

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tisbury Town Hall Annex

High Point Lane, Vineyard Haven

November 20, 2023, 5:30 PM

Attendance: Committee Members: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Keith McGuire, Rachel Orr, Daniel Phelan, Kate Shands,

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of November 13 be accepted, Rachel seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

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

Consideration of a warrant article submission – Solar Installation:

The discussion included the following points:

- The Town had previously set a goal of creating a Net-Zero school.
- The new school building will be larger than the previous one and will be all-electric.
- Suzanne Kennedy (Town Accountant) has said that operating costs for the new school will go way up due to the greater size of the new building and its all-electric design.
- The original plan for the school called for a solar rooftop array to offset the increased costs, but the array was removed from the plan to lower the price of the project.
- The school previously had solar panels, but they were in sad shape and were removed.
- If a solar array could cover the cost of the all-electric design and projected increases in electric rates, it could result in significant savings for the Town over time.
- W.T. Rich, the contractor for the school project, is currently leasing modular units (trailers) to house the students, and the Town is paying for the lease. The school wants to get out of the contract for those trailers in July.
- The Town is interested in purchasing two of those trailers for a temporary Town Hall when the lease is terminated. The parties are still having conversations about the pricing, but purchasing those trailers would result in significant cost savings (actual amount not yet specified).
- There is currently no plan for how to use those cost savings, and no recommendations have been proposed. The TCC believes the Town should consider re-purposing those funds to cover the purchase of a rooftop solar array for the school. Other options for funding the solar array include spending free cash, using the stabilization fund, or voting to raise and appropriate money.
- There is a Special Town Meeting scheduled for January 11, 2024, to address the purchase of the trailers. Warrant articles are being prepared now, with a deadline of November 29.
- There is a lot of confusion about issues for this meeting. It will be the new moderator's first meeting. Rachel talked to Nancy Gilfoy [Chair of the Tisbury Finance and Advisory

Committee (FinCom)], who said that things cannot be changed once the tax-rate is set. In addition, there is a warrant article for a new generator at the police station that is different from what Erik Blake (Town Facilities Manager) was talking about doing.

- The solar array on the Emergency Facilities Building is not big enough to cover the costs of its energy consumption. We don't want to make the same mistake with the school.
- Adding a parking lot array at the school would double the cost of the solar installation.
- The all-island school committee plans to discuss buying some of the modular buildings as well.

The discussion also addressed the following questions:

- What is the projected power consumption (in kWh) of the new building?
- What would be the maximum the solar array could generate, and would it cover the building's power consumption?

Keith said we should do everything we can to save operating costs and get the solar in place. He added that it would be nice to have administrative help and noted that the TCC is trying both to save the Town money and bring in more money. He suggested that we propose a warrant article for a regular annual influx of money.

Melinda said she would draft a letter to Jay and the Select Board with our questions and recommendations.

Dan Phelan's Document: Dan submitted a document proposing official language to be inserted into the Town Bylaws about reaching energy-related goals. It covered zoning, fire and building code interpretation, new construction guidelines and fire pathway rules. Dan said that pretty much the whole country is following the guidelines he outlined. One controversial item is the wording covering the installation of solar modules on roof tops. The word "either" is used in the fire code, and no one is sure whether "either" means either side or both sides. Fire Chief Greg Leland called the fire chief at the state level, and he said it means both. It makes a difference in terms of safety because an additional 18" makes it easier for an installer to stay on the roof when installing modules. Discussion ensued about the need for ground mounting in addition to roof top solar and putting solar into historic districts. Everyone agreed that Dan's document was valuable and well-worded, and Melinda asked for a motion to endorse it as something that could be incorporated into the Master Plan. Rachel so moved, Kate seconded, and the motion passed 6-0. Melinda said she would send it to Dan Doyle and people on the Planning Board as an attachment.

Annual Report: Melinda announced that our annual report is due in January. There has been nothing official from the Town about specific dates.

Other Issues:

Grove Ave: Rachel suggested that we all take a walk to see what's being done at the end of Grove Avenue and along the beach to look at the rock wall being put in. She noted that it will

affect how sand moves. There is a public beach there, and she was surprised that the Conservation Commission allowed it.

CAP Presentation at the Select Board Meeting: Rachel said that Liz Durkee and Meghan Gombos from the Climate Action Group had done a good job of presenting to the Select Board. There are a range of things in the works. Jay said he was pleased to see the regional aspects of the plan. Rachel added that the Town needs to put more energy into this project.

Eastville Beach: Melinda said she had gone to Eastville Beach at the request of Tristan Israel to look at the breakwater, which is part of Vineyard Haven Harbor. The sand has eroded there, and there is a seam down the middle of the breakwater. Tristan said he had never seen anything change that fast. The same phenomenon is occurring at the breakwaters going into Tashmoo. She noted that these problems should be incorporated into the thinking about the harbor if we get the NOAA grant.

ETIPP (Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project): Melinda announced that the ETIPP met, and the water departments showed up. The ETIPP grant is a technical one: it involves help, not money. There was a good dialog and exchange of information. The water departments are saying they will attend another meeting, which was a good outcome.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Kate, seconded by Louise. The motion passed 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Next Meeting: December 11, 2023, at 5:30 PM.
Location:

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands