Select Board’s Climate Action Committee (SBCAC)
Minutes of the September 23, 2019 Meeting
Town Hall, room 308 (employee lounge), 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

SBCAC Members present:  Nancy Heller (co-chair), Werner Lohe (co-chair), David Gladstone, Deborah Rivers, Donald Weitzman, James Carr, Kathleen Scanlon, Linda Pehlke, Michael Berger
- Werner Lohe chaired the meeting.

SBCAC Members absent:  Alan Leviton, Dan Bennett, David Lescohier, David Pearlman, Swannie Jett

Town staff present:  Zoe Lynn (left and returned after attending another public meeting)

Public and other guests present:  John Harris, Tom Kilday, Diane Sokal

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MEETING

1. The draft minutes of the July 22, 2019 were adopted with no changes.

2. Brookline Green Energy – Nancy Heller reported that the next phase of the “Opt Up to 100%” campaign for Brookline Green Energy is under way. An organizing meeting was held on September 19. Precinct captains are still needed for Precincts 7, 13, 14, and 15. Two hundred lawn signs have been printed and are available from Nancy. Two hundred door hangers have been printed for each precinct, and more will be printed if necessary.

3. Update on Working Teams – Zoe Lynn reported on the Working Teams (WTs) that have formed based on ideas and priorities determined from the Select Board’s Sustainability & Climate Action Summit. WTs have been formed in five major areas; details are available in slides in a Powerpoint presentation available on the Town website.
   a. The Public Buildings WT has begun work on developing a Town policy for municipal buildings based upon International Living Future Institute (ILFI) standards.
   b. The Non-Public Buildings WT has begun to think about long-term strategies, but is putting most of its efforts into Warrant Article 21 (sustainable buildings/prohibition against fossil-fuel infrastructure in new construction), which is led by Jesse Gray and has 11 co-sponsors.
   c. The Renewable Energy WT has prepared two warrant articles. Warrant Article 13 is a zoning bylaw to permit ground-mounted solar voltaic installations. Warrant Article 12 will authorize the Select Board to enter into a power purchase agreement (PPA) to develop solar voltaic installations on six municipal sites.
   d. The Brookline Green Electricity (BGE) WT is working with the Communications and Education WT (See below) to develop a brand.
   e. The Transportation WT has focused on Warrant Article 31, with which five other transportation related warrant articles have been coordinated.
   f. The Composting/Sustainable Food and Zero Waste WTs are working with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), the School Department, and Department of Public Works, and will meet on October 1 with stakeholder groups to pursue composting in the schools. After the schools project has begun, the group will consider developing a zero-waste plan.
   g. The Communications & Education WT announced, at Brookline Day on September 22, a competition to develop a brand for the Town’s sustainability and climate change efforts. The Select Board will also announce the competition at its September 24 meeting. A website will be
set up and final legal/project necessities completed. A prize of $500 or $2,000 will be awarded, and a display will be prepared on the third floor of Town Hall.

h. The Green Space/Tree WT has been temporarily placed on hold due to the press of other work.

i. The “Integrate” WT may not be needed as a WT and will likely not form.

4. Future Role of the SBCAC – Zoe noted that 11 of the 36 warrant articles to be considered at Fall Town Meeting are related to sustainability. She said that she has been attending internal Capital Improvement Plan meetings. She reminded the committee that the workload is very heavy and that it is not work that she has created, but rather, largely initiatives that she has had to respond to and prioritize.

Zoe reminded the committee that she has suggested that it might be wise to ask the Select Board to make appointments in such a way so that members of the SBCAC would be distributed on other boards, commissions and committees in Town government, with the full SBCAC meeting only two or three times per year.

Deborah Rivers noted that this could be difficult since many of the other boards and committees meet frequently and their members have many non-climate-related routine responsibilities.

David Gladstone noted that his approach of forming an independent group that coordinates with Zoe and the SBCAC, but is not a WT nor a subcommittee of the SBCAC, has worked well.

Nancy Heller noted that an important function of the SBCAC is to provide a forum in members of the community can be informed about climate activities going on in town.

Michael Berger indicated that Zoe has brought new energy and ideas through the WTs, and that the question now is how can the SBCAC help her. In particular, after November Town Meeting, we should consider how can the WT process be further improved.

Don Weitzman reiterated that it is important to reevaluate the role of the SBCAC itself, and suggested that if it proved problematic to have a member on each Town board and committee, an alternative would be to insure that the Select Board uses a sustainability “filter” in making appointments.

Werner Lohe noted that there are about 70 different Town boards and committees. Building on Don’s suggestion, Werner noted the parallels between climate work and affirmative action (or inclusion and diversity). That is, unlike most governmental tasks, success in these areas requires that everyone be committed and involved, not just one department with primary responsibility. Thus, just as inclusion and diversity should be considered in every new hire and as part of everyone’s job, so too should commitment to sustainability.

Deborah suggested that SBCAC members, instead of being full members of other boards and committees, could be available much like “expert witnesses” to advise only when necessary.

Nancy reminded the group that some of the many committees are less active than others.

Werner suggested that with so many Town boards and committees, each SBCAC member could choose or be assigned several as a “portfolio” to monitor, with the assumption that only one or at most two would require active engagement, while boards with less relationship to sustainability issues could be only passively monitored.

Linda Pehlke expressed a concern that despite having developed Climate Action Plans in the past, we still do not have an effective, over-arching plan to help set priorities.
Don opined that a central function of the SBCAC should be to set the priorities.

James Carr noted that Zoe has been very effective in working with Town staff, and we need to facilitate that and help her.

Michael suggested that we should work with the existing Climate Action Plan (CAP), prioritize activities, and roll out a five-year plan.

Werner noted that the Summit has at least supplemented the CAP, and if there are continuing Summits they may to some extent supplant the more static Climate Action Plan.

John Harris noted that one of Zoe’s great successes in the short time she has been Sustainability Program Administrator is that a great many Town staff, notably including department heads, have become engaged with and are participating on the WTs. He noted that she could be much more effective if the administration would assign to her a half-time purely administrative staff person to help with the many administrative tasks that now take up too much of her time, e.g., scheduling meetings.

David suggested that in order to clarify our role, the SBCAC might consider doing a SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis at some time in the future.

TO DO

Werner will send the SBCAC’s existing charge to all members before the next meeting so that they can review it as we continue the discussion of the committee’s role in the future.