

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

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **June 17, 2021**

**Meeting called to order** at 7:10pm

*Committee members present (in person):*

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

*Committee members present (via remote):*

Matt Charpentier (MC)

*Student Committee members present:* Anna White (AW), Paul Fuchs (PF) (PF left the meeting at 8:44p)

*Associate members present:* Caitlan Davis (CD)

*Also present (virtually):* Helga Lyons (HL) present as liaison from Advisory Committee

**Public Comment:** None.

#### **Review & Approve Minutes from April 22, 2021 and May 20, 2021 Meetings:**

- **MOTION** to approve April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes with minor typographical edits  
Motion: CS; 2d: CG; Vote: 5-0 (PG abstained)
- **MOTION** to approve May 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes with minor typographical edits  
Motion: PG; 2d: CS; Vote: 4-0 (CC and CG abstained)

#### **Election of Officers**

MOTION to elect CG as Chair and CBH as Vice Chair for 2021 to 2022 term.

#### **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. Sarah Adams from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) coordinated and held a meeting with interested town stakeholders on April 26. Meeting involved discussion of priority budget items with biggest return on energy savings. Sarah was to then finalize list and then seek bids from vendors. Another meeting is to be held on June 24.
    - HL had questions about potential budget items:
    - *Goodnow Memorial Library Boiler/Water Heater had a very long payback period that CMRPC had previously voiced might make it ineligible for Green Communities funding. It appears on the “final” list for funding—wondering if the payback estimate has changed or if there are other considerations for including it and/or if it should come off the list?*

- *The Heat Pump Air Handling Units at PMLD are estimated to cost \$30,000 with only a \$77 projected annual cost savings. Is there any chance that \$77 is a typo? If this has such a significant cost but minimal cost savings, what is the reason for inclusion—does it have a significant energy use percentage savings? From a monetary perspective it seems like an investment that won't get much payback.*
- *If any of the proposals for funding we make are rejected by DOER, is Princeton still “guaranteed” the \$130k+ in Green Communities Designation grant funding? Would we simply need to revise the submittal? Or is a portion of the funding lost?*
- **ACTION:** CBH to reach out to Sarah Adams at CMPRC with these questions.

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

- PG provided update: MVP Plan has been submitted for review by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). The Princeton MVP liaison at CMRPC is now Dani Martin. PG recently asked for update on Princeton's MVP Plan submission but did not yet receive a response. After Princeton's MVP Plan is approved, PG is not sure what happens as far as funding, noting that the FY2020 funding is first come first serve and the FY2021 bids are due in October.

### **PFAS Information Sharing**

- The Selectboard drafted a PFAS Information Sharing Plan, which highlighted EAC's role in information sharing.
- MC reported that as EAC PFAS Liaison to the Selectboard he had not yet received any marching orders.
- EAC members discussed potential PFAS Information sharing efforts, including posting information on the EAC website, via Redemption Rock News, the EAC's The Green News newsletter, the EAC's speaker series (with planning for a September speaker on drinking water quality and private well testing).
  - CBH offered to draft an article on PFAS generally, and EAC members agreed to support that effort.
  - CC suggested EAC should be sharing information on town PFAS remediation program now too, but MC and CBH suggested EAC wait for Selectboard direction and specific authorization with regard to sharing of that such information.
  - PG inquired about the technologies being used for PFAS remediation, and CS also suggested the idea of fungi and microbes as a PFAS solution.
    - **ACTION:** CBH to draft article on PFAS generally
    - **ACTION:** CBH to draft blurb for Redemption Rock News on PFAS Information Sharing Plan and EAC role.
    - **ACTION:** AW to create infographic on PFAS

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

- PG provide update. (See attached notes.)
- CBH noted that the Planning Board is considering Solar Zoning as a possible action item this year and noted that PMLD might want to coordinate with the Planning Board on solar-related topics.

### **Waste and Recycling**

- CG provided update the Requests for Proposals (RFP) drafted by the Waste and Recycling Committee (WRC) was approved by Town Counsel and the Selectboard. The RFP is set to go

out next week. If there is no response to the RFP, the WRC will look to a Plan B.

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

- CS provided updates.
  - o Webpage:
    - CS did not reach out to Town Clerk with regard to options for EAC website; creating a separate EAC website would be “a lot of work for little return.” EAC members agreed it was not worth the effort at this time, and to table the issue/idea for now.
    - **ACTION:** CS will put WPI project presentations on the EAC website.
  - o Newsletter:
    - June Newsletter: Organic Lawn Care. CS wrote the issue and it was sent out to subscribers.
    - CS suggests the newsletter be issued bi-monthly given the amount of work involved in each issue. EAC members agree.
    - July Newsletter: “Round-Up”
      - **ACTION:** EAC members to provide CS with links related to EAC issues addressed for a “round-up” of information on the off-month of the Newsletter.
    - August Newsletter: WPI project update on analysis of public attitudes on light pollution in Princeton and possible methods to mitigate light pollution in Princeton
      - **ACTION:** CBH and CG to draft article for August Newsletter.
    - September Newsletter: PFAS
      - **ACTION:** CBH to draft general PFAS information article
    - CS suggests local interview/questionnaire to highlight members in Newsletter issue
  - o Redemption Rock News (RRN)
    - Editor has offered EAC to provide paragraph on monthly EAC activity updates.
      - **ACTION:** CBH to draft blurb Redemption Rock News on EAC’s role in Selectboard’s Information Sharing Plan

### **Curbside Composting**

- AW provided update.
  - o AW had previously reported on Blackearthcompost.com, which offers curbside composting service.
  - o **ACTION:** AW to inquire with Black Earth Compost as to what would be the threshold number of households participating for them to service Princeton.
- **ACTION:** In September CS to pursue information/updates on Sterling Townwide Composting project and whether they will invite other communities to participate

### **WPI Project Updates**

- **ACTION:** CBH to share link to recording to CS for posting on EAC page.
- EAC agreed that a future EAC meeting should address how to proceed with WPI student project reports
- CC noted the valuable resource of these students, including for possible future research

### **Local Cultural Council Grant Update/Speaker Series Update**

- CBH provided update.
  - o The EAC held a Speaker Series event on June 10 at 7p, featuring Dan Jaffe Wilder. Speaker. Dan generally addressed low-maintenance landscaping, and including native plants. The event was recorded.
    - **ACTION:** CS to post recordings of Speakers Series Events on EAC webpage.
- **ACTION:** Speaker Series Subcommittee (CC, CS, CBH) will meet to plan the September speaker series event focused on drinking water quality and testing

### **Plant Sales Group with Wachusett Garden Club Idea**

- CS raised the idea of EAC helping with accessibility regarding native plants to Princeton residents.
  - o **ACTION:** CS to reach out to Dot Odgren (Wachusett Garden Club) about possibly coordinating native plant sale
  - o **ACTION:** CD to inquire as to whether a landscape company may be able to help offer wholesale prices on native plant purchases as part of coordinated effort with Princeton residents
  - o **ACTION:** MC to clarify with Dan Jaffe Wilder how a group of residents might obtain wholesale native plant prices

### **Public Safety Building Environmental/Energy Punchlist**

- PG provided update:
  - o PG, as EAC liaison to PSB committee, reached out to the Selectboard, but had not yet received a response.
  - o PG noted that with reformation of PSB committee, there is an opportunity to include climate-resilient and site-specific building design

### **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.

### **Center School Demolition Architectural Salvage Project**

- CG explained that Nathaniel Gove had encouraged the Town to, with regard to the new Public Safety Building and possible demolition of parts or all of the Center School, incorporate time for historical salvage into the demo/building schedule. This is something that would need to go out to bid. This is not an EAC project.

### **Priority Actions Items Review**

- EAC members discussed that it was time to provide the Selectboard with an updated “EAC Priority Action Items” list for review and approval. EAC members agreed to the following priority action items: Town Opt-Out of State Mosquito Spraying to involve drafting an Alternative Mosquito Management Plan; Community Outreach regarding Light Pollution and Mitigation of Light Pollution; Feasibility of a Town Landscape and Pest Management Plan; Green Communities; MVP; PFAS; Available Wood; EAC Communications.
  - o **MOTION:** CBH and CG to draft updated EAC priority action items list and send to Selectboard.
    - Mot: CBH; 2d: PG; Vote: 6-0.

- With regard to a Town Landscape Management and Alternative Pest Management Plan, MC suggested that the EAC look to other towns like Cambridge and Somerville, including how they require incorporation of native plantings, and CD suggested looking at UMass Amherst's Integrated Pest Management information, and CS suggested exploring a TURI grant.

**Agenda Items for Next Meeting (June 17, 2021 at 7p)**

- Public Comment
- Review and Approve Minutes of June 17, 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
- Plant Sales Group with Wachusett Garden Club Idea Updates
- Public Safety Building EAC Subcommittee Updates
- Snow and Ice Policy Updates
- Priority Action Items Updates
- Agenda items for Next Meeting

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:19 p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard

**Princeton Municipal Light Department notes  
Board of Electric Light Commissioners Meeting  
June 9, 2021**

Items of interest to the EAC are:

**S9 compliance:**

It appears that the best (lowest cost and risk) way to comply is to sell our wind RECS and buy lower costs RECS. Wind RECS are selling for a premium at the moment. Selling them will generate revenue that can be used to buy lower cost RECS for other “green” technologies. There was some discussion that the laws of supply and demand may cause the prices of all RECS to increase in the future.

