

Tisbury Climate Committee (TCC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 6, 2023

Meeting called to order: by Melinda Loberg, Chair at 5:31 PM.

Place: Zoom: Meeting ID: 975 061 9542
Passcode: climate

Attendance: Committee Members: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Keith McGuire, Rachel Orr, Kate Shands, Bruce Stuart
Guests: Danielle Ewart (Tisbury Shellfish Constable), Jamie Houle (UNH Stormwater Center)

Melinda began the meeting by reading the Covid disclaimer and the Zoom information.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of January 23 be accepted, Rachel seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 with one abstention (KM).

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

Melinda began by reminding everyone to check their ethics requirement.

Discussion of DOT's public hearing and possible TCC comments: Louise began the discussion by saying that she was disappointed that the DOT proposal was a band-aid solution. She said there had been previous discussion about extending the outflow pipe at Beach St. Extension further into the water or to put it underneath docks. The Town asked the abutters, but Gannon & Benjamin and the Black Dog said they were not interested in doing that. Melinda said the DeSorcy property is in play; they're looking at putting a shellfish processing facility along Beach Road, but that would be a long-term possibility. She said Rachel has done a lot of research about this land and asked Rachel to fill us in. Rachel showed an 1857 map of Holmes Hole and more current maps of the harbor area which showed that Five Corners, the land east of Water Street (where the Black Dog and the Steamship Authority are now), and Lagoon Pond Road were initially water and were all created by landfill. She noted that landowners along Lagoon Pond Road filed Chapter 91 applications to fill that area. Five Corners is a low point; even the DeSorcy land is higher. What is happening now is that nature is trying to take all this tidal land back to its original state.

At this point, Jamie Houle entered the meeting. Melinda introduced him and said that he was the one who had introduced the idea of an infiltration basin under the fire station. She asked Jamie for his impressions and concerns about the DOT study. Jamie said that his initial plan had included not only the underground basin but also two ways to provide hydraulic relief: (1) new outflow pipes at the Beach Street Extension and (2) a subsurface gravel filter along Veterans Park as it enters Mud Creek. The pipe that existed there is no longer in operation. The DOT plan dismissed those two things, which he said would undo any benefit of the initial plan.

Rachel said she was concerned about several things, including high groundwater, sewage, and mounding. Jamie replied that the small pipe along the edge of Veterans Park would not only provide a relief point but would also address nitrogen issues. He said it's hard to predict mounding effects. Rachel followed up with another potential problem: the DOT plan proposed another catch basin at State and Causeway Roads, but the Causeway system dumps into Veterans Park, which almost always has standing water, and she is concerned about making that worse. Jamie said he could look at that. He added that without relief, increasing the efficiency of how water getting to Five Corners would make the situation worse, not better, and the same thing is true for the Causeway area. It would be necessary to create underground storage or convert Veterans Park to a marsh, which it initially was, to receive the excess water. Melinda said she was concerned about contamination of the subsurface stormwater along Mud Creek. Jamie said the pipe from the infiltration system would be enveloped in gravel; the solid pipe would lead into a perforated pipe that would in turn pass through stone and woodchips, creating a permeable reactive barrier that would de-nitrify the water. He added that it's stormwater, not wastewater. Melinda asked about additional water going into Mud Creek and the Lagoon with resulting flooding into shoreline properties. Jamie said they have been measuring water at the culvert along Lagoon Pond Road, and it doesn't look like the culvert itself could be a restriction.

Keith asked if this system is designed for today's rainfall or future rainfall, and Jamie said the DOT proposal is probably looking at today's rainfall; nobody's really thinking about the future. Keith said we don't want to build this system and have it be out of date. Rachel commented that the DOT said we will still have flooding with this system. Danielle asked how much rain this plan will address and commented that she can't believe they're not taking a multipronged approach that would address both rain and high tides. She also wondered how to get more green space into this area. Rachel noted that the maps from the 1930's and the ones from today both identify the same flood points. She added that the Causeway and Veterans Park are the Town's problem, not the State's, and the DOT didn't address it because they didn't want to deal with permitting issues. Keith commented that we need to re-create a river where it was in the last century and have dikes and a waterfront; he joked that we could call it "Venice Haven." Rachel agreed that we need a water body again, because right now, the roads are the water bodies. The residents in this area are having water intrusion and sewer system problems. Louise reminded us that Veterans Park was a marsh before it was a park.

Melinda thanked Jamie for helping us look at the problem and asked if he would continue to communicate with the DOT. Jamie said he didn't know if he had a role at this point; he was amazed the DOT considered his design at all but reiterated that they had eliminated critical functional elements. He said he would be happy to comment, perhaps through the MVC. Melinda agreed that would be a good avenue because this situation is not just a problem for Tisbury but for the whole island; and the TIP program [Transportation Improvement Program] is part of the MVC. Jamie said he had always been confused about ownership of the outfall pipes and commented that he could do a lot with \$1.7 million and a contract. He noted that his group had never been trying to solve the problem but rather to deal with it, and to respond better: they had a resiliency goal, not a solution. He added that re-establishment of the wetlands would be a more sustainable approach, but that it would involve a political price. He wondered how Chapter 91 fit in and whether it would be possible to re-establish the wetlands.

He also wondered how Horsley-Witten was involved, said we should get all the players together to find the best way to handle the situation, and reiterated that the outfall pipes must be replaced.

Melinda asked if we had something to write about, and Rachel said yes; it is obvious that the infiltration system is not sufficient; we need for DOT to include plans to get the water out of the basin. They could use Mud Creek if not Beach Street Extension. Melinda agreed, saying they need to provide relief points; their solution may create more pressure, as Jamie noted. Rachel added that we need to address the Park as well; it smells like mold & mildew; the basketball court gets used all the time; and the playground area is usually under water. Melinda commented the Planning Board letter to the DOT says they need to coordinate with John Ramsey and Horsley-Witten and we should look closely at that letter. Rachel said we also need to look at longer-term issues, as Keith suggested. Melinda said she would take a stab at writing a letter, and Rachel agreed to help her. Melinda thanked Jamie again and said she wished the DOT would look at things more broadly.

At this point, Jamie and Danielle left the meeting.

Warrant articles: Request from Finance Committee (Fin Comm): Melinda reported that Nancy Gilfoy said that the Fin Comm is looking for \$600,000 in savings and wondered if the solar installation at the senior center could be paid through CVEC. Melinda noted that Bill thinks the Town should have ownership of the solar panels. Rachel said she had looked at the budget and there is a line item for solar taxes. If we don't own the facility, we pay taxes; if we do own it, we get a rebate. She said she has questions about that. Melinda said if CVEC owns it, they do all the administrative work and give us a check at the end of the month, but we pay them a fee. Some people believe the Town can handle the administrative work. She wondered what kind of savings we get from the fire station and said it had not been quantified yet. She wasn't sure what to ask the Fin Comm to do, because it's better to own, but there's a price to pay up front. Louise commented that \$600,000 is a lot, and Rachel agreed, saying she had been surprised to learn we were in a hole. There are some expenses that can't be cut, such as insurance, salaries, and a COLA for employees. Melinda said she didn't know if it would be appropriate to turn to Vineyard Power, but if the project were in their wheelhouse, perhaps we could ask for a couple of years' worth of an advance in their grant; it could reflect well on them. Keith said that was a good idea and wondered if VP could do the administrative part. Rachel said that was a good idea, and Melinda said she would check it out.

Grant committee for charging stations: Melinda said she and Bill needed some help with that grant and asked Bruce if he could help; Bruce said yes.

Calendar item: Ferries Now at the Film Center (registration required): Melinda announced that the MVC is holding a discussion about electric ferries at the Film Center on March 31. She said we need to register by March 1.

Rachel said that she is hoping that the heat pumps for the animal shelter may be coming back (the cost will be \$17,000 rather than \$70,000.)

Rachel made a motion to authorize Melinda and herself to compose a letter to the DOT to be distributed to the committee. Keith seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Kate, seconded by Keith. The motion passed 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Next Meeting: March 6, 2023, at 5:30 PM.

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands