

Tisbury Climate Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tisbury Town Hall Annex
High Point Lane, Vineyard Haven
And Zoom Meeting ID 975 061 9542

Passcode: climate

March 4, 2024, 5:30 PM

Attendance: Committee Members:

Annex: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Daniel Phelan, Kate Shands, Bill Straw, Bruce Stuart

Zoom: Holly Stephenson

Liaisons: Casey Hayward, Planning Board (Zoom)

Others: Tristan Israel (Zoom)

Review and Approval of Minutes: Louise moved that the minutes of February 12 be accepted, Bill seconded, and the motion passed 8-0.

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

Tree planting project: Tristan Israel

Tristan described his plan to plant shade trees in a mini nursery that can supply trees for the Town. He has talked with Cheryl Doble, Tim Boland, and Kirk Metell (the Town's tree warden) about the project, and all are supportive. He will get 25-30 trees (including pin oaks, red maples, American elms, Basswoods, and beetlebungs) from Polly Hill Arboretum and plant them in 5-gallon buckets in an L-shape along the leaching field behind the DPW. The planting will be done in the fall, and he will need to install a hose with a timer and fencing to protect them. He can donate his time and his truck and crew, but he will need volunteers to monitor the trees. He has submitted a warrant article for \$8,000 to purchase and install the trees, but he thinks it will probably cost in the range of \$3-5,000.

Rachel said that the trees along the east side of Veteran's Park need replacing, and that could be another site for a mini nursery, and she volunteered to help Tristan with the monitoring. Holly commented that the black oaks are dying, and Tristan said the beech trees are as well. Melinda asked how long the trees can stay in the buckets, and Tristan said he would look into that. Melinda thanked Tristan, said it was apparent the Committee was in favor. She told Tristan we will support the proposal at the Select Board meeting. [Tristan left the meeting at this point.]

Tisbury School Solar Project: Continued Discussion

Rachel and Daniel presented their summary of an appropriation request.

Daniel said he had talked to the OPM and an architect at Tappe, who came up with cost estimates; Rachel added soft costs. Daniel noted that Jay had said it was too expensive, but we want to present our case.

Rachel made the following points:

- We should take care of this now because the available incentives are so good, and we don't know what the future of those incentives will be.
- The school was always intended to be a net zero building. The solar is not a new idea; it was in the original plan for the school and was supposed to be integral to the project.
- The school is a large building, and it will be expensive to run (the School Committee is estimating \$119,200 for their electric costs) but we would be locking in those costs for 25 years, and we know that electric rates will only go up.
- This solar proposal would cut the school's electric bill in half.
- Upfront costs will be offset, and the system will be paid for before it needs to be replaced.
- Luke Lefeber at Vineyard Power thought we would not be billed as a large commercial entity.
- We need to convince people at Town Meeting that it's a good idea because it's a pay-now or pay-later situation.

Bill asked if it gets approved at Town Meeting, what the time frame would be for installation, and Rachel said it would be turned over to the Town in the fall. She commented that Eversource is not currently letting large systems come online. Bill said the sooner, the better.

Melinda announced that there will be an in-person School Committee meeting at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, March 13, and a hybrid Select Board meeting at 5:00 that same day. She asked who could be at those meetings, and Rachel and Daniel both said they could be there to present their findings. Melinda asked if their document was in good enough form to be presented, and both Rachel and Daniel said yes; they needed to keep it simple; it is very much an estimate of costs. Melinda said she would try to get the meetings changed since they conflict, but if that doesn't happen, we will rely on Rachel and Daniel to present our case.

Bill commented that the Town is currently spending \$300,000 in electric costs. Melinda noted that the Town will be paying for the solar installation; it's not in the school budget.

