.
 - **ACTION:** CG to edit MC's April Newsletter article; CS and MC to provide sidebar links for April Newsletter.
 - May Newsletter: WPI project updates—(1) analysis of the supply of available wood as a sustainable energy source; and (2) analysis of light pollution and potential solutions to mitigation.
 - **ACTION:** CC and CG/CBH to provide articles and sidebar links for May Newsletter; CBH/CG to obtain article from WPI students on light pollution.
 - June Newsletter: Organic Lawn Care
 - **ACTION:** CBH and CS to draft organic lawn care article for June Newsletter by mid-May.
- Redemption Rock News
 - Editor has offered EAC to provide paragraph on monthly EAC activity updates.
 - **ACTION:** CS to get clarification on what editor is seeking for EAC monthly update for Redemption Rock News and the deadline for submission.
 - **ACTION:** CBH to draft monthly update for Redemption Rock News based on meeting minutes and to include link to latest EAC Newsletter
 - Editor is seeking Hometown Hero nominations and received nominations for PG and CG. PG has suggested four founding EAC members be included. CBH suggests if that is the route then suggest focus on EAC wholly.
 - **ACTION:** CS, CG, and/or PG to follow-up with editor regarding Hometown Hero nominations.

Curbside Composting

- AW provided update.
 - Blackearthcompost.com provides 13 gallon or 4 gallon trash bins for compost collection with a once a week curbside collection option. They accept food and yard waste, as well as certain textiles. They are not yet servicing Princeton but are servicing Worcester. \$17.99 per month or \$99 for 6 months service. If more than 750 people in a community sign-up then there is a 30% discount. Participants get a voucher for a bag of compost.
 - **ACTION:** AW to inquire with Black Earth Compost as to what would be the threshold number of households participating for them to service Princeton.

WPI Project Updates

- CC provided updates.
 - CC and PG worked with WPI students on analysis of the supply of available wood as a sustainable energy source. The students created a final report with numbers and information that may be helpful for future EAC exploration of this issue.
 - **ACTION:** CC to share the WPI student report with EAC members.
 - CC wants to pursue idea of heating the proposed new public safety building with available wood and sought EAC support.

- **MOTION:** EAC supports CC moving forward to investigate where the Town may be able to heat municipal buildings with available wood residue.
 - Motion: CS; 2d: MC; Vote: 5-0.
- CG provided updates.
 - CG and CBH have been meeting with a group of WPI students a project related to assessing the issue of Light Pollution in town. Their final presentation will be made on 5/10 or 5/11.
 - Lighting survey was sent to town and has over 200 responses thus far.
 - CC suggested that the students interview Jeff Crowley from Wachusett Mountain.
 - EAC members discuss whether any final report will be “public record.”

Local Cultural Council Grant Update/Speaker Series Update

- CBH provided update.
 - The Princeton Cultural Council (PCC) awarded EAC a \$1,000 grant to support its Environmental Speaker Series. The grant will reimburse for monies spent for the Speaker Series. CBH coordinated completion of grant-related paperwork, getting signatures from Sherry Patch and sending the signed documents to the PCC.
- CBH reported on the planning work by CBH, CS, and CC with regard to the Speaker Series. - -
 - Next event will be on June 10 at 7p and will feature Dan Jaffe Wilder. Speaker fee is expected to be \$200. Topic will generally address native plants.
 - **ACTION:** CBH to finalize details on second event in Speaker Series with speaker Dan Jaffe Wilder.
 - CBH, CS, and CC proposed a 5th event in the speaker series to address sustainable lawn care to take place in September. EAC members do not object.
- CBH, CS, and CC would like to provide “thank you” gifts in lieu of fees from the EAC to the speakers of the first event in the series: Rick Rys (PMLD Light Commissioner and independent consulting engineer); and Joe Coles (Energy Efficiency Program Manager with the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company).
 - **MOTION:** To provide a thank you gift in lieu of speaker fees valued at up to \$30 per speaker.
 - Motion: CBH; 2d: CG; Vote: 6-0.
 - HL raised concerns about gifts to public officials. CBH understood law to allow gifts up to \$49 but will seek advice of Town Administrator.
 - **ACTION:** CBH to seek advice/counsel of Sherry Patch regarding gift in lieu of speaker fee to public official.

Public Safety Building Environmental/Energy Punchlist

- Per last EAC meeting all members were to email suggested ideas for environmental/energy considerations at new Public Safety Building to EAC email for CG and/or CBH compilation into one document for discussion. Only CBH provided suggested list.
- EAC members discussed need to timely complete and submit prioritized punchlist for consideration in building design, but agree that it makes sense to see if project is funded at Town Meeting before putting in extensive efforts.
- EAC members discussed creation of an EAC subcommittee to finalize a punchlist of items to submit to Selectboard for initial consideration and to prepare for EAC involvement in building design. EAC members volunteering to be on subcommittee: CBH, MC, and CC, and associate member CD. (In mid-May, PG will replace CC on subcommittee.)
 - **ACTION:** CBH, MC, CC, and CD to meet as subcommittee to finalize prioritized energy/environmental considerations punchlist for proposed Public Safety Building and

reach out to Selectboard.

- CC and HL discussed how wood burning as heat energy source might work in new Public Safety Building.
- HL noted architects said solar would not be suitable because of the East/West orientation of the proposed building. PG suggested the orientation of the building should be determined based on energy efficiency opportunities like solar.

Town Draft Snow and Ice Policy

- CBH provided update. No new updates since last meeting.
 - o **ACTION:** CBH, on behalf of the EAC, will analyze existing practices, guides, and plans in other communities; and identify opportunities for action items in Princeton—such as alternative materials or methods.
- CBH noted that the plan was for Highway Department, EAC, and Sherry Patch to meet again in May to assess proposed action items with regard to their realistic implementation and budget, and then revise the draft Snow and Ice Policy to address environmental considerations based on findings and deliberations, and then present that draft to the Selectboard.

Earth Month

- CG provided update.
 - o EAC has been asked to cleanup Rt. 31 from Rocky Pond Rd. to Westminster Line.
 - **ACTION:** MC to start cleanup of Rt. 31 from Rocky Pond Rd. to Westminster Line on Saturday, 4/24, and then update EAC members as to what is completed.
 - **ACTION:** EAC members to meet on Sunday, 4/25 at 9a to complete road section cleanup.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting (May 20, 2021 at 7p via online forum)

- Public Comment
- Review and Approve Minutes of April 22, 2021
- Green Communities Updates
- MVP Updates
- PMLD Updates
- Waste and Recycling Committee Updates
- Communications/EAC Webpage Updates
- Curbside Composting Updates
- WPI Project Updates
- EAC Speaker Series Updates
- Public Safety Building EAC Subcommittee Updates
- Snow and Ice Policy Updates
- Earth Month Recap
- Agenda items for Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

MOTION to adjourn.

Motion: CG; 2d: CBH; Vote: 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard

