



TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING Meeting Minutes

BOARD/COMMITTEE: Sustainability Committee

MEETING DATE: January 13, 2021

TIME: 7:00pm

PLACE: Video conference

Members Present: Francie Nolde, Chair; Richard Garrison, Member; Larry Grossman, Member; Palmer Moore, Member; Barbara Salzman, Member; Suresh Jasrasaria, Member

Members Absent: None

Other Attendees: Mr. and Mrs. DeLise, private citizens; State Senator Jamie Eldridge, Middlesex and Worcester District; Bob Stemple, Select Board Liaison; Ryan Ferrara, Town Administrator; Rajon Hudson, Assistant Town Administrator; Daniel Szetela, Legislative Aide, Office of Representative Dan Sena; Kelly Brown, Central MA Regional Coordinator, DOER; Brian Sullivan, Green Communities Division Director, DOER; Johannes Buchanan, Director of Legislative Affairs, DOER; Alexis Smith, private citizen; State Representative Dan Sena, 37th Middlesex District; Connor Reardon, Energy Efficiency Engineer, LELWD;

- 1) Roll call: Chair Nolde: present; Member Garrison: present; Member Moore: present; Member Salzman present; Member Grossman: present;
- 2) December minutes: Garrison made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 9th, 2020, meeting; Grossman seconded; *Approved: 5-0 (roll call)*
- 3) Green Communities and Municipal Light Plants (MLPs): Senator Eldridge noted he has two MLPs covering four municipalities in his district; his office is looking at legislation that could provide caveats to the current Green Community surcharge requirement, possibly creating a standalone MLP Green Community program; he also highlighted that the current climate change bill on the Governor's desk has elements that compel MLPs to take more action relative to climate change; (*Jasrasaria joined meeting*) noted that February 19th is the deadline to file such legislation for the current session; Representative Sena shared that he was not aware of this issue prior to this meeting; he thinks it is important that Boxborough has access to 'green' grants, one way or another; Sullivan highlighted that 280 of Massachusetts' 350 communities will be designated Green Communities shortly; 27 of those designated communities are MLPs, whereas 23 MLPs remain that have not yet received such designation; he noted that Reading is in a similar situation to Boxborough, being part of a regional MLP that has other member communities, some of which are Green Communities and some that aren't; Nolde asked for guidance on next steps; Senator Eldridge recommended that his office provide a draft of the MLP legislation they are currently

working on and will follow up with the Committee to review; Garrison expressed concern about the flaw in the criteria that a MLP community can become a designated Green Community by having a single Investor-Owned Utility (IOU) customer, thereby meeting the requirement without having to contribute sufficient surcharge fees to justify the measures that are sought by that same community; Eldridge responded that this was intentional in that DOER worked out this solution early in the program to help a number of MLPs achieve Green Community designation, where those communities otherwise would not have been eligible; Nolde expressed interest in other grant options in the meantime; **Action Item(s):** *Nolde to follow up with Senator Eldridge's office regarding the draft legislation;*

- 4) Climate change survey: Jasrasaria summarized that 270 residents had responded thus far, as well as nearly 50 non-residents; he reminded members that the original goal was to obtain an 8-10% response rate, or +/-500 residents based on population of ~6,000, and asked if the Committee should extend the deadline and push to get more participants, and, if so, how could the Committee engage those additional participants; Nolde clarified that there are 2,200 households in town, so the response rate could be considered higher if the metric was based on that; Jasrasaria noted that the response to the freeform 'Suggestions' field at the end of the survey had been very good, with a diversity of responses, and wondered if more responses would materially change the outcome of the survey; Stemple asked if the expectation was that all members of a household, including children, would take the survey; Jasrasaria believed that depended upon whether the members of the household held similar or unique perspectives on the issue, but that anyone with their own views on climate change should participate; Nolde suggested extending the survey to give Garrison an opportunity to expand engagement within the business community; Ferrara noted that the town will be sending out a mailer to the business community soon, which could include an advertisement for the survey if that would be helpful, but he was not certain of the timing for that mailer; Jasrasaria suggested extending the deadline for a month to capture additional responses; **Action Item(s):** *Garrison to send draft of business engagement letter to Ferrara; Jasrasaria, Garrison and Nolde to draft an announcement for the deadline extension to February 15th*
- 5) Bay State Textiles program status: Moore highlighted that bins have been overflowing over the past two weeks, so clearly the word has gotten out;
- 6) Black Earth composting at the transfer station: Nolde worked with Ed Kukkula, DPW Director, to add Black Earth services into the town budget, subject to approval at Town Meeting; Ferrara expressed interest in tonnage data to know how much the town might save by diverting solid waste; Grossman confirmed he had previously done the calculation and can update that, alongside seeking data from Black Earth regarding other communities where they have established operations; Salzman renewed the concept of subsidizing the cost of compost bins for residential use, but recalled that there were issues in the past regarding allowable use of town funds; Ferrara confirmed that the town would not be able to process payments from residents; Nolde wondered if we could simply give them away for free as part of the Committee's duty to educate the community, since the purchase of the bins has already been budgeted for the 2021 fiscal year; Ferrara agreed that giving away the bins for free

would be acceptable; ***Action Item(s): Nolde to add a note to the Committee's next meeting agenda to discuss a plan for the compost bins***

- 7) Sustainability policy/climate action plan: Nolde consulted with Ferrara regarding a 'sense of the meeting' article for Town Meeting regarding sustainability policies to guide the town's various boards and committees; Nolde described next steps, including engagement with boards and committees in advance of Town Meeting to collect feedback and build support; Ferrara confirmed with town counsel that anything coming out of this effort would be advisory in nature, compelling boards and committees to factor in sustainability in their work but not enforcing it; he noted that Acton's Climate Action Plan was advisory more than anything else and mostly reaffirmed things the town was already doing through community engagement; Mr. DeLise recalled that Acton started off with modest steps and evolved from there; he also noted that Harvard wasn't currently doing anything substantive with respect to sustainability/climate change, and that very few communities in our region have developed any organized response to these issues; Salzman attended a recent Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN) meeting that highlighted many communities' strides in the context of sustainability/climate change, including several that had already or were in the process of hiring sustainability coordinators; she noted that the Heat Smart Alliance was pushing to have 'heating coaches' designated in each community to help educate about the push for electrification in residential heating systems; ***Action Item(s): All members to read the draft warrant article and provide feedback to Nolde; Nolde to schedule a time to meet with the Select Board to seek their comments and support regarding a sustainability policy***
- 8) Committee web page: Nolde asked if members want their personal email listed on the Committee's web page; Ferrara clarified that the link can be set up to route the user through a submission form versus having the member's personal email revealed on the page; Stemple also noted that a catch-all email can be listed in lieu of individuals' email addresses, and messages sent to that address can then be forwarded to a single member; Nolde liked that idea and volunteered to be the recipient; ***Action Item(s): Nolde to follow up with the town website manager to implement a catch-all email address;***
- 9) Solar bylaw: Nolde and Salzman attended the recent Planning Board meeting where they reviewed the draft solar bylaw; Nolde stated the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on Feb 22nd to take feedback on the current form of the bylaw; Moore offered to consolidate the Committee's comments prior to and represent the Committee at that meeting; Nolde was concerned the draft was overly restrictive at a time when our community needs to take action; Mr. DeLise noted that the restrictions that LELWD has in place for solar projects only applies to grid-tied systems, not off-grid; ***Action Item(s): Moore to compile comments and submit to Planning Board in advance of the public hearing on February 22nd***

List of Exhibits used, if any:

Emojot survey analysis.