

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tisbury Town Hall Annex and Remote

High Point Lane, Vineyard Haven

November 13, 2023, 5:30 PM

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

Liaisons: Ben Robinson, Tisbury Planning Board Chair & MVC Commissioner

Guests: Master Plan Steering Committee: Dan Doyle, Susannah Bristol,
Mary Ellen Larsen*, Sean Roach*, Elaine Miller (Planning Board)

* Remote

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

Master Plan: Dan provided a document entitled "Tisbury Vision Plan and Master Plan Goals". It laid out goals, policies, and actions in a spreadsheet, and he asked for comments and discussion. Rachel said she had 3 comments: (1) there is no action plan that makes getting town facilities and buildings off fossil fuels a priority; (2) a big chunk of island power comes through Tisbury along the power lines, and there are opportunities for open space along those power lines; and (3) we still don't know what the plan is for the waterfront: is the plan to have a managed retreat or to fortify? Dan replied that the consultants are reluctant to be specific, even though the steering committee has pushed them. He said they're early in the process and zoning regulations can be changed; they need community input for recommendations. He added that maybe they should include the energy facet of buildings in the plan.

Rachel said that Dodson & Flinker (D&F) has maps that show proposed structures under water. Dan said there are a range of consultants; D&F is looking at the 3 commercial areas and said that the areas Rachel was referring to won't be under water instantly. Holly commented that we are way behind and wondered if the reason that the Vineyard Wind building is very high is that they know what's coming; she emphasized that first we need rules about new buildings.

Ben noted that there are FEMA regulations, including height restrictions. He said the Vineyard Wind building didn't come before the Planning Board because it met those regulations: it's 13 feet to the first floor. He said the next step is to update the flood plain by-laws and said there's a NOAA grant in process that he would present later. Elaine said the zoning is outdated; we have to adjust the by-laws, and the Planning Board is pushing for that; she added that the Planning Board is saying thank God FEMA is there. Louise said the plan calls for a Town Manager and a Planning Manager and asked if we have to change the government before we do all of that. If so, we need to get that in place. Ben said plenty can be done before that and reiterated that the biggest step is a change in the zoning by-laws. Melinda asked about a timeline and resources. Ben said we have to look at the existing laws and see if we are following State regulations. Hopefully that will start now. There will be a Special Town Meeting in late summer to look at that. Elaine commented that there's a contract on the table now.

Ben said they are looking to provide the consultants with a draft early In December and the Planning Board will ratify the Master Plan in February. Holly commented that there are island-wide issues and wondered why there are five separate Master Plans and if the MVC is looking at that. Ben said we are still six towns, but the island-wide conversation is more robust now. Elaine commented that the affordable housing group under Laura Silber is leading the way in looking at island-wide issues and said they are communicating with Nantucket and Provincetown as well. Ben said we will need help from everybody with regionalization and wondered how willing people are to regionalize.

Sean Roche (chair of the transportation sub-committee) said he had a question about the waterfront. What will the Steamship Authority (SSA) do? The current port won't last 50 years. The State doesn't want to raise Beach Road. The SSA is waiting for the Town to decide what they're doing with Beach Road. We need a big transportation plan, and the TCC should be a major part of that. There are no Town plans to build in that area; all building will be done in the B-2 area as part of the retreat option. Melinda brought up resilience in the face of sea level rise in the areas of Water Street, Lagoon Pond Road, Beach Road, and Five Corners. She said she heard there's a Task Force but doesn't know who's on it. Ben said he and Kirk Metell are on the Task force and they are talking to a consultant about those areas. Melinda said there are questions about roads, stormwater, and infrastructure and that there are lots of little groups in their own silos. Ben said that's why there's a possible need for a Planning Director for the Town. Rachel commented that a change in government is key and would be ideal in the final plan, but we don't want to wait a year or more to move forward. She wanted to make sure that where it would be wise to adapt and where it would be wise to retreat is included in the final plan. She added that private property owners and business owners are coming up with their own plans. Susannah said we need to coordinate issues around private and public land.

Melinda asked if the energy goal timelines that the Town voted on are included and said they should be specific in the Plan. Daniel added that there are lots of details that need to be included. Melinda said it's an important document to go through thoroughly and that it requires reading several times. Ben replied that the TCC should read over it in the next few weeks and provide feedback so the Committee can give the consultants a near-final draft in December. Louise said we should start with the items that have an SE designation as Dan suggested and zero in on those.

Melinda brought up the seawall study done by Tighe and Bond, and Ben asked about the status of that grant. Melinda said it's a feasibility study. They are reaching out to the DOT; they think the DOT owns that wall. She said she hopes we don't get stuck there. She added that it doesn't matter to us where the money comes from: the State or the Feds, but the permittees have put thumbs down on most of the plans. Susannah said the next Master Plan Committee hearing is in December, and this is the time for input. Melinda said if TCC members have questions, they can send them to her, and she will pass them along. She thanked Dan and the members of the Master Plan Committee for meeting with us. Elaine said that there's a capacity factor here: the Town doesn't have enough people to get some of these things done; she said if we have enough people; in spite of the added expense, we will save money in the long run.

At this point, the MP Committee members left, and the TCC continued with its regular agenda items.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of October 30 be accepted, Rachel seconded, and the motion passed 9-0.

