

Task Force on the Climate Emergency
Minutes for meeting 1/25/2021, 3:30 PM.

1. Call to order: 3:36PM Jen Crandall, Brian Booher, Cornell Knight, Sirohi Kumar, Ruth Poland, Tobin Peacock, Margaret Jeffery, Kristen Murphy, Jill Goldthwait, Norm Burdzel
2. Approval of Minutes: Sirohi moves to approve, Jill seconds. All voting members approve.
3. Adoption of Agenda: Jen moves to adopt the agenda, Sirohi seconds. All voting members approve. (Jen, Brian, Sirohi, Margaret, Jill, Norm)
4. Public Comment. No comment at this time.
5. Regular Business
 - A. ACTT presents about the Salsbury Solar Farm initiative (now known as Higgins Pit). Lawson and Beth joined us to speak about the Higgins Pit Solar Farm initiative. They began with a land acknowledgment--we are on Wabanaki land and making recommendations for how to be stewards of it. The hope is that the solar farm would power all town facilities and schools and offer low cost power for non-profits and low income folks. This is town land and ACTT is facilitating the process but is not in the business of building solar farms. Currently in the feasibility study phase of the project. Project comes on line Fall 2022---maybe. Beth describes the feasibility study: engaging stake holders (many land owners abut the land in question). The access road is unused and needs repair. The area has been used by town as a gravel pit and dumping site. It is a 40 acre lot with young trees. Part of the land is in Park boundaries; there is also a wetland in the lot. The previous owners have first refusal if the land is ever sold. All of these issues make the land a difficult plot to ever sell and develop. Beth will do site analysis, interview stakeholders (including this task force), and make recommendations about the feasibility of going forward with the project.

One recommendation is for the Town and task force to officially partner with ACCT and share the cost of the feasibility study (\$4000)

Another recommendation is for the Town to budget for legal development costs(\$20K) if the study proves that the development should move forward.

Discussion: Ruth- what is the potential power production of this array? L: They plan to develop about 10 acres and produce about 10 megawatts. The Tremont array produces 150 kilowatts. It would get us all of our power (whole island) on shoulder seasons. R: \$20K estimate for legal fees are for what specifically? The costs that would accrue to make contracts, clear deeds etc. Not part of the construction costs.

Brian: What risks or pushback have you run into? What would give you a red light on the project? L: we are in the very early stages of the project. There are ways to navigate the PR piece. Partnership with the Park (acquisition boundary) is important so they don't feel blindsided. Ecological roadblocks (wetland, cost of clearing trees, repairing road) could also put up a roadblock, but we will know better once Beth does feasibility study.

B: 40 acres? 10 acres? L: if you remove the wetland, the Park acquisition boundary, it leaves about 10 acres to be developed economically.

Norm: *estimates that a 10 acre array is about a \$1.5 million investment, producing about 13 megawatts a year.* * correction to the notes which were in error (from email) Norm: Napkin sketch \$1.52/wattx10 megawatts (10000000 watts) is \$15.2 million. Add in \$1mil for land/site work and \$1M for the rest (permits etc) and \$16-17M is the number. It will generate 13,469,269 KWH per year. I do not know what the town consumes but we will have that soon from the GHG audit. I believe it is magnitudes less than this.

Now, if we consider “scaling” the system to town capacity and using the rest of the land for commercial power generation with a developer, that may make better sense for the town. This can certainly be looked at, scalability and a multi tenant approach.

A quick analysis with cost of money and 20 year financing at 4% would put the 20 year cost of commodity power from the array at about \$0.092 per KW assuming a 20 year life. (SRECs, solar credits that can be sold on the market are worth about \$471k/year today’s value)

As an FYI the current residential standard offer for power is \$0.065/kWh. The rest of our rate is transmission and distribution at \$0.103/kWh.

. L: Who is the right investor? The Town? A developer the Town leases from? That is part of the question.

Jill: Timing--Town Council has already started the budget process and have not had the opportunity to give this more than a cursory consideration. The TC will need a presentation and have their questions answered. Council will need to know how this will work in detail and the costs. Concerned about the amount of info needed by the time of the council’s next meeting. Then the Warrant Committee will need all of the same information. Another concern is the amount of work that the town staff is being asked to do.

Jen: can the TF use our budget to get the feasibility study going if we don’t have time to get it on the budget for the Town? Jill: yes, but anything over a certain dollar amount needs to be approved by the Council in advance. Would this put us off another year to get the \$20K? Jill: not sure. There is contingency money but we can’t bank on that

Ruth: what is our budget? Jill: \$17k for the year that ends in June 2021. We have \$15K budgeted for the next year. We have not spent anything yet.

