

EGREMONT GREEN COMMITTEE

Minutes September 13, 2022

The meeting opened at 4:35 at the Pavilion at French Park. Present were Pat Konecky (Co-Chair), Emily Eyre (Co-Chair), Juliette Haas, Sharon Waskow, Marj Wexler, and guest Dave Rejeski.

Guest speaker Dave Rejeski discussed how to begin introducing information about climate change to residents. His points were: 1) Determine who the information is coming from/who the “messenger” will be. Examples: Anthony Fauci, Juliette Haas. 2) Decide what actions we would like residents to take. 3) Take advantage of a recent event, such as drought, wildfire, high temperatures, or severe winter storms, to bring up issues that correspond to the event. Example: heat wave/passive cooling techniques, such as whole house attic fans, mini-splits. Drought/rain barrels, etc. 4) Personal stories, such as when bittersweet choked a transformer in S. Egremont causing a power outage, can be a very effective way to reach people with the message “get ready.” 5) Providing data is key, such as temperature, number of lightning strikes hitting trees and transformers, etc. Dave has a great deal of data, which he is willing to provide.

Sharon asked if there is a way to get the message out that is not text/read oriented (i.e., different from communicating only via the Egremont Post and Town newsletter). Juliette said our latest census population count is 1374, and it skews toward an older community.

Sharon moved on to the findings of the Municipal Vulnerability Survey. It was noted that the town’s vulnerabilities, which are natural resources, are also its strength. How do we best share this information with individuals and find out the actions residents wish to do as a town? It was also stated that the importance of individuals being on board to support these issues at town meeting is critical. Juliette said that climate and hazard mitigation expenses can be very high. For example, one culvert replacement is \$400,000 to \$600,000. It could be eligible for a matching grant, and if so, it would go to town meeting.

More discussion was held on how the Green Committee could get people more involved. Dave suggested that a competitive game with a prize may be an effective tool. Example: “Invasive Species Collection Competition” Prizes that pertain to the game could be obtained from local businesses, such native plants from Ward’s. It was also suggested that Egremont challenge another town to the game, creating greater outreach and greater competition. Sharon suggested the use of photos and signage around town with minimal text encouraging people to participate. An example could be a photo of Sharon next to her pile of bittersweet with the text “Beat this!”

Dave also thought it would be helpful to determine our carbon footprint as a household in Egremont. He gave an example: using a carbon footprint calculator, 40 tons of carbon per household x 800 of homes in Egremont equals 32,000 tons. He can help us use the calculator.

This ended Dave’s portion of the meeting, but he remained and contributed to discussions regarding Juliette’s sustainability report.

Minutes of the 7/27/22 meeting were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Report: Juliette introduced the topic of decarbonizing one's home and how to share this information with residents. A 2-sided brochure, being sent to every home, gives information on how residents can decarbonize their homes. It was suggested that a zoom meeting with about 4 selected residents telling their stories about what they did to decarbonize their homes could be very effective. Information regarding environmental benefits and financial benefits could be included. Another idea was to create videos of the 4 stories. Emily met Diane Crespo, a documentarian who lives in S. Egremont. Emily believes Diane made environmental videos for the State of Massachusetts and will contact her to see if she would be interested in helping the Committee video residents' decarbonization stories.

Further discussion regarded individual self-sufficiency and town self-sufficiency. Sharon said the goal is to "move the needle" by getting members of the community and town employees to begin thinking about ways to decarbonize their structures. Dave mentioned that for some, that may mean new windows, for others insulation, while for others it could mean solar panels or installing a mini-split system. As a committee we can offer INFORMATION.

It was mentioned that sometimes people are nervous because they don't know how or what to do. Juliette has asked representatives from National Grid and the Green Communities division if they have a brochure the Committee can use to help residents decarbonize their homes. Pat will contact 350 Mass to see what other towns are doing to promote decarbonization and ask if they have literature to share.

It was decided that each Committee member should complete a carbon calculator for their household. Dave added that the EPA.gov calculator carries weight with the general public because the EPA is known for its vast amount of data. After each Committee member completes the calculator, we can share our findings with each other and later with the community. Dave stressed the importance of using the same calculator. Dave will send us the link and Sharon will check Mass Save Home Energy Audits.

Juliette suggested the Committee could create a decarbonization program, with a schedule. Sharon suggested choosing a topic/task per month. The Committee agreed that this could be a primary focus for this fiscal year.

Discussion was held to determine if there was interest in completing the Alford-Egremont Local Cultural Council Grant Application for a specific program (grant deadline is October 17, 2022). Juliette said the event must be completely planned. Sharon suggested we think about it to see if anyone comes up with an idea. Pat suggested, because it's a bit close to the deadline, the committee consider doing this next year. Emily said it would be helpful to know about the grant application sooner, even if approximate, and begin planning a program well in advance.

Discussion was held regarding topics for October Town Newsletter. Submission Deadline Wed. Sept. 21.

Emily suggested that this month we place an expression-of-interest post on Egremont Post for the Rain Barrel 2023 sale, while the memories of this summer's drought are fresh.

Marj gave a brief update on LED lightbulb collection in Egremont. We are going to postpone collection for the time being, as there is not enough room in the Town Hall Pick-Up & Drop Off area. After the library has returned to its building on Button Ball, there may be room for an LED collection box.

Emily announced that Sharon was recently given the Herman Sands Award in New York City for her contributions to the community. In addition to running a history book group for ten years, Sharon founded "It's Easy Being Green" in 2019 to offer climate education and suggest personal actions to mitigate the climate crises. Congratulations, Sharon!

Meeting adjourned at 5:52. The next meeting date will be October 4, 2022, 4:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Submitted by Emily Eyre ____ insert date ____