

Select Board Climate Action Committee Minutes

June 29, 2020, 6 pm.

Meeting held remotely on WebEx due to COVID-19. Webex Events platform hosted by Town staff Kara Brewton and Linda Hickey. Meeting chaired by Nancy Heller.

SBCAC Members in attendance: Nancy Heller (co-Chair), Werner Lohe (co-Chair), David Gladstone, Alan Leviton (arrived late from another meeting as noted below), Deborah Rivers, Don Weitzman, Linda Olson Pehlke, Michael Berger, David Pearlman (arrived late from another meeting as noted below), James Carr.

SBCAC Members not in attendance: Dan Bennett, Dr. Swannie Jett, Kathleen Scanlon, David Lescohier.

Staff: Kara Brewton, Linda Hickey, Fred Russell, Tina McCarthy.

Guests in attendance included: John Harris, Clint Richmond, Jim Batchelor, John Van Scoyoc.

After making sure that Committee members could fully participate in the remote meeting, Nancy Heller opened the meeting and welcomed Fred Russell, Director of Water & Sewer.

Approve June 1st Meeting Minutes

- June 1st minutes, including revisions by Linda Olson Pehlke, were approved unanimously by roll call vote: Nancy Heller, Werner Lohe, David Gladstone, Deborah Rivers, Don Weitzman, Linda Olson Pehlke, Michael Berger, James Carr.

Water rate structure with regards to irrigation systems

Fred Russell updated the Committee on how water rates were recently changed to be more equitable and sustainable. Last year, the irrigation monthly administrative fee was raised from \$10 per meter to \$60, the same as domestic water. The plan was to this year increase the usage fee for irrigation, but the Town decided to put that off for a year. The main concern is that anticipated COVID-related impacts for Fiscal Year 2021 would not allow the Parks Division budget to accommodate this rate increase.

Some SBCAC members believed that for household use, the irrigation water rate should be even higher than domestic water (perhaps at higher monthly consumption volumes) to disincentivize lawn watering. Other SBCAC members noted that drip irrigating shrubs or young trees may have an overall beneficial impact to the environment. Additionally, for multifamily areas, the lawn and other green spaces are even more valuable to the well-being of the residents.

In response to questions, Fred Russell explained:

- a Town Meeting vote several years ago determined that the water rate for municipal use and private use must be the same;
- some of the new elementary school designs may be incorporating grey water design;

- 2/3 of what the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) charges is for sewer – a very complex formula based on the strength of the sewage, infiltration on peak day, etc.

Clint Richmond joined the discussion and noted his concerns about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the domestic water supply. Although New England generally has a good supply of water for the foreseeable future, many communities currently not on the MWRA system are starting to see groundwater contaminants affect the quality of their drinking water. Clint believes that Brookline should be concerned about these issues for the larger Massachusetts community; that drinking water is a basic human right but irrigation is a privilege. Michael Berger added that if the issue in the future is going to be access to treated water, than perhaps sewer is more important to worry about with regards to climate issues.

Clint Richmond shared these links during the discussion about irrigation rates:

- 1) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/23/millions-of-americans-cant-afford-water-bills-rise>
- 2) <https://www.drought.gov/drought/states/massachusetts>

Ideas that individual SBCAC members suggested Fred Russell consider included:

- Charging residents an offset to pay for the irrigation of park usage
- Incentivizing consumer habits to reduce the peak load in the summer (e.g., could 5-bathroom homes be charged higher fees)
- Looking at cost structures from other parts of the country
- Ensuring the rain sensors for all the parks are fixed as a preliminary step

[Alan Leviton joined the meeting.]

Co-Chair Updates

Werner Lohe reminded SBCAC members that now that Linda Olson Pehlke is the Transportation Board's appointee, there is a Brookline Neighborhood Alliance (BNA) appointment opening. In Werner's conversation with BNA leadership, they are more than happy to have Michael Berger be moved from an "at-large" to their appointee. This then opens up at "at-large" position. Werner introduced Jim Batchelor, Preservation Commission member. The Preservation Commission is interested in working with the SBCAC. Werner made a motion to have Jim attend provisionally until he could be appointed by the Select Board. Following further discussion, some SBCAC members were not sure that Jim should fill the at-large position, and that perhaps every time there is a vacancy, the SBCAC should be looking for the most diversity that they can. Other members liked the idea of having a Preservation Commission member on the Board. Werner Lohe withdrew the motion. Everyone welcomed Jim to continue attending the meetings, as there may be many topics of interest to both SBCAC and Preservation.

[David Pearlman joined the meeting.]

The group also discussed the need to have technical roles, not just appointed roles. Additionally, Nancy Heller noted that the Co-Chairs probably need to talk to all Committee members about their time availability moving forward. Don Weitzman noted that although he absolutely loves being a part of SBCAC and was one of the founding members of creating the SBCAC, he was willing to offer his seat to new membership. There was general consensus that the membership structure should be discussed again, perhaps after the Sustainability position is filled.

Following additional discussion, Werner Lohe also indicated that the non-Select-Board co-chair election should be placed on the September SBCAC meeting agenda, and that others interested in running for the position should feel free to step forward.

SBCAC statement: Black Lives Matter movement

Werner Lohe introduced a draft SBCAC statement on Black Lives Matter. Following discussion and suggested revisions by several members and staff, the statement was amended as shown below in tracked changes. During the discussion, James Carr shared the following resources with the other members:

- 1) <https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/gtr534.pdf>
- 2) <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/environmentalisms-racist-history>

Black Lives Matter

The Brookline Select Board's Climate Action Committee stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. We must look to [the history of racism and exclusivity within all of our cultural institutions, including the environmental movement](#), ~~the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless others~~ to help us recognize and understand how racism has shaped our institutions and culture. It is our responsibility to speak and act to end racism and repair the harm it has done to individual lives, to communities, the country, and to the planet. [We cannot create](#) ~~an~~ [creating a sustainable world without](#), ~~it is just as important that we build a world of justice, social equality, and economic opportunity, and as a healthy environment.~~ [The Select Board's Climate Action Committee encourages a diverse membership.](#)

There is no climate justice without racial justice.

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Through consensus, the SBCAC decided that the amended version should be sent around to all SBCAC members and then released shortly after the July 4th weekend - as long as none of the members (present or otherwise) did not have any edits or wish to discuss further.

Discuss recurring schedule for SBCAC

Voted: the next meetings will be held on July 27th and August 24th.

As the meeting was closing, Nancy Heller asked that David Gladstone's report on the Climate is Everybody's Business program be sent to all SBCAC members [link at <https://gogreen.brooklinechamber.com/report/>]. Nancy also noted the next meeting agenda should also include updates from the working teams.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.