

Green Advisory Board
Minutes of Meeting
June 22, 2009
Town Hall Room 126

Present: Eric Hudson, Kate Crosby (chair), Mary Smith, Carol Holley (associate and clerk), John Murray, staff liaison

Late Arrival: Chris Schaffner

The meeting opened at 6:08 p.m. Minutes of the prior meeting were accepted as corrected by motion of Ms Crosby seconded by Mr. Hudson and unanimously voted.

Ms Crosby gave a brief overview of the Mass. Tech Collaborative funds, and how they were spend on the solar installation at the hotdog stand, and how a little bit of money is left over. Mr. Murray gave a brief overview of the complexities of municipal accounting procedures.

Mr. Murray discussed Warrant Article 5 for the next day's Special Town Meeting. He has been talking to Town counsel, who believes that a 2/3 majority is required because of easements – the question is which article to try to pass – the one that requires 2/3, or the home rule petition. Ms Crosby felt that the problem was with people who have never heard of this sort of thing and have an impulse to say no because it's new to them; and some people in town prefer that the Selectmen not be given the power to sign the lease. Ms Crosby went down a list of individuals she had spoken with, and their feelings on the topic.

Mr. Hudson asked about the follow up regarding Article 4, the home rule petition. Mr. Murray replied that the legislature needs to approve it. It creates a special law that is only for Acton. The legislature can be slow, or fast, and these bills usually move en masse. Mr. Murray thought that if it were in the group in the end of the session it would go fast but if it goes into a study committee it could take two years. Ms Smith couldn't see the legislature holding it up because it's what everybody has been talking about.

Mr. Hudson said he didn't know how many people he knows will go to town meeting – is there a way to connect with the people who will be there to vote on the sewers?

Mr. Murray noted that, at present, the plan is for Town Meeting to move to pass over Article 4 and take up 5, and he is still working with town counsel on why a 2/3 majority is required.

Ms Holley related per conversations she has had, people are concerned about unintended consequences of the broad wording of the article. Ms Smith noted that a lot of things that will be coming up will be newer technologies; if limitations come up, let it get voted.

Mr. Hudson asked if the lease would be with a solar power company or a third party. Ms Crosby noted that these are installation companies. They can't overwhelm the building, and anything that gets generated that is excess can be designated to other town buildings. Ms Smith noted that this article is written to enable a type of transaction, and there are hundreds of ways these can be carried out.

Mr. Murray noted that if it were a ten-year pay-back, we wouldn't need a town meeting vote at all. Ms Smith confirmed that these agreements usually require an easement.

The conclusion of the discussion was that the group will initially intend to go with Article 5, and if it doesn't look at the time that it can be passed, they will revert to 4.

The zoning article, number 6, was discussed. It had originally been on the consent calendar, but the Fincom wanted that changed. The Planning Board will present it, but this group needs to be ready to speak to it.

Mr. Hudson asked how much time was allotted to present. Ms Crosby noted she had 12 minutes, and she didn't think she would need that much. Mr. Hudson felt it would be good to let people know that this is a way we can be proud of Acton.

A brainstorming session of future activities ensued. Among the considered/discussed:

- Public education
- Upgrading town buildings (Ms Smith noted that energy includes water consumption – you need this to do a footprint)
- Getting more information – people really need to understand this would help with energy efficiency
- Improving the knowledge base and supporting more organized efforts
- Collecting data and having an organized approach to energy efficiency and resources
- Conservation as a way of living, not a piecemeal effort
- Prioritization of energy efficiency efforts that should be done, and a program to actually lower consumption
- We should be making a big effort to become as efficient as possible

Ms Crosby asked, what's a way to have it better organized? Ms Smith felt there needs to be a vision, to look at how they collect the data. There needs to be some kind of concerted effort to identify, and we will look at paybacks and lowering footprint through energy efficiency. Ms Crosby, looking at the list, asked, how do we rank? Ms Smith noted that first, we need the information.

Mr. Hudson envisioned the GAB as getting together to analyze information we receive and have as a goal what our recommendations are, then having an idea of what our mission is in the next 4-5 meetings. Look through the work we have done, information we have, and get more. We should have a hit list. Maybe number one is what we are doing tomorrow. We need to be able to show the town what Acton should be doing. Understanding our consumption better.

Ms Crosby noted a task to track down data; Ms Smith felt they weren't collecting it all. There are ways to collect more. In some instances, they are paying people and maybe the information isn't good enough for today.

Mr. Hudson felt the group knew how to organize itself around 5-10 areas. Something like biodiesel for buses – get information from NRDC, make recommendations, list initiatives.

Ms Smith felt the group needed to look at financial impacts. In this town, there are a lot of people who have oil heat, and they don't get the same services in terms of data that electric and gas users do, nor

the advice on how to be greener and more efficient – maybe we could consider something like that – it would have broad impact on residents. The Green Energy Fair was noted to have a lot of stuff there – the group could concentrate on areas not as strongly addressed as others. What to concentrate on? Municipal, schools, residential, commercial?

Ms Crosby noted that there are four months until the oversight meeting with the Selectmen. If we can get a data set before then, that would be a lot. Ms Smith noted it would be a lot even if we collected what we need. Ms Crosby thought exploring ESCO's would be a good idea; Ms Smith observed that you have to have the data and interview the ESCO's, etc. You might not have that by October, but it would be achievable by next Town Meeting, to look at that prospect.

Ms Crosby noted that the group should also look into biodiesel. Ms Smith felt the GAB could play a big role in terms of facilitating an effort, if the town is enabled.

It was noted that the Green Communities Act and getting Acton involved in it is another priority. Mr. Murray stated that he would like to get a zero percent loan program for residents in the town to buy photovoltaics.

Mr. Hudson felt that in October, the group could present to the Board of Selectmen a nice-looking PowerPoint that states that this is what we have done – the interviews, etc., this is the information we have gathered. We have continued down these paths. We think they will produce some fruit – we lay out five slides with a couple of steps down to get things accomplished. We can brainstorm what to put, what we are setting out to do.

Ms Smith noted that, for the people that collect the data, she would be happy to meet with them and tell them things they can do to have more data and energy efficiency.

Mr. Schaffner (late arrival) would like to get a sense of - we have gotten some preliminary access to energy information. It would be great to take that to the next step – how do our buildings measure up against typical buildings? That goes to the idea of footprinting - ultimately it leads to the information for footprinting.

Ms Smith brought up the whole ESCO question –it's interesting, but you really have to do the data first. The ESCO is just one way to get there, a cost efficient way to get to reduced energy use. They take energy numbers and benchmarking to identify problems. Maybe we are doing things that will make the numbers come out well, and maybe not. We need a year or more of energy data. Ms Smith thought the group had parts of the data. Mr. Head was going to give us access to the Internoc system. Ms Smith remembered that Mr. Head had an energy advisor, and she thought that the group needed to get with the advisor about what they are collecting. Mr. Charter did not appear to be collecting demand data, just kilowatt hours and money, and rates and demand data are missing, and they are not getting interval data. Mr. Schaffner wanted to look at what Mr. Charter was doing and follow up on accessing the school data, noting that the group needs to be very specific in their information requests.

It was noted that, at some point, somebody needs to have a conversation with the OLEC people.

For the July 8 meeting, Mr. Schaffner will look at information from Mr. Charter regarding what he thinks is missing, and Ms Smith will email Mr. Head and follow up with a phone call. Mr. Hudson wanted to find out how much biodiesel the Town was using – general fuel consumption for both municipalities and

schools. He will talk to Mr. Stamski about talking to Mr. Robinson and others regarding municipal biodiesel usage. Mr. Hudson talked about OWL energy in Massachusetts, and Ms Smith noted there are also facilities in New Hampshire.

The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m. by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Holley
Clerk