NOAA Grant: Ben brought up the NOAA grant he had introduced at the last TCC meeting. He said the MVC saw an opportunity and applied for this regional resilience grant. There were initially 800 applicants. The MVC made it into the second round of 120 applicants. The final group will consist of 40 applicants. The grant will provide a framework to analyze roads, infrastructure and natural resources and will focus on 3 areas: Vineyard Haven harbor, Beach Road from Oak Bluffs to Edgartown, and Menemsha harbor. Matthijs Bouw will be involved with the project; the deadline for the application is February 15. Liz Durkee and Meghan Gombos from the MVC will be presenting to the Tisbury Select Board on Wednesday. This grant will pay people to participate in a way that is not yet spelled out. The grant should provide about \$700,000, and the decision will be made next summer. It will look at how to provide infrastructure and protect natural resources. The TCC will be intimately involved in the project.

Rachel commented that we need to do this evaluation even if we don't get NOAA money, and Ben said every piece of coastal infrastructure will need to be evaluated.

MVP 2.0: Melinda said that brought us to MVP 2.0. The process was introduced at a meeting at the MVC on November 10. It will be a 2-year process. The first year will involve planning and will provide \$45,000 to each town. The second year will provide \$50,000 for a seed project. The money will go to a vendor, a liaison, and participants. Ben said this is a chance for the Town to update its priority list. It's a laborious process; they want to build equity into it, which is a big piece. It will include the underserved, seniors, youth, and those with disabilities. (These populations are no longer called "vulnerable"; now they are called "priority".) He said no town has used the MVP process to obtain grants. He noted that this a big change in the way MVP operates, for example, paying for participation. Melinda asked if there is a lead on this project, and Ben said Jay wasn't at the meeting. In fact, no staff from any town were there. Rachel noted that the meeting was held on a holiday. Rachel then said that the town populations are not on the same level when it comes to equity and that it's not that hard for us to look at that issue as a Town, because we have done a lot of work in that area already. Ben noted that equity is a zero-sum game. He said there was interest in an island-wide effort at that meeting and added that there needs to be a follow-up meeting with the TCC and the MVC Climate Action Plan (CAP) group. Louise noted that there had been a suggestion to hire one consultant for the whole island rather than having the towns each hire their own consultant. Keith said they are trying to get more people involved and thought perhaps they could pay Town employees for extra time they contributed to the process.

Flood Plain By-laws: Melinda moved on to flood plain bylaws. Ben said Liz Durkee had flood plain maps. Melinda asked if Liz is ready to reach out and suggested we invite Liz to a meeting.

Eversource: Melinda asked Bill for an update, and he said he had reached out to Laura Selmer at CLC. Rise Engineering has not completed their study of the Senior Center and added that

they are way behind. He said this is round 6 at CVEC; we won't have to upgrade the electric but maybe the heat pumps. The Eversource working group is not meeting again until December, and he is waiting to hear their plan. Rachel said she had seen an article in the Globe that Eversource had applied for a grant to upgrade Southeastern Massachusetts but didn't get the grant. Ben said there had been a meeting between Tisbury and Eversource, and they had said that once they are done with the generators, they will restore the land. Looking at wastewater and recreation needs, and relocating sewer lines for cluster development, they said they would allow for burying lines but won't pay for it. Melinda noted that there are a large number of trucks parked on Eversource land (which they own; it's not an easement) on Daggett Ave. They moved them from near the generators to the Tashmoo watershed. Ben said the trucks are not Eversource's; they are their sub-contractors' and added that their deed allows them to do certain things but not others.

ETIPP (Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project): There is a meeting on Thursday, Nov. 16, and the water department is coming to the meeting.

Tisbury School Solar: Ben said that there will be a Town Meeting on January 11 to look at the issue of buying the trailers being used during school construction. He said that would free up some money from the project and wondered if we could use that money for solar panels. Rachel said there are a lot of questions about logistics: can we move money around? Melinda said we should ask that question before Town Meeting. It will cost \$1,000,000 for the solar array. She asked if FinCom can answer these questions, and Rachel said that a very short timeframe for the FinCom. The Capital Plan is not ready, and the FinCom is not meeting until 11/29. The Construction Manager at Risk is W.T. Rich. We would need something in writing from them that states that the money is going to another part of the project rather than to profit. What will they commit to? She wondered how to ask for that assurance, and Ben said we would need to ask for an executable change order. Rachel said we could submit a warrant article to pay for the panels; there is some money in the stabilization fund. They Town will set the tax rate this week. We could spend free cash. She wondered if it could go out to bid and be ready when the school opens.

Daniel said that it's not shovel-ready now, and Eversource will say no until they upgrade their substations. They are provisioning the building, including connections. Melinda asked if we could do it in increments. Daniel said the carport solar is in the plan, but there's no plan to connect it to the rooftop solar. The focus would be to make sure the building is provisioned, and increments wouldn't save money. Bill asked if, since the conduits are in play from the roof to the central room, it would be possible to break the components into pieces, for example buy the panels one year and put them in storage. He added that the important thing is to move forward. He said that was just a suggestion and asked Daniel what he thought. Daniel said it's not typical of how things are done. Melinda asked if we thought we should write a warrant article or write a letter so people can think about these ideas. Ben said it's premature to go after money in time for the January 11 meeting, but not for the May 28 meeting. He said we need to document the need for Eversource to upgrade and added that we have a number of concerns about what we're voting on at the January 11 meeting. Daniel said he wants to see the finished roof. Then we could go to Eversource and submit a plan, which could be modified.

Melinda asked if we should bring Erik Blake into this conversation. The group decided to meet again on November 20 with Erik Blake and focus on just that topic.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Louise, seconded by Rachel. The motion passed 9-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:19 PM.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 20, at 5:30 PM.
Location: Tisbury Town Hall Annex

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands