



GREEN ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

TUESDAY, May 14, 2024 - 6:00 pm

HYBRID MEETING

GAB Members Present: Eric Hudson, Cameren Cousins, Mary Smith, Partha Krishnan, Peter Berry

GAB Members Virtual: Dennis Loria

Town Staff Present: Lauren West

Town Staff Virtual: Andrea Becerra

Mary calls the meeting to order at 6:05pm and reads the hybrid meeting statement. Attendees are advised that the meeting is being recorded.

Business

Resident Concerns

- None.

GAB Updates

- Cameren mentions the email GAB members received from volunteer coordinating committee. Cameren, Peter, and Erik Larson need to note their status by filling out the link that was sent.
- Eric proposed the GAB share reflections on Town Meeting.
 - Mary liked the new moderator. She noted the first night was very crowded. The Town went over lots of useful content related to Powdermill.
 - Paul Kampas gave a presentation on the proposed gas-powered leaf blower ban as a citizen's petition item on the warrant. Select Board Member David Martin made a motion for the Select Board to take on studying the ban before anyone had made any comments. David's motion passed with strong support.
 - The Select Board had created their own draft of the ban but it was not presented at Town Meeting. There were multiple amendments proposed to the citizen's petition version of the bylaw on the day of Town meeting.
 - Mary came across a landscaper in Town using an electric truck to charge batteries for his business. She notes that people need time to learn more about the technology.
- Peter Berry shared about an email from Peter Light on battery storage at the Boardwalk school. The Board of Health, the Fire Department, and abutters have lots of concerns

regarding the battery. Wetlands and the topography of the area restrict where the battery can go and create a potential for issues with noise and concerns about Fire dept. access.

- Partha asks if a noise study was done. One was completed however there were some objections that the study was not done correctly.
- Mary wonders why the battery cannot be further away from the school. Peter and Eric note it would be very costly to add infrastructure to extend the reach of the cells and grid.
- Nexamp is a private company and will operate the battery under a contract with Eversource.
- Dennis is disappointed to hear the battery issues will impact the school's ability to reach their net zero objective. He will reach out to Kate Crosby for more information.
- Andrea adds that fire safety concerns for electric batteries have been coming up across the state. There is no formalized or standardized training protocol for addressing these systems. MAPC pointed to an optional training through MassCEC. It is questioned if there should be a requirement for less ambiguity to addressing hazards of these systems.
- Kate says there was a safety study done. Non-lithium batteries are not as efficient. Newer systems can be safer but take up more room.

Sustainability Updates

Nature Based Solutions

- Lauren recaps that the GAB decided to add wetlands to the older I-tree analysis and to make an updated one for 2024. The Town GIS team is also developing some new maps for the OSRP which show data on local geology and ecology.
- Cameren asks if Lauren will share her notes doc with information on what local groups are doing for measuring carbon capture. Lauren will email it to the GAB.

HMP & MVP

- Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is a Federal process.
 - Outcome is developing a new updated plan. Focused on the Town's weaknesses to natural hazards and less focused on community resilience.
 - Mary & Peter joined a previous working group session.
 - The Sustainability office is hosting a workshop tomorrow, Wednesday May 15th to receive feedback on Acton's threats and weaknesses from natural disasters.
 - Andrea sent HMP goals to GAB.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan is a State process.
 - This update will not create a new plan but will implement a seed project according to community input and using grant funding.
 - Collection of community input will end in December.
 - This plan update process includes hiring Community Liaisons with grant funding.
 - Eric asks if the MVP seed project could involve Acton fire training regarding renewable energy technology.

- Mary shares that she ran into the Fire Chief and suggested that community members could help prepare for vulnerability. Acton could have an established group of volunteers who know what to do in case of an emergency.
 - Andrea notes this idea has come up in MVP 2.0 already and some noted that renters don't know what to do in the case of natural disasters. The Fire Chief has seen pamphlets with information on how to deal with disasters that could be sent to every home.
- Peter notes the definition of Environmental Justice at a Federal level is more concerned with health outcomes. Acton is defined as an Environmental Justice Community at the State level. He asks for clarity on the difference.
 - Andrea replies the State definition is more nuanced, which considers minority status, language isolation, and income. Sections of Acton where more than 40% of the population falls under the minority definition.
 - The Town considers other indicators such as single parent family status in determining vulnerable populations .
- Peter asks how the HMP addresses the vulnerable populations.
 - Andrea explains for example there is no reverse 911 call in a different language due to risk of incorrect translation. One solution is offering a pre-translated message that has been verified to be used in case of emergency.
- Andrea asks that the GAB provides feedback on the goals in the next month via email or discussed at the next meeting. She had emailed them out and they are in the meeting packet.
 - GAB members can also provide feedback at the event tomorrow from 5:30 to 6:30pm in the library.
- Eric asks when the previous goals were published.
 - Andrea responds it was 2018.

Red House

- Andrea sent a diagram of the drafted design for the space.
- Peter notes that he looked at the survey and asks about accessibility considerations. He notes that it seems possible to have walkways be accessible and pervious. Andrea clarifies that the pathways are already existing and accessible.
- The project is fully funded by an MAPC grant and the goal is to create a welcoming and educational space to serve as an example for residents wishing to update their own spaces.
- Andrea describes the space as a “pocket park” and invites ideas beyond the scope of this grant that could be added in the future.
- Partha asks about including an emergency device such as telephone, blue button, etc.
- GAB members consider existing emergency response devices and note that they cannot think of locations around Town where they exist currently.

- Eric asks where the project is in the process of hiring landscapers. Andrea shares she can send the request for quotes for the landscaping work including details of species being considered. They have not yet hired anyone, but are going through the procurement process with the help of Betina, Ian, other Town staff, and the Acton Water District.
- Eric would like to see list of recommended species to be planted.
- Cameren asks about including signage to provide extra information on the project and to direct visitors to additional resources.
 - Andrea responds the goal is to have QR codes with information for every sign.
- Eric asks if the group has looked at adding a teeny forest. Andrea responds it is not part of this phase, but the team is investigating removing some of the invasive trees on the property to make space to plant more native trees.
- Mary asks about volunteers involved in the project.
 - Andrea notes high school volunteers visited to help reduce invasives. Girl scouts and Eagle scouts have offered to help, individuals have volunteered.

GAB Goals

- Andrea shows a GAB Goal tracker she created and asks for feedback.
- Eric asks if this was requested by the GAB. Andrea had offered the concept of GAB goals.
- Needs to be updated to say Acton becomes a “Climate Leader Community” instead of a Green Community.
- Lauren is working with AB schools to complete a decarbonization roadmap and EV first policy to comply with the requirements. Becoming a Climate Leader will give the Town access to additional grant funding.
- GAB will look at the goals and provide feedback.
- GAB members are supportive of the tracker and like the progress tracking aspect.
 - Cameren notes it should grow and we should not remove completed components.
 - Peter thinks the goals are clear and have achievable outcomes.

Sustainability Policy

- Cameren, Mary, Andrea, and others have been working on updating the Sustainability Policy from 2018. The policy describes the climate emergency declaration and identified goals. Select Board Member Jim Snyder-Grant wanted to add to the policy to include tracking and accountability and to make it more specific to Acton’s climate concerns.
 - Updated version is focused on acknowledging climate change, human health, and preservation of natural spaces. They are still wordsmithing the policy, everyone agrees explaining and highlighting specific concerns for Acton is good.
 - Eventually members of the Select Board will proof the document and create a final version.

Climate Resilience Festival

- Save the date! Saturday June 8th from 1pm – 4pm. Live music, face painting, activities, free ice cream, composting porta potty, and more.

- Funded by the MVP 2.0 process, featuring community tables on local climate efforts.
- Mary suggested that the high school students that presented on their septic project have a table at the festival.
- Mary, Peter, and Partha offered to put yard signs up to advertise the festival.
- Ask businesses to put up flyers.

Approve Minutes

- Will review for next time.

Cameren makes a motion to close the meeting at 7:18. Partha seconds the motion. By a unanimous roll call vote; meeting adjourned.