

EGREMONT GREEN COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Members present via Zoom (due to snow storm, town hall was closed): Pat Konecky (co-chair), Emily Eyre (co-chair / acting secretary), Bonnie Greenwood, Juliette Hass, Sharon Waskow, and Marj Wexler. Guest Mary McGurn.

Co-chair Pat Konecky opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. She welcomed the group and asked for a motion to approve the February 13, 2023 minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Report-Juliette

Juliette submitted the annual report for the Mass DEP recycling dividends grant, which includes the town's recycling data. We have received about \$4,500 each year from this grant for the past 10 years. These funds can be spent on anything to assist our recycling efforts. Juliette asked the committee to think of projects to encourage residents to increase their recycling efforts.

Juliette is in the process of thinking of ideas to submit for the Green Communities Grant submission. One important idea is to improve the town's HVAC system at Town Hall. The current system is inefficient, and Juliette hopes the grant will pay for heat pumps and better insulation for energy conservation. We could receive \$200,000, and the town could save approximately \$12,000/year in electricity.

A representative from Discover Books asked Juliette to consider a book collection program at the town transfer station. Discover Books collects every kind of book (hardcover, soft cover, law books, school text books, yearbooks, etc.) except telephone books. DVDs, VHS tapes, and audio books are also collected. Books left in the swap shed at the Transfer Station are often thrown into the paper recycling bin, increasing the cost of hauling fees. Discover Books is a book reseller and a for-profit company. The books they can't resell are sold for pulp. One challenge is finding space at the Transfer Station for their kiosk. Juliette spoke with Jim Noe about this. Perhaps one of the CMRK kiosks can be removed. Sheffield has 2 Discover Books collection kiosks. Emily asked Juliette to check with the Select Board to be sure there is no problem with Discovery Books being a for-profit company.

Old Business:

The roadside cleanup is scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 22, 2023, which is Earth Day. Marj reported that many people have signed up, already half the streets in Egremont are covered, and she is confident all roads will be covered by April 22nd. Bonnie asked if we could ask people to separate the recyclables from their trash. Marj is willing to make that suggestion. Emily will make a flyer to place around town.

Marj noted that all batteries should be recycled and suggested the Green Committee initiate a regular household battery collection program. It was suggested that we buy a collection box from Big Green Box, which recycles household batteries, to be placed at Town Hall, possibly in the "Pick Up and Drop Off" area. Juliette asked Marj to find out details about the box, as it's possible the Mass DEP recycling dividends grant money can pay for it. Important: the battery anode must be taped over to prevent fire. It was suggested that we could put a roll of tape by the box with instructions about taping the positive end.

Marj reported that CMRK magnets, created to remind residents of CMRK's house-to-house pickup, were given to the town. Mary Brazie agreed to hand them out with Transfer Station stickers.

Marj and Juliette worked on creating ideas to promote decarbonization and the importance of providing a community meeting. The Green Committee could host a speaker and call it something like "Decarbonization for Dummies." Initial topic ideas could be: 1) What is decarbonization and how can we incorporate it into our daily lives? 2) Conversation about the Inflation Reduction Act and how it benefits us, and 3) The Fab 4: solar, heat pumps, windows, insulation: How to get started. Juliette is working on finding a speaker, possibly from Mass Climate Action Network (MCAN, a political group), Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), which provides information on programs and initiatives (it also does advocacy), and Center for

EcoTechnology (CET), which is local and assists communities and individuals with energy and waste reduction. The event could be held in the Town Hall meeting room, which holds about 50 people, preferably on a weeknight (perhaps Thursday) around 5:30 sometime in June. Pat suggested reserving the pavilion at French Park for the event in case there is a large turnout and/or people prefer not to be in a crowded enclosed space. The committee discussed which group would best meet our goals for educating the community in a fun, non-judgmental, informative way. Sharon suggested a hybrid meeting so that people could attend via Zoom. Sharon urged that we break down the issues when we publicize the event, and Pat suggested we “prime” the audience by providing preliminary educational outreach.

Pat led discussion regarding a Community Sharing of Items program in Egremont. The Town’s insurance agent has strong liability concerns about the Green Committee promoting the Community Sharing of Items. It was stated that the COA has been lending items and has never experienced any liability problems. Emily said loaned power tools (e.g., chain saws) can cause serious injury, which is less likely to occur with the items the COA lends. Juliette suggested the items can be things without moving parts, non-electric, etc. Pat said perhaps we as the Green Committee would not promote a sharing program but we, as individuals, can promote sharing via NeighborNet. It was agreed that promoting community sharing of items would be a great eco-tip. It was agreed to keep it simple and not to pursue a Community Share of Items as a Committee.

New Business:

Pat led a discussion about collaborating with the Comprehensive Planning Committee to incorporate climate crisis issues/goals into the plan. She spoke with Stephen Lyle from the CPC who was interested in what the Green Committee does regarding climate crisis. She invited him to our meetings. Stephen is interested in ways to educate residents on how to incorporate changes in their lives to prepare for climate change. It was noted that during the Saturday March CPC meeting the community wants to learn how to do more to support climate initiatives. Juliette and Marj drafted a paragraph that Juliette hopes will be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Sharon has been speaking with Guido’s regarding bringing our own containers instead of using their deli containers. She tried it at their deli and it worked perfectly. Guido’s was very enthusiastic about customers providing their own containers. The Big Y deli told Sharon they could not use customers’ containers because of cross contamination (i.e., the customer’s container could be dirty). She had the same negative experience at the Berkshire Co-op. Juliette will meet with the health director and ask if there are health restrictions regarding customers using their own containers at deli counters.

Juliette noted that Big Y’s brand of chicken parts is now being packaged in recyclable clear blue plastic trays rather than Styrofoam, which is a step in the right direction. She suggested the Green Committee write a letter to corporate Big Y, thanking them for using these trays instead Styrofoam. Juliette will draft the letter.

Additional business:

Emily suggested the Green Committee not sell rain barrels this year because most residents who are interested in harvesting rainwater have already purchased them in our previous sales. Last year, we sold fewer even though we invited neighboring towns to participate. Also, the community discount for barrels is significantly lower in 2023, the barrels selling for only \$20 less than retail. Finally, the delivery company for the bulk delivery of rain barrels is now operated by a 3rd-party vendor who prefers a 3-day window for delivery, making it difficult for us to secure the use of the town forklift. The Committee agreed to skip the rain barrel sale in 2023.

The next meeting will tentatively be Monday, April 10, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting was closed at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Emily Eyre, acting secretary