



GREEN ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

TUESDAY, March 12, 2024 - 6:00 pm

HYBRID MEETING

GAB Members Present: Peter Berry, Cameren Cousins, Erik Larson, Mary Smith

GAB Members Virtual: Partha Krishnan

Town Staff Present: Andrea Becerra, Lauren West

Guests Virtual: Jacqueline Marden, Kurt Marden

Mary calls the meeting to order at 6:00pm and reads the hybrid meeting statement. Attendees are advised that the meeting is being recorded.

Erik Larson makes a motion for Erik Larson to act as a voting member to establish quorum. Cameren seconds the motion. The GAB votes unanimously in favor, the motion carries.

Business

Resident Concerns

- Kurt Marden wants to confirm that his email was received regarding minutes from the previous meeting
- Andrea confirms that the GAB will make the requested updates to the minutes before posting them

GAB/Sustainability Updates

FFF Bylaw

Andrea shares some information about Acton's new Fossil Fuel Free Bylaw (FFF Bylaw). The Town has developed a website with Lexington and Arlington with information on the bylaw (bit.ly/fffenergy). The bylaw goes into effect on March 21st and requires that all new construction and major renovation in Acton must be fossil fuel free. The Town is working on adding a waiver request regarding the bylaw on the Town's Open Gov platform.

- Cameren asks if it is only for permits submitted after March 21st. Andrea confirms
- Mary and Erik explain that Somerville has also adopted the specialized stretch code & FFF bylaw
- Andrea notes the specialized stretch code already made it difficult to build with fossil fuels, but this bylaw removes the option for any fossil fuels including natural gas
- Cameren asks how the bylaw handles existing infrastructure. For example, what do they do with existing gas connections? Andrea clarifies that major renovations do have to

remove existing fossil fuels. Different requirements will apply depending on size of the renovations

- There are exemptions if there is a financial burden or urgent need to renovate
- Fossil fuel backup generators are allowed under the bylaw

Nature-Based Solutions

Lauren reached out to MAPC on their nature-based carbon accounting tool. ICLEI has already shared their tool that is currently available. MAPC will be releasing their tool sometime this summer. The MAPC tool will look at carbon sequestration and land use.

- Andrea messaged the Nature Conservancy and they said they would look into what options there are for nature-based carbon accounting
- Cameren notes that if the MAPC tool will align with our current work, it may make sense to wait until it is available
- Lauren asks what the goal of bringing a speaker to the GAB would be
 - Mary says she would like to hear what has the speaker's experience been, what have they looked at, and how did they get their data
 - Cameren would like to know what other communities are doing with this information and how are they turning it into action

HMP and MVP

- Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)
 - Climate resilience plan focused on infrastructure
 - Working closely with Department of Public Works
 - Had the first meeting, Peter and Mary attended
 - Peter asks how climate change fits into this plan after attending the first meeting and noting a lack of focus on climate
 - Andrea explains they will be pulling data and examining previous natural disaster events, but will eventually investigate future events
 - Specifically, Peter mentions thinking about prevention for future natural events like flooding
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)
 - Climate resilience plan focused on community
 - Will begin with an internal process of a Core Team consisting of 5 Town staff members and 5 community liaisons who represent vulnerable populations in Acton's community
 - The Town received over 40 applicants
- Both plans will have public outreach and opportunities for input
- A Climate Resilience Festival will be held on June 8th at Gardener field in West Acton with music and food
 - Andrea will share more information as this date approaches

Red House

The Town received a \$37,000 grant for the Red House project. The Conservation department recently received an additional grant to fund plants. The Sustainability Office had a community design workshop with community members who provided feedback and input on the existing design for the space

- The Sustainability Office will be presenting at Northeastern where students will provide feedback and design assistance
- Cameren asks if the parking area is included in the scope of the project
 - Andrea notes realistically, it is not in this budget but we are still asking for out of scope concepts and ideas. The Red House currently has two driveways. The project team has discussed eliminating one of them. Could be very costly
- Cameren suggests goats as phase 3 for lawn maintenance. Could be an annual event, “No mow May”
- Peter asks about the fossil fuel transition of Red House. Andrea says that will come later, not as part of this project
 - ARPA and Energy Efficiency funds will support the electrification project
 - Peter asks if ground source heat pumps have been considered
 - Andrea says the Sustainability Office will request both air & ground source quotes
 - Andrea shares in an analysis for the new DPW building, with new IRA and Eversource incentives, ground source heat pumps would be most cost effective by far
- The Red House plot is almost exactly one acre.
- Cameren suggests phase four as a living machine septic treatment system or a “manufactured wetland”
- Lauren notes the Red House survey is open with any additional feedback
 - Mary suggests water resilience components
 - Andrea notes plans for a bioswale and rain garden with signs explaining “whys” and “hows”
 - Consider natural infrastructure, last summer we had drought, now we have floods

GAB Charge

- Select Board voted and approved it. They were pleased with it. It is now more comprehensive and expands our topics to discuss

GAB Goals for 2024

- Andrea thought it would be a nice habit to start the year with goal setting for the GAB
 - Example: establishing a method for nature-based solution tracking
- Cameren expresses that the GAB often acts as a sounding board and relies on information coming in from the Town
 - Adding goals will require labor, time, & energy from the GAB members and the Town

- Mary notes that the GAB should help with decision making and sharing what the Town and the GAB are doing. How can the GAB support the Sustainability Office with their outreach efforts? The GAB can help circulate outreach with their networks
- Andrea mentions a campaign for Acton Power Choice (APC) with a new tracker on the APC website. The Sustainability Office will be sending a mailer out and posting a banner. Andrea will share outreach materials
 - Mary suggests linking climate events to the APC campaign
- Erik shares that he has received mail from other power choice companies that looks like it is coming from the Town program. He asks how the Town can make it clear on the mailer that it is an official program
 - Andrea will share mailer with the GAB before sending it out
- Cameren asks if we have rebounded since people opted down during the higher costs period. Andrea shares the Town is overall shifting up. Many folks did jump to basic, but there was also some jump in Green when mailers went out, despite more expensive costs
- Peter suggests an APC video with Acton TV
- Cameren asks if we have breakdown of single vs multifamily homes on APC
 - Andrea says we did not know that info, but we do have a business program launching. Businesses fill out simple application to get badge / certification as APC Green subscribers
 - Erik suggests creating a directory to access all businesses that have signed up
- Peter asks about how the GAB can help Andrea accomplish her goals
 - Will revisit next meeting, some examples include:
 - Make the Red House 100% fossil fuel free by the end of the year
 - Meet APC Green campaign goals
 - Establish a system for tracking nature-based solutions
- Cameren explains air to water heat pumps and how if steam pipes are right size, it can work. Alternative to ripping out whole system.
- Cameren suggests investigating carbon offsets.
 - Mary notes interesting & informative discussion from Eric's contact

Approve Minutes: December 2023, January 2024, February 2024

- Cameren makes motion to accept the listed meeting minutes with the suggested changes for December, Mary seconds, all vote in favor, motion passes

Erik makes a motion to close the meeting at 7:04. Cameren seconds the motion. By a unanimous roll call vote; meeting adjourned.