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Green Advisory Board Footprint Subcommittee
Minutes of Meeting
August 10, 2009
Town Hall, Room 126

Members present: Kate Crosby, Eric Hudson, Terry Lindgren, Carol Holley

The meeting opened at 6:08 p.m. Ms Crosby related her conversation with Reed Schuler at Mass Audubon, and he gave her some links to footprinting tools. She has also spoken to Rob Garrity at MCAN and asked him about different tools. She has a list of 4 tools – one from the EPA Community Energy Challenge, one from ICLEI, an international organization with an office in Boston, and another tool from the Climate Registry and Clean Air Cool Planet, run by Michael Biddey, which would give small town carbon calculations. The DOER is going to issue a tool, but it isn't out yet. The tool will probably be limited, but useful. She also talked with Jason Teregin at the EPA and Alison Webster at ICLEI, and Jen Boudrie in Marlboro – she did the Marlboro carbon footprint. Jen used the EPA as a framework and used Worcester to flesh that out.

Ms Crosby noted that the EPA wants you to reduce 10% with a time frame being up to the participant. 10% of New England towns have signed on to this program. ICLEI is concerned about greenhouse gases for the entire municipality; it's a more comprehensive and expensive tool. Mr. Hudson felt that a good intern could complete a footprint for Acton in a couple of solid weeks of work. Both tools could be used.

Mr. Hudson was concerned about the tools for footprinting – the guidelines will be defined by the tools. Ms Crosby noted that the subcommittee needs to understand the tools, and be able to choose one. Mr. Lindgren noted that the group needs to be able to say what we are measuring and why – we can't set ourselves up for political failure. Ms Crosby noted that the ICLEI tool was available with a \$600/year membership.

Mr. Hudson observed that the groups needs funds for this. We should understand how much – how many dollars would be available for the town if we were to be approved as a green community. And once we are a green community, there will be another "pot of gold". The other element is that it took somebody at our company at least 80 hours over a six month period to figure out what product-life cycle analysis tools to use. You need to network with others to decide which tool to use. If there is a town that has done a footprint, we could consult. Mr. Hudson is concerned about the success of moving forward with "this is Acton's footprint". Which tool comes through with a clean calculation and easy to understand results?

Mr. Lindgren noted that, when purchasing a tool, he always makes a list, so he made one for this exercise:

1. Hands-on user experience (people we can talk to)
2. Guts (how it works)
3. Tech support
4. Documentation
5. User group
6. Additional complexities – software requirements
7. Town staff supportable

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Ms Crosby noted that “Reid the whiz” suggested the group check out ghgprotocol.org. He also noted that Baltimore was using the ICLEI tool. He said you pick a measurable core area, then expand. He also recommended that the group check into the Cambridge sustainability plan.

It was noted that 4 towns seem to have climate action plans, including Arlington and Belmont.

Did Mark Hald have the bandwidth to support this effort?

The group discussed what towns are similar to Acton, so they could be contacted about their footprinting efforts. Factors would include wealth, industrial base, etc. Mr. Lindgren noted that the School Committee used a list of town compiled a while back by Peter Ashton. Ms Crosby thought the group should investigate towns that are leaders in this area.

Mr. Hudson would like to figure out which tool to use first. He would like to get a list of towns to cross reference with the School Committee’s comparable communities list, and then we can identify responsibilities for the 4 members of the group in terms of contacting the communities about their carbon footprints – we need to understand what the process was and the tools they used. Then we report back and discuss tools. For each town, we can look at categories used in the footprint. We need to research the tool and figure out what categories we are going to work with in Acton.

Mr. Lindgren was concerned about a dollar figure, which needs to include time – this needs to be kept at the back of the groups’ collective heads, and we need to start talking about this. Mr. Hudson asked if we were going to do hiring. Mr. Lindgren wondered how long it would take to investigate on our own.

Ms Holley noted that the exercise could be revenue neutral to revenue positive, given the savings that would result. Mr. Hudson felt that the group should take a practical approach to it.

The group worked on a timeline. At town meeting we want to be able to talk about the footprint, and that’s in April 2010. Then we talk about a set of things we are thinking about for footprint reduction and the benefits of those things.

Mr. Hudson felt the group should ask for \$8,600 - \$8,600 for the intern and \$600 for the ICLEI membership for one year. That would be about \$500/week stipend for an intern. Mr. Lindgren noted that maybe the first thing the group needs to do is make a pitch for the intern. Mr. Hudson thought an Olin student might work well, and Ms Crosby mentioned Tufts and Clark.

The discussion turned back to what to ask other towns, and the list was:

1. Which elements were included in your footprint, and why?
2. How much did you pay to get the footprint done?
3. Did you use an intern?
4. What would you do differently? The same? What worked and what didn’t?

Initial conversations should be done by the whole committee meeting on August 28.

It was noted that, by October 2, we should know how much money we think we need – that gives us six weeks to generate information. A town meeting presentation would need to have work started by mid-February. Therefore, an intern would need to be hired by mid-October. Mr. Lindgren felt that by mid-November we needed to be able to articulate what we wanted for the next fiscal year.

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Mr. Lingren found the list of comparable towns: Bedford, Dedham, Milton, Westborough, Wilmington, Canton, Concord, Hingham, Sudbury, Westford, Winchester were among them. The schools look at Lincoln-Sudbury and Concord-Carlise as comparable districts.

Mr. Hudson took on Concord, and will also talk to Newburyport. Mr. Lindgren will talk to Westford and Belmont. Ms Crosby will talk to Marlboro and Arlington. Ms Holley will talk to Sudbury and another if her bandwidth allows.

Ms Crosby will initiate a conversation with John Murray about money – how do we deal with the cost of the intern as discussed? What is the timing, given that college courses are starting soon?

The meeting wrap up: research assigned towns, research costs, talk to schools about interns. Mr. Lindgren would like the footprint finished in February, which could be done with an intern. Mr. Lindgren left to attend the Selectmen's meeting.

Ms Holley moved to adjourn, both Mr. Hudson and Ms Crosby seconded and all voted in favor. Meeting adjourned 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Holley, Clerk