There was further discussion about how income from the solar at the EMS Building and fines at the library go to the Town rather than back to those departments, how complicated the accounting is, and how difficult it is to sort out the free cash portion of the budget. Rachel added that one of the challenges is that the free cash is not certified. There is a healthy amount of money in the stabilization fund, but others are competing for that money. The Town is trying to resurrect some serious capital planning. She said she assumed we would need an OPM and asked if the fire station had used one. Bill and Daniel said Kirk Metell was the OPM for that project, and she commented that would be a way to cut costs. She added that we may need more design work, and Daniel replied that whoever installs it will make measurements. Rachel said she wished Luke were present,

and Melinda said that Vineyard Power has indicated that they will be helpful. Bill asked if Jay thought the Town should own it, and Rachel said that Jon Snyder said yes, because of the bonds for the school.

Landfill Solar Field Acquisition: Bill Straw

Bill found a copy of the original contract for the solar field and circulated it to the Committee. The contract is for 20 years, and there are seven years left. He didn't know if there had been any addenda to the contract. The contractor currently pays the Town \$100,000 a year for leasing the land, and the contract says they must return the property to its original condition at the end of the contract. That will be expensive, and the contractor may simply want to walk away; Bill said they should pay us if they want to do that. There are several options for the Town. We could negotiate for a higher payment amount; we could take over the array and replace the 190-watt panels with 400-watt panels; or we could sell the array to other entities. ACE (American Capital Energy) has several of these projects. He said we need to start planning for the end of the contract now so we can work out details. We need to start by reviewing the contract and the options with the Town lawyer.

Melinda said we need to ask the Select Board for permission to talk to the Town lawyer, and Rachel said we need to make sure the Planning Board is not planning to use the land for something else. Bill wondered if the FinCom has an interest in this matter, and Rachel said it should be in the capital plan. He proposed that there be a subcommittee to handle the planning, and he and Daniel agreed to be on the subcommittee. Bill said Rachel's expertise would be a big plus, and Rachel said she would need to confirm that she doesn't have a conflict before committing. Melinda suggested that we could also ask Bruce.

Green Communities – Senior Center

The project is out to bid. There has been an updated assessment. We wanted Green Communities to get the HVAC system updated, but the Town officials said no. We need an okay from them to go ahead with Green Communities.

Report from Emergency Preparedness at Home meeting, March 2, 2024

Melinda and Rachel attended this meeting. A representative from Grace Church was at the meeting and said that several of the churches have climate committees. Grace Church, the Unitarian Church, and the West Tisbury Congregational Church all have plans to provide emergency services. Grace Church, the Hebrew Center, and others have solar. Melinda said she would ask someone from Grace Church to attend one of our meetings and added that we have invited Patrick Roland (Assistant Fire Chief), who is the Tisbury Emergency Management director, to come to one of our meetings. The Committee decided to set up an emergency management subcommittee; Kate & Holly agreed to serve on that subcommittee.

Electric Vehicle Chargers Review

Bruce reported on his follow-up with East Coast Renewable Energy, the company Jay spoke with at a recent MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) conference. The company will run the whole charging operation and do profit-sharing with the Town. Quick chargers make sense, as does using the parking lot at the old fire station location. They would put in six charging stations, and they would take up six parking spaces. Dan said there is power there already, because of Cumberland Farms and the post office. Rachel said it would be good for the Town: the parking lot is not used much; it's in the heart of the business district; it's near the ferry; it would give the Town a good green look; and it would be helpful to Town businesses. Bruce noted that Eversource sometimes stages their equipment there, but others thought that could be managed. Melinda said it's in keeping with the Town's philosophy of letting other people manage things and suggested that we tell Jay what we think.

Upcoming Meeting Reminders:

Climate Café: Food, Soil and Land Use, Sunday March 17, 10:00 AM,
Outside Rosewater Market

Forest Management – CATF – MV Commission March 15, 10:30AM - Zoom

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Rachel, seconded by Louise. The motion passed 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Next Meeting: March 25, 2024, at 5:30 PM.

Location: Annex

Minutes Submitted by: Kate Shands