There was further discussion about the life expectancy of the wind turbines going forward. One of the gearboxes is showing notable indications of wear in the last oil analysis undertaken. Various strategies and possibilities were discussed as to what to do about this, but no firm resolution of any action to be taken at this time other than to continue to monitor and maintain them.

**Green Muni Meeting discussion**

These meetings were conceived during discussions amongst MLP board candidates sponsored by the Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM). This information was discussed by Phil Gott at the PMKLD meeting and is included below:

Meeting topic: Dealing with Solar installations, a topic suggested by Phil Gott, Princeton Electric Light Commissioner

After a brief introduction of the topic from Phil Gott, Commissioners from various towns gave their thoughts on how they are or should be dealing with this distributed power installations. While Phil’s intention was to address the topic of the rate structure and how it is impacted by decreasing demand for total power, it was clear that none of the towns have given much thought about how to sustain revenue for operation of the MLP in the face of potentially long term declines of net sales of electric power. Nonetheless, the information provided was interesting. Below is a summary of what each town representative said.

**Overall:**

Participants agreed that for the moment, solar power installations in town should be handled the same way as efficiency improvements. In other words, they see no need to change their rate structure. No thoughts about what to do if and when revenues decline significantly. There was a lot of discussion about the benefits of peak shaving with batteries. There was a lot of interest in this with the chief hurdle apparently being the ability to pay the up front costs.

**Groton:**

- Currently 64% carbon free with a combination of Nuclear, Wind and Solar (including MLP-owned arrays on rooftops of municipal buildings and on an abandoned landfill). Have part ownership of Seabrook, Millstone and Berkshire Wind. Their rate is \$0.11/kWh. Groton has \$3 million “in the bank.” (In a private meeting with another Groton Commissioner in 2019 I learned that at that time Groton had contracts to buy about 80% of their power at fixed rates, filling in the remaining 20% from the spot market at an average price of \$0.025/kWh or less.)
- Groton pays the wholesale power rate for power exported by homeowners back into the Groton grid.

- Is purchasing a 5 mW battery for peak shaving, to be recharged by purchased off-peak power or excess solar power as appropriate. Plans are to expand this to from 5 to 15 mW in the future.
- Installing 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Eaton smart meters for time-of-day billing. The Eaton meters were chosen for 2 reasons: 1) they can communicate by cellular links (a number of cellular receivers have been placed around town) and 2) advanced software enables billing features they seek. The Groton MLP is paying 50% cash for these meters, the balance being financed by MMWEC at 3%.

#### Wellesley

- Paying full retail for power exported by homeowners back into their grid.

#### Hull

- Investing in 48 mW of offshore wind (3 turbines) and a smaller underwater turbine in Hull Gut. Their goal is to be a net exporter of power to other users outside of Hull. I gather their intent is that this will financially isolate them from declines in power demand within their own grid.
- Solar power installations are limited to 15 kW
- Net metering is used, but any balance due the homeowner is zeroed out at the end of every year.
- Using smart meters (5G communications) and dynamic pricing

#### Wakefield

- Pay full retail for power exported by homeowners back into their grid.
- Investing \$100,000 per year to help homeowners install solar power. Average take is 10 customers pre year.

#### Hingham

- Using smart meters with time of day pricing
- Expressed interest in buying power from Hingham

#### Belmont

- The impact of solar power installations should be treated just like the impact of efficiency improvements

#### Peaking Generator

The peaking generator is up and running and “caught” an unexpected peak in May, just after it was installed. Research into running it on biodiesel by both Sean McKeon and Phil Gott indicated that it would not be wise to do so at this time due to possible impacts on operation and reliability.

#### HELPS Program update

Sean is working with MMWEC to get a HELPS-like program in place for commercial buildings, similar to the one in place for residential.

#### Nextera contract

The Nextera contract is under review with the objective of meeting the S9 requirements for MLPs to reduce carbon emissions and increase reliance on renewable power. Discussions took place in executive session.

Respectfully submitted by Philip Gott: Note that these notes reflect only his understanding of the meeting and have not been reviewed by other commissioners. Any discrepancy between these notes and the official approved minutes of the PMLD meeting is unintentional, and the official notes should prevail.