

Tisbury Climate Committee  
Minutes, Meeting of October 16, 2023  
Tisbury Town Hall Annex, 5:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Committee members: Melinda Loberg, Dan Phelan\*, Bill Straw, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Holly Stephenson\*, Keith McGuire, Bruce Stuart

Others: Casey Hayward, Planning Board\*

\*late arrival

Minutes recorder: Rachel Orr. Minutes have been grouped and ordered for clarity.

1. Minutes of Sept. 11, 2023. Louise Clough moved to approve the minutes of September 11. Bill Straw seconded the motion. The motion passed, 5 in favor (Louise, Bill, Bruce, Melinda and Rachel), 1 abstention (Keith).

2. Updates

- a. Flood Plain Bylaw. Keith reported that Edgartown received a grant to assist with updating the town's flood plain bylaws. Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) climate planner Liz Durkee will be meeting with the chair of Edgartown's Climate Committee to discuss the work. The goal is to have uniformity in the towns' flood plain regulations.

Holly reported that the Open Space Committee is also looking at an update to the town flood plain bylaw. Much of the town's municipal open space and parkland is within the flood plain.

Casey reported that the Planning Board has started to work on an overhaul of all the town bylaws.

- b. Eversource – Cape and Vineyard Electric Compact. Bill said he didn't make the last meeting but from the minutes he can report that 8 people attended from Eversource and 11 from the island. Eversource is working on its long-term plans, first with a shorter-term plan to run from now to 2035 and then a longer-term plan from 2035-2050.

Bill and Dan reported that the Vineyard's solar energy plans are constrained by limits to Eversource capacity. Right now any solar installation that produces less than 15 kilowatts must be accepted into the Eversource system, but anything larger is on-hold while it goes into the queue for Eversource's long-term planning. Currently the company has an application before the Department of Public Utilities to upgrade regional substations and

to pass along upgrade charges to customers. The company has said larger island solar projects will be easier to approve once the new undersea cable and the replacement cable have been permitted and installed.

- c. ETIPP- Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project. This is the grant that Kate Warner, MVC energy planner, helped secure for the down-island towns. Melinda reported that the first meeting with project advisors was devoted to process. The island representatives told the advisors that they were interested in hardening the water departments' systems. The study will be confined to that.

Bill Straw reported he had an opportunity recently to converse with Johnny Dumas, who works for Eversource. Bill asked him if he would check out the power lines to the town wells, which currently have overhanging limbs and trees that may harm the lines in a storm situation.

- d. Invasive Species Questions. Holly reported three major species of trees on the island are suffering from infestations of pests, the black oaks, the beeches and the southern pines. The infestations are happening in part because of the warmer winter weather caused by climate change. The United States Department of Agriculture has interactive maps that are informative, and the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture also has helpful information.

By consensus the committee agreed that it would be a good idea to post information about the issue on our webpage.

- e. Seawall Grant. Jay has asked that the Climate Committee take the lead on this project. The town has a one-year federal grant for design work and has hired engineering and design firm Tighe and Bond to assist. The hope is that this grant will lead to additional federal money to pay for the actual repairs/replacement of the seawall. Melinda said she attended the initial meeting with the consultants. The second meeting will be a substance meeting about the fixes needed and other town requests for the project, such as a public access component.

Related – Melinda reported that recently the MVC was alerted about another federal grant opportunity through Senator Edward Markey's office. We have submitted language for a grant to build resilience. Applications are for Fiscal Year 25 funds.

Keith reported that MVC planners received positive feedback from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) for a grant application to work on upgrades to Tisbury, Oak Bluffs and Menemsha harbors.

Holly said it would be beneficial if we could combine grants so that we have funding for improvements beyond just replacing the wall.

- f. Tisbury School solar. Dan said he attended the school construction team meeting Jay mentioned at our September climate committee meeting. He spoke with the architect and was shown the electrical plans. The plans involve solar on the school roof and on parking lot canopies. Currently there is no money for the panels, but the roof is being made ready for a later installation. The school will continue using the existing generator; the generator transfer switch is slated to be in the electrical room, which Dan was pleased about. Dan said the designers believe the school will use about 250 kilowatts of electricity; the solar plans – including the parking lot canopies – are estimated to generate about 463 kilowatts. Dan showed the committee the plans drawn by the school design team for the solar installation on the school. Keith expressed concern that the drawings do not have the level of detail necessary to be meaningful and that the town will need better plans before installation. Dan said the design team appeared to be rushing through the design aspect of the solar.

Dan said he has looked at the school roof area and thinks that panels generating 270 kilowatts will fit on the building. An array generating 250 kilowatts, the wattage estimated to be needed by the facility, at \$3.10 per watt would cost about \$800,000. By consensus, the climate committee agreed to request that the town's capital plan include the array. The committee thought the appropriation request should be in the \$1 million to \$1,250,000 range to allow for inflation and soft costs that may be incurred, such as owner's project manager services, for the project.

- g. Green Communities – Senior Center. CVEC (Cape and Vineyard Electric Cooperative) is assisting with this effort. The building has been reviewed for solar and battery back-up. Bill said he would call and ask where the project stands.
- h. Other updates:

Island Climate Action Plan: Keith reported that Liz Durkee and Meghan Gombos, leaders in the Island Climate Action Plan effort, will be meeting with island Select Boards in the coming month to update them on implementation of the plan. It would be helpful if committee members attended the Tisbury Select Board meeting when it is on the Select Board's agenda.

Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness Program (MVP): On November 10<sup>th</sup>, a representative from the state program will be on-island to discuss MVP 2.0, the latest requirements for the program, and future grant opportunities.

Keith said right now the MVC is using MVP grant money to update island vegetation maps including eel grass. A Vision Fellow is studying lawns on the island and will want to meet with the committee to discuss their research.

Island Emergency Management: County Manager Martina Thornton has agreed to take on the role of county-wide emergency manager on a temporary basis.

Wind Turbine Effects: A study has been done to determine the local environmental effects of off-shore wind turbines – results were “inconclusive”. Melinda passed along a news article about the study shared by Aquinnah Climate Committee member Bill Lake. Dan shared the actual study with members.

- i. Next meeting: Our next meeting will be October 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at the town hall annex.
- j. Adjournment: Louise moved and Bill seconded a motion to adjourn. The vote was unanimous. The meeting ended at 7:15 p.m.