**Town of Princeton**

**Environmental Action Committee (EAC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 13th 2023**

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

*Committee members present via remote*: (Attendees via remote access only due to inclement weather). Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH), Claire Golding (CG), Phil Gott (PG), Steve Jones (SJ), Kaitlin Kohberger (KK), Forrest Iwanik (FI)

*Committee members absent*: Matt Charpentier (MC) (arrived in last minutes of meeting)

*Advisory Committee liaison*: none present

* No public comment (no public present)
* Minutes Approval
  + **February 13th – SJ moved to accept as written, PG seconded, unanimous approval.**
  + **February 23rd – CG moved to accept as written, SJ seconded, unanimous approval.**
* Updates on action items and liaison positions.
  + See Compiled updates attached. (Distributed to members in advance of meeting and open to discussion at meeting.)
  + PG provided an update on MVP Grant status – he and CBH reported that Princeton will not be applying for one this year (largely due to the complexity of the grant application process.) PG to share his report on the matter with the rest of the EAC.
  + MVP climate conference concluded that for our region flood risks would be lower because of decreased overall rain and that forest health would be less impacted than originally thought. Both of those conclusions were not in line with what we were expecting them to suggest as heavy rain events are expected to become more frequent and severe and there seems to be ample evidence that our forests will be impacted by droughts and invasive species.
* Member Recruitment
  + KK has a target for possible full membership, will update with more info later.
  + PG is running (currently unopposed) for the Select Board so we may need to find a replacement for him.

\*\*Lost connection to meeting around 7:30 due to a virtual meeting scheduling issue with the Parks and Rec Department. Back online at 7:39 with CG and KK, all members present again at 7:48.

* Climate Campaign
  + PG held his educational talk about fuel efficiency in February.
  + FI’s March Green News Brief on Stormwater Management has been distributed.
    - Brief discussion was held about whether or not we should try to extend the reach of the GNB to other towns/groups on social media. General conclusions was to leave things as they are, currently targeting Princeton residents. If they choose to pass on that information that is wonderful.
  + April
    - GNB topic will be Native Plants, lead by CBH and MC. Possible outreach events include re-releasing last year’s talk on the topic and joining up with the Garden Club for their Plant Sale.
  + May
    - GNB topic is Local Food and Agriculture, to be led by FI who will reach out to Charlie Cary to determine his interest in still being involved and to the Ag Committee about EAC involvement at Princeton Farm Day (5/21/23.) John Mirick has requested a possible “kid-friendly” activity.
    - Open Space Committee to lead nature walks in May and early June, looking for EAC support in outreach. Members were receptive to the idea, CBH will reach back out to Rick Gardner with ideas to mention the walks in the GNB, possibly create posters.
  + Earth Month
    - Open Space Committee has requested that EAC share the burden of cost for Earth Month activities to the tune of ~$130. After discussion, **CBH moved to appropriate up to $300 to help with the cost burden of Earth Month and the upcoming nature walks. CG seconded, unanimous approval.**
    - Thomas Prince School inquired about EAC interest in having a table at school events such as book fairs, school nights, etc. Unanimous support among members for that idea.
    - Gary Menin wants to talk to us and Princeton residents more broadly about rodenticide use’s adverse effects on ecosystems. CBH will reach back out to him to explore the opportunity.
  + Rain Barrel Event
    - Pick-up date has been moved to Thursday, May 25th. Same time and date as before.
  + Worcester Road Improvements
    - PG updated the committee that they plan to include night sky compliant lighting and native plants in the pollinator friendly rain gardens. When asked for other requests from EAC, none were proposed at the time.
  + Master Plan Steering Committee
    - CG welcomes all input on the existing chapter drafts, particularly on EAP/Sustainability/Climate issues. Deadline for input 3/18.
  + TPS inclusion in energy audit is still on hold until budget season is over.
  + Agenda items same for next meeting, April 10th.
  + MC arrived at 8:40, will talk separately with CBH about April Climate Campaign.
  + **Motion to adjourn unanimous**

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Iwanik

**EAC Working Group Updates for Review and Discussion at EAC March Meeting:**

**Green Communities Initiative Update (CBH) (PG)**

*No new updates.*

**Snow & Ice Policy (CBH)**

*No new updates.*

**Climate Resiliency Outreach Campaign (CBH)**

*(See Communications updates below.)*

**MVP (PG)**

*No new updates.*

**PFAS Information Sharing (FI)**

*No new updates.*

**Communications/Newsletter/Website (CG) (CBH)**

- ***March Green News*** *Brief* topic is: “Stormwater Management” – FI wrote the issue with editing from CG. Should be published before next meeting.

- March- in-person event: EAC has partnered with Worcester’s Community Rain Barrel sales event to offer Princeton residents the opportunity to order rain barrels from the Great American Rain Barrel website at near to wholesale prices—with order pickup on May 22 at Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center in Worcester.

- **April Green News Brief** **– topic is “Native Plants and Sustainable Landscaping**” MC and CBH (and CS?). Typically, the goal has been to complete draft by 15th of prior month to allow time for edits and finalization and publication.

- Need to brainstorm in-person ideas. (Garden club collaboration)?

- **May Green News Brief- Local Food and Agriculture**- FI, CC?. At Chairs’ breakfast, CBH told Ag Commission member John Mirick that EAC is interested in collaborating on “local food and agriculture”. Ag Commission is hosting Farm Day 5/21 at 4 locations in town: Rattle Root Farm; Audubon; Alpaca Farm on Ball Hill; and one more.. They are also considering a farmer’s market for the season.

- **June Green News Brief- Invasive Species: Plants and Insects** – MC and KK. At Chairs’ breakfast, Conservation Commission Chair Brian Keevan expressed interested in this topic and might be interested in collaborating. He is hosting a nature walk in May on invasive species.

- Still need to make website corrections/updates. CBH reached out to new Town Clerk who said she’d train CBH as to how to make changes to pages once she is settled into her new position.

**EAC Liaison Updates:**

**Public Safety Building Committee (PG)**

*No new updates.*

**Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) update** **(CG)**

No meeting has yet been scheduled to discuss the draft chapters.

**Waste and Recycling Committee Update (CG)**

Committee was we were supposed to meet 3/9, but meeting was cancelled and has not yet been rescheduled.

**Princeton Solar Farm Working Group (CBH)**

- *No new updates.*

**Earth Month Working Group (CG) (CBH)**

The 4th Annual Earth Month will kick-off April 1! EAC to consider splitting some minor related costs for signs, prizes, end-of-event celebration. (To discuss at EAC meeting.)

The promotion for the event should be in Redemption Rock News’ March issue. Signs for the event have arrived and will go up around town at the end of March. The website for the event (via Open Space Committee page on Town website) is now functional for the 2023 event.

**Open Space Committee (GP)**

*No new updates.*

Open Space Committee is hosting a series of nature walks this May, guided by various experts, and have asked the EAC to co-sponsor the events. (To discuss at EAC meeting.)

**PMLD (PG)**

*No new updates.*

Public Information Session Report to EAC

Worcester Road Reconstruction Meeting

February 13, 2023

This project is the first of several phases of a reconstruction of Worcester Rd (Rte 31) from the Holden line to the Junction of Rte 62 in Princeton Center. This phase deals with a 1200 foot strip from Post Office Place to the entrance of the PMLD Parking Lot. This 1200 foot strip is part of a 4000 foot long project from Hickory Drive to the PMLD parking lot entrance. When complete this 4000-foot strip will have sidewalks, Dark Sky compliant lamp posts and rain gardens to manage water runoff and help prevent erosion of the earth adjacent to the road pavement at several points along the way. Aesthetically it will be similar to the Rte 140 project in East Princeton. The Phase 1 funding (~$550,000 including $50k from the Town) is only sufficient for sidewalks and rain gardens in the 1200 foot strip. Lamp Posts will come in subsequent phases.

Sidewalks and road crossings will be ADA compliant. Unlike East Princeton, there will be no obstructions in the sidewalks. In front of Post Office Place the sidewalks are planned to be adjacent to the road, but North of Monti Market the sidewalks will have a barrier strip of grass and trees between the sidewalk and the roadway. No land takings are planned as the current right of way for Rte 31 has sufficient width for the planned roadway, sidewalks and barrier strip.

This 1200 foot strip will assist in the objective to develop revenue from Ecotourism in Princeton. It provides a safe walking path connecting the Trailhead between Monti Market and PMLD with Mountain Barn and the businesses in the old Auto Museum area as well as Post Office Place.

Meeting Report

PMLD Board of Commissioners

February 15, 2023

This report provides a summary of This PMLD meeting on points relevant to the Princeton EAC.

**Sustainability**

* Richard Chase indicated that **Princeton Solar Farm continues to look possible.** The SelectBoard considers this a good idea and will do their part to move it forward. Next steps are:
  + Draft warrant article for the Town Meeting to lease the old landfill land for a solar farm
  + Obtain a Post-closure Use permit for the old landfill
  + PMLD to complete the primary connection to Sterling to enable export of power beyond the town line
  + Continue to work on a land sway deal with DCR to enable the use of the old gravel pit, currently owned by DCR, as an expansion of the solar farm. Note that this is a long-term goal and we will attempt to attract a developer/owner/operator for a solar farm on the town-owned old landfill area only as a first phase of solar farm development. Richard mentioned that the evolution of solar panel technology should allow for sufficient generation capacity on the old landfill site to be commercially attractive.
* **The wind turbines** continue to be non-operational due to the lightning strikes in September of last year. As reported earlier, the final problem (lack of speed control) was thought to be in the programming of control circuit cards, but these have been reprogrammed with no change in results. Remote diagnostics have been set up with the Austrian-based vendor and we are optimistic that’s they will be able to determine the root cause of this final issue.
* **Electric power demand declined** in 2022 compared to 2021 despite the growth in the number of customers and the installation of several heat pumps. PMLD sold 1,313,293 kWhr in 2022 versus 1,512,606 in 2021. This decline was attributed to several new residential solar installations in town and people returning to work in offices rather than at home.

**Sterling Connection**

* Further progress awaits the hiring of a new General Manager for the Sterling Municipal Light Department. They are in the interview phase at the moment.

**Peak Shaving**

* Progress towards the installation of a peak shaving battery continues. While it is still early in the process, it looks as if we are on track to capture the summer peaks in 2024 with a battery installation in the wind farm area.
* MMWEC forecasts for peak loads suggest that a Diesel Gen set could save us as much a $90,000 in 2023 even with the high prices of Diesel fuel. Contrry to what was reported earlier, PMLD is considering the leasing of a Gen set to shave the summer peaks, as we did in 2021 and 2022. Savings in those years were about $140,000 and $38,000, respectively.

Respectfully submitted by Philip Gott

**DISCLAIMER;**

These notes have not been reviewed by any other attendee. Any differences between these notes and the actual minutes of PMLD are unintentional and my mistake. In the event of discrepancies, the actual minutes should be referenced and considered accurate.