

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tisbury Town Hall Annex
High Point Lane, Vineyard Haven
And Zoom Meeting ID 975 061 9542

Passcode: climate
February 12, 2024, 5:30 PM

Attendance: Committee Members:

Annex: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Kate Shands, Bruce Stuart

Zoom: Daniel Phelan, Bill Straw, Holly Stephenson

Liaisons: Casey Hayward, Planning Board (Annex)

Melinda called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of 1/29 be accepted, Daniel seconded, and the motion passed 7-0. (Rachel was a few minutes late.)

Discussion: [*Recorder's Note: Discussions are grouped for clarity and brevity.*]

Committee Updates:

Tisbury School Solar

Melinda began this discussion by saying that we have to make the best recommendation we can to the School Committee, the Town Administrator, and the Finance Committee. She said that the plan for the school was supposed to be net zero, so that means we would need rooftop solar and parking lot canopies in order to provide the kWh that the school would need. A lively discussion followed, based on a draft document prepared by Daniel and Rachel, which covered the following points:

- We can only use the school parking lot, not the lot across the street or the field behind the Emergency Services Building, which is a leaching field.
- Rooftop solar would only provide 55% of the power needed for the school.
- Putting in a parking lot solar array would require putting in 4-inch conduits along the sidewalk from the building to the parking lot. The DPW had plans to put in new sidewalks but postponed those plans, so it might be possible to wait on installing those conduits.
- Large commercial companies have different rate categories depending on kilowatt hours used, so if electric usage is decreased, the school might fall in a lower rate category, but Rachel didn't know about special rates for municipalities. Rate structuring is very complicated and hard to follow.
- There are numerous unanswered questions about the costs of the school solar array, including whether there would be a delivery charge and whether we could lock in a rate. John Snyder says we need to own the array, and there are lots of sources of money to do that. The system should pay for itself in 5-6 years.

- Bill reminded us that we want eventually to acquire the solar array at the Park & Ride lot. The contract says the contractor must return the site to its original condition at the end of the lease, and Bill thinks, since that would be expensive for them, we might be able to acquire it for nothing. Daniel said he liked that idea. The infrastructure is already there, and if we could own that array, we could use the power it generates to offset several buildings. Retrofitting the racks with new solar panels to provide greater power would be less expensive than putting solar on all these buildings.
- Melinda said she had talked to Luke Lefebvre at Vineyard Power about solar at both the school and the Senior Center. He wants to maximize solar at the Senior Center. He asked about the P&R array, and Melinda explained to him that we're currently being paid for the lease of the land. Luke said we need to calculate the overall needs of the town and wondered what our current target is. Melinda said she would invite him to a meeting in April when CVEC will be giving out bids for contracts.
- Holly asked about EV charging for teachers' cars, and Melinda said the school has a grant for EV chargers.
- The whole industry is moving to storage devices, and we will need batteries at all our facilities.
- A meeting scheduled for the following day (Tuesday 2/13) with the school committee was likely to be canceled due to snow.

Cape and Vineyard Electric Compact and Green Communities – Senior Center

Melinda announced that CVEC came today and said they have issued a request for bidders. There are 3 bidders for 4 projects. Bids are due in late March. CVEC described the Senior Center as “a piece of cake.” RISE Engineering looked at the harbor master's building and the library. They decided to hold off on the library, since the library has hired an OPM (owner's project manager) and they're working on a combination rehab and addition. Catie Blake (Senior Center director) said the heat failed and they need heat pumps. Melinda said Luke told her he was still working on getting heat pumps there, and Melinda said we've made our recommendations; we'll have to see what happens. Bill said there's one other building that could use rooftop solar, and that's the DPW. Holly asked about emergency shelters, and Melinda said the only official shelter on the island is the Oak Bluffs school, because the Red Cross has major manpower requirements to make a shelter “official”, but the Senior Center, the library and the fire station can all serve as unofficial shelters, which can also provide water and power in an emergency. The school is an obvious choice, but it is under the control of the School Committee and must accommodate the needs of the students.

ETIPP – Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project

There is nothing to add. They are working exclusively with the water departments.

Invasive Species Questions

Holly talked to Dan Doyle at the MVC, who told her about a March 15 CATF (Climate Action Task Force) open meeting on forest management, which will include a report from Sheriff's Meadow. She also talked to Kristen Geagen at Sheriff's Meadow, who said they have a grant to work on Phillips Preserve and West Chop Woods. They may have to cut 70% of the trees at Phillips Preserve, and there are a lot of problems at West Chop Woods. There may be a huge number of pitch pines affected, and they don't know about the black oaks. Nantucket and Cape Cod are also having problems. Adam Moore will present at the meeting, and Kristen offered to come to one of our meetings or do tours at those two properties. Melinda said we should attend the March 15 meeting before we have Kristen come talk to us. Holly said she also talked to Tristan Israel, who wants to come to one of our meetings. Melinda said he has a warrant article for tree planting. Rachel expressed concern that where trees were cut near the DPW, there are invasive species moving in, and wondered what they're doing to prevent that from happening; and Holly added that new growth on the ground becomes a fire hazard.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Louise, seconded by Rachel. The motion passed 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Next Meeting: March 4 at 5:30 PM.
Location: Annex and Zoom

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands