

## **Tisbury Climate Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** June 12, 2023

**Meeting called to order:** by Melinda Loberg, Chair at 5:35 PM.

**Place:** Tisbury Senior Center Library  
34 Pine Tree Lane, Vineyard Haven

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Kate Shands, Bill Straw, Bruce Stuart, Keith McGuire

Guests: Daniel Phelan

**Review and Approval of Minutes:** Rachel made a modification to the minutes of June 5, 2023. Louise then moved that those minutes be accepted, Rachel seconded; the motion passed 6-0 (with 1 abstention).

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

Daniel Phelan introduced himself and said he is interested in being on the Committee. He works for Harvest Sun Solar and has expertise in solar panels & battery system installation, system integration, and power system economics. He is originally from California, lives on Border Road and has 2 kids in the Tisbury School. There was a brief discussion about whether there would be a conflict of interest if the Town was putting out bids for solar installations, and his company was a bidder, and it was decided that it was unlikely to be a problem.

There was a long discussion about the Eversource generators. The major points were as follows:

- When the cable failed, Eversource added 12 new diesel-powered generators, bringing the total to 24 generators, without getting permits from the Town.
- They moved the generators closer to the well and into an Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhood.
- They put in permanent infrastructure on Town pathways, again without permits.
- The generators run all summer, from 4 to 8 PM or later. They are noisy and produce noxious emissions.
- They had plans to put in a battery project, which would have been preferable from the town's point of view, but they cancelled it when they decided to put in the 5<sup>th</sup> cable.
- Eversource owns the switching station land and a piece in West Chop, but not the land where the generators are situated. There have been easements in place for a long time, and easement rights trump property rights.

- They do have a generator in the State Forest; Christina Colarusso has said that she doesn't know why they haven't put more generators there instead of in Tisbury.
- It would be possible to put some generators in W. Tisbury or Aquinnah for distributed generation.
- Edgartown and Oak Bluffs are the highest users of electric power, and the generators in Tisbury are essentially a power plant for the whole island, which means that Tisbury, and especially the EJ neighborhood, is being taken advantage of.

Keith moved that these concerns be sent to the Select Board, with a request that the Select Board meet with Eversource to discuss the problems outlined. Rachel seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

The next item was the Mass Save Initiative to repurpose American Rescue Plan Act funds. Cape Light Compact (CLC) has people who are willing to come and talk to lower-income residents who qualify for state funds. Rachel explained the program to Keith and said that CLC is looking for 80 such residents from the island to have solar panels and heat pumps installed in their homes. Island Housing Trust (IHT) residents will qualify. There was a discussion about how many households have heat pumps; the building department knows that, and the Assessors are catching up. CLC doesn't have enough auditors on the island to keep up with the work; there was a suggestion that we could ask for more auditors. Rachel said that this is a good time to take advantage of the program because of the Inflation Reduction Act. Keith said he has a list of people who are deed-restricted and said he could help with that aspect of the plan.

The next agenda item was sharing of committee member participation in climate-related programs and meetings. Liz Durkee convened a meeting of all the island climate committees; four representatives from Tisbury attended: Melinda, Rachel, Keith, and Ben Robinson. There were many common themes, including frustration with the DOT, procurement policies and processes, and growth vs conservation. There were also discussions about having the towns collaborate on flood plain zone and wetlands by-laws, having all the town conservation agents be on the same page, and the need for a paid staff person to coordinate efforts. The issue was raised about the possibility of an island-wide effort to collaborate on critical infrastructure needs such as those involving the hospital and the Steamship Authority (SSA), but there was pushback from Edgartown on that score.

Melinda said we need to re-organize the Committee and set goals for the coming year, and that there are two issues we need to pay attention to.

The first is that there is a bill in committee to raise the debt ceiling for the Steamship Authority from \$100 million to \$150 million. Ben Robinson, as chair of the MVC Climate Action Task Force, wrote a letter to Julian Cyr asking that the increase be tied to a mandate that the SSA electrify its vessels and participate in the decarbonization goals of the island towns and other state entities. In the letter, he noted that the SSA accounts for 10% of the Vineyard's greenhouse gas emissions and that the port communities and other island towns are responsible for covering shortfalls if the SSA debts cannot be repaid and stressed that clean propulsion should be a central feature of any bond cap increase. Melinda said both individuals

and the Select Board can write letters in agreement with Ben's proposal and need to do so very soon.

The second is the Coastal Resilience Grant, which has a deadline of June 30. Jamie Houle can't take it on, so Melinda will talk to Jay, Kirk, and possibly John Crocker about what projects are needed. The Committee suggested the outfall pipe, rebuilding the dock at Owen Park, the seawall and erosion along Spring St. into Tashmoo. Melinda noted that we have consultants who can write grants.

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Rachel, seconded by Keith. The motion passed 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

**Next Meeting:** July 17 at 5:30 PM at the Senior Center Library (later amended to Town Hall Annex).

**Minutes Submitted by:** Kate Shands