

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tisbury Town Hall Annex

High Point Lane, Vineyard Haven

December 11, 2023, 5:30 PM

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

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of November 20 be accepted, Rachel seconded, and the motion passed 6-0 with 2 abstentions.

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

Update on Town Meeting Jan. 11

Town Meeting for 1/11 has been canceled. The modules the Town was interested in buying don't meet the new stretch code and are of no value in Massachusetts except for school use. The other agenda for that meeting was a new generator for the police station. Buying a new generator will have a long timeframe, so we won't have it for the summer. The Finance Committee approved a line item for the generator. The DPW budget was used up for generation-related expenses. Melinda commented that a microgrid could help us with that problem, but so far, the Town has ignored us on that issue. Rachel noted that January 12 is the deadline for money articles for the next Town meeting in May.

Review of DOT public meeting on Five Corners and Beach Road

Melinda reported that the meeting did not offer anything new. The DOT simply outlined existing conditions and said that they will present 3 proposals about what to do about these areas. Rachel asked if they could raise the road if they put in a roundabout at Five Corners, and Melinda said yes, and that there's no problem with eminent domain. She added that District 5 of the DOT has had a plan for a roundabout at Five Corners for about ten years and that it's depressing how many lost opportunities there have been. She said the DOT is now working with Jamie Houle at the UNH Stormwater Center. Rachel commented that only 45 people were present at the meeting and that the DOT was talking about a shorter design life than usual: they are only looking at a fix that would last until 2050, so these plans would only be a band-aid. She added that she was encouraged by the DOT's acknowledgement of vulnerability and by the fact that the DOT was back at the table just after finishing the Beach Road update.

Committee Updates:

Flood Plain By-Laws

Keith went to a meeting last Friday. Liz Durkee hasn't been able to get to this item. Questions include can we use overlay districts, and is it all up to FEMA? Barnstable has been working on this issue.

The discussion moved on to cover briefly various fees being considered by the Steamship Authority, the Cape and Islands Waterways Fund, and short-term rental fees. A need for a Comprehensive Wastewater Plan was also mentioned.

Eversource – Cape & Vineyard Electric Compact (CVEC)

Bill said there is nothing new to report. There was a meeting scheduled in December, but it was postponed until February.

Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project (ETIPP)

Kate Warner obtained a grant for technical advice to the water departments of Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury concerning resilience in the face of loss of power. They had 3 scoping meetings, and finally the water department superintendents came to a meeting. They wanted the technical assistance offered, so they are now on the right track.

Segue to Water Department and Tashmoo Well

Bill noted that we haven't made any progress with respect to the trees near the power lines at the wells. He said we need to address storm preparedness and the possibility that if trees come down, we could lose water. Ideally, the power lines near the wells should be put underground, but, as Dan noted, that would require a big conduit and would be expensive, so that's unlikely to happen. There is a simple fix; the trees near the wells could be cut down or trimmed. No one has requested that, so it hasn't happened. Bill proposed that we send a letter to the water department saying that we recommend that they ask Eversource to cut the trees near the wells. Eversource supervisor John Dumas had to respond once in an emergency, and Bill thinks he would be responsive to a request to cut the trees. In addition, the old pole at the Tashmoo well has three transformers on the top of it, so the pole is top-heavy, and could fall and hit the propane tanks next to the well. He thinks the transformers should be on the ground. Rachel said that's an environmentally sensitive area, and Daniel said we need a map. Holly added that three major island types of trees (black oak, beech, and pine) are dying, and we could use some help from groups looking at that problem in terms of mapping. The committee agreed to take a field trip to the Tashmoo well on 12/28 at noon, with a rain date of 12/29 to look at the situation. Dan agreed to "package" a report including photos and maps to include with the letter.