L: legal fees might start up around this summer and into the fall. The money would need to be in the FY 2021 budget, ideally. At this point we don’t need to know the cost of the construction because it is unlikely that it would be part of the Town’s operating budget, but preparing for the legal costs would be great.

The risk is that the feasibility study might show that the project is not feasible. Then the \$4k would be spent.

Brian asks is this the best use of this land? There are many positives for a solar farm there. Would it be cheaper to do this on similar land off island? Is this good value? Ruth: there is big value in developing this land for solar since the Town already owns it. The feasibility study would answer many of these questions and we should go forward with it. This seems like an obvious use of the land.

Norm: this is using Town owned land to develop it commercially. There are a lot of issues here that need to be reviewed before we can go forward. Public - private pull. Brian: once we convert everything we use oil and gas for, we will need a huge electric service, might we consume all of that electricity as a Town? Norm says it is more power than the Town could use.

Jill: if we spend more than \$1000 we must give Council prior notice.

Motion: to pay ACTT \$2000 toward a feasibility study to develop the Higgins Pit land as a solar farm, determine how it will be funded and all of the details, and determine if this is a project worth pursuing ecologically, financially and practically. (Brian has an email from Lawson that outlines the components of the feasibility study).

Norm: per our by-laws do we have the authority to do this?

Margaret: we should do a little more research on all of this and make a decision at our next meeting. We need to figure out what our role is as a task force before making this decision.

Jill: It would be in the form of noticing the Council that we intend to spend money that we already have allocated to us to gather information to make recommendations to the Council. Nothing preventing us from making a motion to spend this money on feasibility study that will help us make a recommendation to the Town.

Jill will work with Cornell on the wording.

Jen moves that we recommend the Town spends \$2000 to share the cost of the feasibility study of the Higgins Pit Solar Farm Project with ACTT, done by ACTT.

Norm wonders if the Town could pay for this. Jill is concerned that it will not be approved. Tobin say we can always fall back on our money.

Jill seconds. Vote: Norm-yes, Jen-yes, Jill-yes, Margaret-yes, Tobin-yes, Sirohi-yes, Brian-yes.

B. Open discussion with ACTT about how we might cooperate more.--Tabled for now

C. Report on other MDI efforts on climate change and exploring ways to work together. - Jill Spoke with Phil Lichtenstein of Mt Desert about working together. She spoke with the Town manager of Tremont who just resigned. Hasn't spoken to SWH yet. Jill will attend the League of Towns. Is there anything we can do together?

B. Report on Council action on TF nominees. - Jill 2 new members who still need to sign in officially. Millard Dority has applied and needs to be nominated.

B. Review of 2021 budget for GHG reducing items – Cornell--Brian spoke with Gary Freidman who says that there are many GHG reducing items in the budget. Solar panels on garage roof and storage batteries. Money spent every year to buy them to eventually get rid of the power purchase agreement. \$110K left over from bond for a solar array on roof of transfer station, parking, bike racks, engineering study for bike route on Crooked Road. Money to continue with energy audit and climate emergency funds. Tobin asks if solar array is going ahead on transfer station? There will be discussion tomorrow night when they review the public works budget.

6. Continuing work on Climate Action Plan--Tabled

Ruth asks if there are specific goals to accomplish on the plan? Brian: no specific goal but add to the doc info/stuff we found from elsewhere. Keep adding. We could use a structural framework. Jill: is it reasonable that we are going to put a plan together as a group? Sirohi: the intro and other sections can wait. We need to add our goals. The strategies and implementation plan we cannot do on our own and is what a sustainability coordinator would do. Ruth: can we set a deadline for that doc/goals? Can we try to have goals done by end of second meeting in Feb 22?

6. Items for next meeting. Both Alf from BH Chamber and Ken Coburn from ACTT will be presenting to us next time. Can we try to have goals done by end of second meeting in Feb 22?

6. Task Force Comments.

6. Adjournment: Jen moves and Tobin seconds that we adjourn. All in favor! 5:04PM.

***pdf of ACTT presentation is in shared folder

Future Work:

A. Tourism carbon impact

i. Cruise ships

B. Climate Justice-- acknowledge impact of climate change and its disproportional impact on lower socio-economic groups and the intersectionality with other crises like racial equity. Climate change impacts developing countries exponentially more than developed countries and the developing countries are not the ones benefiting from the use of fossil fuels etc.

C. Ground mounted solar array.

D. Community composting.

E. EV chargers

F. Town based incentives for new buildings or renovations to exceed code requirements for efficiency, build electric and/or incorporating solar into design. Tax break? Cash back? What could the town actually do to incentivize? Could you forgive the first year of property taxes on a new build if there a solar array of a certain size or all electric house or passive house level insulation? A few thousand dollars might be enough to encourage some best practices.

G. Public Outreach

i. Engage the BH Chamber of Commerce