

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **March 18, 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), Phil Gott (PG), Chris Samoiloff (CS)

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

*Also present:* Helga Lyons (HL) present as liaison from Advisory Committee; Caitlan Davis (CD) (applicant for Associate Member position)

**Public Comment:** None.

#### **Review & Approve Minutes from February 18, 2021 Meeting:**

- **MOTION** to approve as written with meeting date added.  
Motion: CG; 2d: CC; Vote: 6-0

#### **Student Member Update**

- EAC members briefly introduced themselves to new members.
- Anna White and Paul Fuchs have been appointed as non-voting EAC Student members. Anna and Paul introduced themselves, and stated their special interests. AW is interested in residential composting initiative—"Black Earth Compost Bins"—that involve retrieval of compost from your home to be composted at regional site; PF is interested in land conservation and repair café idea.
  - o **ACTION:** AW will explore details about Black Earth Compost and the possible feasibility of offering it in Princeton (e.g., is there is minimal number in community that must register in order for service to be offered in town?)
- Caitlan Davis applied for Student Member position, but EAC members have discussed recommending her appointment as a non-voting Associate Member. CD introduced herself—she is getting her masters in Landscape Architecture at UMass Amherst—and expressed her interests, which include conservation burial sites.
  - o HL noted there are 8 cemeteries in Princeton that are primarily historical and in need of maintenance in perpetuity.
  - o CG suggested EAC consider CD for an Associate Member position, which would be an appointed 1-year term (to June 2022) and would allow her to participate and deliberate, but not vote.
    - EAC members discussed their support of CD as an Associate Member
    - PG suggested consideration of CD as full member. CG noted that would be a 3-year commitment and may be more than CD could commit as she heads to graduate school in the fall. CBH noted hesitancy on full membership if CD would be residing in Amherst come fall, and not as a Princeton resident.

- **MOTION** to accept CD to EAC as an Associate Member for one year+ term to end June 30, 2022.

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

### **Shared Streets/Complete Streets Programs—Lighting**

- CBH brought issue to EAC.
  - o CBH noted that Princeton has received grant money through the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program and through the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. CBH explained that some related Town projects might include sidewalks or biking/walking lanes; and construction/reconstruction/rehabilitation of roadways—and generally accessible options for walking, biking, transit, and motorized vehicles. CBH noted that some of these projects may include lighting installations, and she suggested that the EAC reach out to the Selectboard and Sherry Patch to indicate the EAC's interest in being involved/offering suggestions for any lighting to include considerations that would avoid light pollution and light trespass.
    - **MOTION** to authorize CBH to draft 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.

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

### **Green Communities Designation Application**

- CBH provided update.
  - o Green Communities Designation Application was filed in early December (prior to the end of December deadline). Kelly Brown from Department of Energy Resources emailed CBH, Town Administrator Sherry Patch, and Sarah Adams from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), requesting more information be submitted/clarified by January 29, 2021. The information sought was timely provided.
  - o Although the Town adopted a Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy as required for its Green Community designation application, it has been determined that all Town-owned vehicles meet exemptions from this policy. Therefore, in order to achieve Green Community designation, the Town was asked to adopt an Alternative Fuel Compliance Policy. This was discussed at the Selectboard's 2/23/21 meeting. Sarah Adams led the discussion, and PG added his expertise; CBH also attended. The Selectboard adopted an "Alternative Fuel Compliance Policy," under which Princeton has (a) adopted an anti-idling policy intended to reduce vehicle fuel consumption and emissions in municipal vehicles; (b) committed to installing on municipal vehicles engine idle management systems to conserve fuel; and (c) committed to fleet right sizing in an effort to balance municipal fleet composition and operational requirements such that each asset within a fleet is fully utilized and the right size for the job. With this policy adopted, the Green Communities Designation Application was again timely completed.
  - o CBH expected the Town would hear about Green Communities designation in April 2021.
  - o HL had previously inquired whether Green Community grant funds could be used to install energy efficient options at new building. CBH sought an answer from Sarah Adams, and reported that "Princeton would not be able to use Green Community Grant

funds for energy efficiency parts of the design of the new Public Safety Complex” as “Green Communities funding can only be used to improve efficiency at existing buildings that are included in the baseline.” Sarah had noted that since the Town had been entering energy use data into the MEI for the existing Public Safety Complex for baseline and subsequent years, when the new complex is complete, the Town can complete a building stock change calculation that will track the energy use associated with the old building, compared to the new building moving forward (and also account for any changes in square footage). Therefore, with a more efficient new building, the Town will ideally see the new complex really progress the goal of a 20% reduction in the Town’s total energy use.

- CBH also noted that Karen Cruise, Selectboard Chair, had recently expressed that the EAC would be brought on board to work with the Building Committee on energy efficiency and environmental-related choices.

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

- PG provided update.
  - A public listening session—led by CMRPC--on the MVP planning process and draft report was recently held. Rick Rys offered some substantive suggestions at this session that will be included in the MVP report—a final version of which is expected in April 2021 (well before the June 2021 deadline for submittal to the Commonwealth).
  - PG noted that the MVP can fund regional project/ collaborative grants. PG and HL plan to attend a 3/25/21 seminar on collaborating to write regional grants.

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

- PG provided update.
  - Since last EAC meeting, there has been no PMLD-related news that impacts EAC.
  - PG noted that there had been some discussion with PMLD on changing language in the draft MVP report related to PMLD (as relates to tree-trimming efforts, and MVP language aimed at removing trees that may shade streets as a means to combat ice accumulation on roads)

### **Waste and Recycling**

- CG provided update.
  - The Waste and Recycling Committee (WRC) is working on Requests for Proposals for waste haulers and an Implementation Plan
  - MC was appointed by the Selectboard as an alternate on the WRC.

### **Communications /EAC Webpage Updates**

- CS provided updates.
  - EAC’s April 1 Environmental Speaker Series Event is on the EAC webpage, and CC put event posters around town.
  - CS requested updates to Webpage—particularly MVP and Green Communities sections.
    - **ACTION:** PG to draft update regarding MVP for EAC webpage.
    - **ACTION:** CBH to draft update regarding Green Communities for EAC webpage.
  - March Newsletter was “published” with article written by CBH.
  - **ACTION:** MC to draft article for April Newsletter
  - CS started discussion on newsletter topics for May and June. EAC members agree on May Newsletter topic of WPI Projects—(1) analysis of the supply of available wood as

a sustainable energy source; and (2) analysis of light pollution and potential solutions to reduction.

- CC proposed idea of collecting emails for EAC requests for support and sharing of information.
  - o CS noted her concerns with the legality of collecting emails.
  - o CS noted that EAC Newsletter subscribers are automated and she does not have the emails of subscribers.
  - o EAC members discussed and concluded that the Town News would be the best avenue for sharing EAC news outside of the Newsletter subscription.

### **Sterling Composting**

- CS provided update.
  - o The Town of Sterling is creating a Composting Facility that will accept food waste. CS to follow-up to seek more information and details on this facility so that the EAC might inform Princeton residents. CS's report as discussed at EAC meeting is attached to these meeting minutes. (See attachment.)

### **Public Safety Building**

- CS provided update.
  - o CS attended a Public Safety Building Information Meeting. CS made report to EAC on this information session. (See attachment for CS report.)
- CG noted many possibilities with which energy and environmental considerations might be implemented in new Public Safety Building design.
  - o EAC members discuss creation of an EAC subcommittee to research in-depth a "punch list" of items that might be included so that EAC is prepared to engage when Selectboard calls for EAC involvement.
  - o **ACTION:** All EAC members to create list of suggestions of ideas for environmental/energy considerations at new Public Safety Building and email them to EAC email for CG and/or CBH to compile into one list for discussion at next EAC meeting.
  - o **ACTION:** EAC members to consider if they'd like to serve on EAC Public Safety Building subcommittee, and to "raise hand" to be on subcommittee at next EAC meeting if interested.

### **WPI Project Updates**

- CC provided updates.
  - o 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.
- CG provided updates.
  - o CG reported that she and CBH have been meeting with a group of WPI students that they will be working on a project related to assessing the issue of Light Pollution in town.
  - o CG circulated to the EAC the WPI students' "Final Project Proposal": "Assessing the State of Light Pollution in Princeton, MA and Developing Best Approaches to Mitigation."
    - PG noted his concerns about "broad statements" that may not be true. E.g., all LED's are bad; and all incandescent lights are good with regard to light pollution. PG suggests the students be advised not to make such "sweeping statements."

## Local Cultural Council Grant Update/Speaker Series Update

- CBH provided update.
  - o 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 Environmental Speaker Series. CBH noted that grants were expected to be announced between late February and late March.
- CBH reported on the planning work by CBH, CS, and CC with regard to the Speaker Series. The first event in the series will take virtually on April 1: "Energy Savings for Today and Tomorrow" with speakers Rick Rys (PMLD Light Commissioner and independent consulting engineer); and Joe Coles (Energy Efficiency Program Manager with the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company).
- CBH submitted announcement of April 1 event to Redemption Rock News, but despite assurances from editor that it would be included in the March issue, it was not.
- **ACTION:** CBH to submit announcement of April 1 event to The Landmark.
- CBH noted that for the second event in the series—to be scheduled for June—on "Healthy Landscape Management," CBH, CS, and CC had focused the topic to possibly include organic lawncare, lawn alternatives, natives, invasives, IPM. MC has possible speaker that could address all but organic lawncare. CBH noted her preference for not focusing on lawncare as lawns aren't environmentally friendly, but noted CS preference for including lawncare, and CC noted that realistically most folks will keep lawns. CBH asked EAC members for opinions, but ultimately, EAC concluded this could be left for the subcommittee to finalize.

## Town Draft Snow and Ice Policy

- CBH provided update.
  - o CBH reminded EAC members 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.
  - o CBH met with Sherry Patch, (Town Administrator) Ben Metcalf (Highway Superintendent) and Andrew Santry (Highway Foreman) on March 11 for a project kick-off meeting.
    - CBH reported Highway Department already seemed to be aware of environmental considerations related to snow and ice, and that Ben Metcalf noted his particular concern with sand remaining in waterways. CBH reported that Highway Department is building storage for sand/salt. CBH reported that Ben and Andrew noted that they calibrated the sand/salt equipment this year with pre-calibration levels of sand/salt application at 1200-1400 pounds per line mile and post-calibration levels of 250-450 pounds per line mile.
    - CBH explained that she addressed the meeting noting that both the Environmental Action Plan and the MVP report suggest actions related to road salt and sand for winter road maintenance because of impacts to wetlands and stormwater drainage (and associated flooding risks) and health effects of increased salt in drinking water. CBH offered EAC's goal was to balance public safety with environmental and public health concerns in a cost-effect manner.
    - Going forward, the Highway Department will do an audit and draft a brief report as to their current equipment, practices/methods of sand/salt use application, and current training of staff. Sherry Patch will reach out to other small towns to see

how they might have included environmental considerations in their snow and ice policies. 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.

- The team expects 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.
- PG noted that sand on roadways must be disposed of as hazardous waste. He wondered why and why it cannot be reused. CBH suggested it perhaps because it is contaminated with auto oils, etc.
  - **ACTION:** CBH to research and respond to PG's inquiry as to why winter road sand cannot be collected for reuse and must be disposed of as hazardous waste.

### **Fossil-Free Construction/Net-Zero Building**

- CBH and PG reported that Bill S.9 was on 3/18/21 passed through both the State House and Senate and “re-enacted and again laid before the Governor.” CBH reported that she had found news stories reporting that the revised bill had “adopted a great majority of the amendments that Governor Charlie Baker suggested.” CBH reported that specifically as may relate to Princeton, the latest version of the bill provides for a municipal “opt-in” to specialized stretch energy code, that would require net-zero building, but also provided that a community designated as a Green Community that elects not to adopt the municipal opt-in specialized stretch energy code shall not lose its designation as a green community as a result of that election.
- PG reported that town resident Richard Chase had informed PG that net-zero building would be less than 1% increase in cost. But PG wondered increase as compared to what? Requirements of the Stretch Energy Code?

### **Earth Month**

- CG provided update.
  - CG gave a description of the April 2021 Earth Month Townwide Cleanup event.
  - **ACTION:** CG to update CS with information and a link to the Open Space Committee webpage with updates on this event.
  - **ACTION:** CS to update EAC webpage with information on April 2021 Earth Month Townwide Cleanup.
- PG suggested that participants in the cleanup should tally the collected beverage containers and the Selectboard write to the manufacturers of beverage found to be most prevalent, suggesting they market proper disposal of containers.

### **Matt Charpentier Presentation**

- MC is proposing a natural resource inventory in town to include inventory of endangered species. He would like to engage Town committees and organizations to participate. He will be making a presentation to the Princeton Conservation Commission at their meeting on 3/30 at 7p.
  - MC would like to make presentation on this to EAC. EAC discussed best date, and agreed for MC to present to EAC at their 4/15 EAC meeting.

### **Agenda Items for Next Meeting (April 15, 2021 at 7p via online forum)**

- Public Comment

- Review and Approve Minutes of March 18, 2021
- Green Communities Updates
- MVP Updates
- PMLD Updates
- Waste and Recycling Updates
- Communications/EAC Webpage Updates
- WPI Project Updates
- LCC Grant/EAC Speaker Series Updates
- Public Safety Building Environmental/Energy Punchlist
- Agenda items for Next Meeting

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:22 p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard

ATTACHMENT:

**Chris Samoiloff Notes on Public Safety Building Meeting and Sterling Composting Initiative:**

## Public Safety Building Meeting Notes

### February 25, 2021 Information Sharing via GoToMeeting

They couldn't realistically reuse the existing building as part of a larger building because of some structural issues in the back of the building and because of its positioning on the lot.

They went with a compromised version of a new building. Not the most expensive version, but it still meets the needs of both the police and fire departments.

The cost of the building would add \$461/year to people's tax bills, at least initially.

I asked a question about what looked like solar panels on their building rendering. The architect said by law building roofs have to be built to support panels. It was an option they hadn't looked at yet. Karen spoke up and said they would definitely be engaging with the EAC as the project went forward. That's my big takeaway from the presentation.

It looks like all the HVAC/heating stuff will be in a loft above a section of the building (it's a two-story building but there will be no public spaces/elevator).

You can see the presentation, including a recording of the meeting, here:

<https://www.town.princeton.ma.us/selectboard/pages/new-public-safety-building>

## Sterling Recycling Initiative

I reached out to Blaine Bershad, the contact I got from Claire, on March 1<sup>st</sup>. They are in the figuring-things-out stage, so it was good for them (he cc'd their DPW director, Paul Lyons, and their Environmental Planning Consultant, Bob Spencer, from Vermont).

I had shared a link to our town webpage and our food waste newsletter when I reached out, and he forwarded the newsletter on to them as well.

They had just finished up their site evaluation with Bob that afternoon and the site was perfect and much larger than expected, giving them room for expansion.

From his response:



“I think taking material from all of the communities involved with Wachusett Resource Center needs to be discussed. We were originally discussing making this smaller for Sterling, expanding it as we go along. It could be that we’ll do better making our starting point larger.

There is no question in my mind that we’ll be able to take food waste from larger operations. By doing this and charging competitive rates, we’ll be able to fund the operation, essentially making it possible to accomplish. I know we’ll be able to get some setup assistance from MassDEP - its people have been quite wonderful to work with.”

And what Bob sent in response:

“As Blaine said there is significant potential for the Sterling DPW site to compost food scraps generated in the region. My work is sponsored by RecyclingWorks and will assist Sterling in establishing a cost-effective regional facility.”