MVP 2.0 [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness]

The committee reviewed the provisions of this grant opportunity. Liz Durkee is going to take the lead, and the MVC will ask us for help. They want Town employees and members of the underserved population to be involved, and they want the group to look at the goals of MVP 1 and revise them. It's a social engagement plan and will provide \$45,000 in the first year and \$50,000 in the second year. The Town must find a vendor. MVP will supply a list of vendors, and the money will go to paying the vendor and the participants. This is a required process for continued MVP funding.

Invasive Species Questions

See above in the Tashmoo well section.

Seawall Grant

The MVC got Tisbury into a Federal Grant program to address the Seawall. We are waiting to see what they propose. Rachel and Melinda found a similar situation in Prince Edward Island that is part of the Trans-Canada Highway. They used local materials to nourish the beach and a reef offshore to cut off wave action. Tighe and Bond had proposed building offshore reefs underwater here, but the harbormaster balked at the plan because it would be next to the free anchoring area. Melinda added that in Holland they put giant concrete jacks in the water to behave like a reef.

Tisbury School Solar

Melinda sent a letter to Jay Grande, Erik Blake, and the Select Board, but there has been no response. Rachel suggested that we should consider a stand-alone Warrant Article for the May meeting, which would at least keep the issue in the forefront of people's minds. Melinda noted that one problem is what size solar array Eversource will approve, and the cost would be about \$1.2 million. Rachel said we should ask for what we think it will cost; we can always amend down, but not up, and we can always pull a Warrant article. We can also say we are seeking grant funds. Bill asked if CVEC could handle a project like that. Melinda said the Town has been consistent in saying they don't have the bandwidth to manage it. Rachel said the school might have their own financial manager who could handle the panels and the finances. Another problem is that the School Committee has control over the finances, even though the Town is responsible for payment. Daniel said we need a system that covers the school's consumption and wondered why they didn't come up with the number of kilowatts needed. He asked if he should write a letter to Mike Owen, the OPM at CHA, and the answer was yes. Rachel said the school needs to come up with a budget. Melinda wondered if the school solar project were large enough if it could cover the electric needs of the ESF across the street. She asked if we could construct a microgrid to cover those two buildings, and Daniel said if we build a large enough system, yes.

Green Communities – Senior Center Solar

Green Communities came to do a re-evaluation of the Senior Center. Bill spoke to Laura Selmer, who said we should have a RISE report tomorrow. The project is going out for bids. We need a warrant article to cover the cash component required, and we need to make sure we have the money, so we don't have to turn the GC money back, as we did with the DPW. We can take money out of the stabilization fund, but the Town has to agree to vote it out. Bill said Laura may copy him on her letter to Jay Grande.

VSEC - request for representative

Bill reported that VSEC is a local island energy group led by Rob Hanneman with representatives from each of the towns. It was largely superseded by the MVC and the Climate Action Plan Committee, but it still exists, and Tisbury does not have a representative on that committee. They meet at Howes House on third Thursdays at 5:00 PM. Keith suggested that TCC members could take turns attending those meetings.

Annual Report – Due in January

Melinda said she has started work on the Climate Committee's Annual Report and noted that there are some goals we haven't yet met.

Bill brought up the issue of solar array at the landfill area and said that was one of the unresolved issues. Tisbury is leasing the land to CVEC [Cape & Vineyard Electric Cooperative]; and the lease generates about \$100,000 per year. The lease agreement states that at the end of the lease in 2033, the vendor must clear the land and put it back the way it was. He said the Town needs to be discussing with CVEC what they want to do with the array at the end of the lease. He noted that we can't use the landfill for anything else. Ideally, the Town could buy the array from CVEC at that time and take over administration of the power generation. He suggested that we could write a letter to the Select Board, with the agreement of the FinCom asking if they are interested in that option. Melinda said she could write the letter, but she would need all that information spelled out.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Keith, seconded by Louise. The motion passed 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Next Meeting: Jan. 8, 2024, at 5:30 PM.
Location: Tisbury Town Hall Annex

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands