

Energy and Climate Action Committee

Minutes – 6/27/23

(Approved 8/15/23)

Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Michael DeChiara, Miriam DeFant, Gail Fleischaker, Zoe Weizenbaum, Nate Heard

Members Absent: Graeme Sephton

Chair's Call to Order at 7:04 p.m.

Meeting is being recorded.

Vacancy on ECAC: Three slots are open on ECAC. Isaac Goldstein is interested in joining the committee. Town announcement will be drafted to recruit new members. Weizenbaum and Heard shared their experiences as new committee members. Weizenbaum is stepping down. Process for meeting prospective new members was discussed, including having candidates attend at least one meeting to observe and learn about the committee's charge, provide a written statement of interest, and then come to a second meeting. At that point, ECAC would decide whether to recommend the appointment. ECAC agrees.

DeFant suggested that ECAC revisit its strategy for liaising with other boards. Suggests ECAC get check-ins. Also suggests revisiting the working group action lists that were generated over the winter.

Conway School Project Ideas: Cerier had reached to get information for ECAC. Winter term is January to March. They gave examples of Climate Resilience Plans and stormwater plans. DeChiara shared information received about how Conway School of Landscape Design can assist municipal governments. Studies can cost as much as \$12,000. Funding would need to be explored. DeChiara shared that he does not think Town is ready to take advantage of this resource. Additional planning is needed.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA): CCA was approved by Town Meeting. ECAC needs to consult with the Select Board. Nate Heard agrees to serve as point person for ECAC. Town Counsel never consulted with DPU, so it is unclear what DPU barriers may exist at this point. Town Counsel is advising that the Town just move forward with plan. Next step is reaching out to an agent/broker. Most local Towns use Colonial. They can present to the Town when Town is ready. Amherst/Pelham/Northampton are developing their own legal entity to get bids as a collective, without getting a broker. Heard spoke with a representative from Amherst. ECAC noted that this collective might be an option for Shutesbury in future. DeFant suggested ECAC inquire whether Shutesbury can join collective. Heard can send out links about the effort. DeChiara suggests that it might be easier to pivot to a regional arrangement after residents have a year or two of experience with CCA going it alone. DeChiara will reach out to Select Board Chair to develop a plan and get topic onto the Select Board agenda.

Conservation Commission Draft Bylaw Regulations: DeFant asked whether ECAC would consider providing written comments to the Conservation Commission. DeFant summarized the effort underway with the Conservation Commission to update its 2000 Bylaw Regulations. SCC is seeking comments from Town boards. ECAC's charge aligns with the same goals of the Wetlands Protection Bylaw in terms of climate change and stormwater management.

Fleischaker suggested shortening the document and limiting legalese. Asked for an executive summary in layperson's language. DeFant noted there is an informational webpage created by the SCC with handouts and explanatory information. Regulations are a reference for the SCC and would be supplemented by informational handouts and instructions for applicants. The SCC already has instructional handouts for applications currently. Technical language is used because it mirrors the regulations of the Wetlands Protection Act. DeFant posed some questions for ECAC, noting that new draft Regulations have standards for ensuring that development projects do not result in stormwater damage off-property and protecting wetland areas that sequester carbon and mitigate effects of climate change. Regulations are scalable, so requirements would be proportional to the size and scope of the project. DeFant encouraged readers to look at the Preambles for each Resource Area in the Regulations, as this is the section that explains the importance of protecting that Resource Area. DeChiara suggested condensing the document and changing the formatting to make the Preambles more visible to the reader. Weizenbaum asked how landowners can learn more about permitting requirements. DeFant noted that the Commission welcomes questions and consults with landowners to help them with planning projects. Rather than giving one-size-fits-all recommendations, the Commission recommends that landowners contact them for guidance tailored to their property and project. One purpose of the proposed Regulations is to provide the Commission with language for permitting decisions, so that the reasons for permit requirements are transparent and clear. The Regulations would in some ways constrain and limit the discretion of the Commission as their decisions would need to be tied to the rationale in the Regulations. Public Hearing for the draft Regulations is July 12 at 7 p.m. Written comments are welcome. ECAC passed over suggestion for written comments as a committee. Individual members can submit comments at their discretion.

Question about ECAC supporting legislation: Fleischaker inquired if ECAC could support petitions. What access does ECAC have to Town Counsel? DeFant asked what the concern could be? DeChiara noted that it's important to be clear that ECAC represents itself but not the Town as a whole.

Funding for ECAC: DeChiara plans to speak with the Finance Committee Chair about a budget allocation.

MVP Applications: DeFant inquired about status of 2023 MVP application. DeChiara has not heard back. DeFant forwarded a stormwater financing workshop series opportunity.

5/16/23 Minutes:

Fleischaker moved to approve the 5/16/23 minutes as submitted. Heard seconds. Roll Call: DeChiara: aye; Heard: aye; Weizenbaum: aye; Fleischaker: aye; DeFant: abstains. So moved.

DeFant moved to adjourn. Fleischaker: seconds. Roll Call: DeChiara: aye; Heard: aye; Weizenbaum: aye; Fleischaker: aye; DeFant: aye. So moved.

This is Weizenbaum's last meeting. ECAC members thanked her for her participation.

Next meeting: July 25, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Miriam DeFant, Member, 8/01/2023