



**Meeting Minutes of the
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
January 30, 2024
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
10:00AM**

The Topsfield Sustainability Advisory Committee met virtually at 10am on January 30, 2024.

Present: Jenn Forster (chair), Julie Shannon, Bradley Bissell, Tom Warren, Phil Kennedy, Rafael McDonald

Absent: Andrew Prazar, Kevin Harutunian (non-voting member)

Virtual Public Meeting Announcement

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to watch or listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: Video conference (see log-in information provided on agenda). No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. If we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Tom Warren made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on December 19, 2023. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Trash Data Collection

An intern, following the trash route on Dec 28, Dec 30, and Jan 5, collected data on the number of bins that were for trash and recycling. The data was shared with the committee and the Chair asked for questions especially any for the intern to clarify the data. Two of the days were Recycling and Trash and the third day was Trash only. A 96-gallon trash bin was counted as one trash bin; and an 18-gallon recycling bin was counted as one.

There was discussion about taking out the outliers when tabulating the data – such as one household with twenty-two containers because it was skewing that data tabulation. Also, there was discussion about collecting data again on a non-holiday week. Zillie Bhujju, a local business owner, remarked that the businesses in town would appreciate being included in any new

recycling contract. There were also questions and discussion regarding how bins and containers were counted; for example, a 35-gallon trash bin with a “Recycling” sticker on it.

Ms. Forster summarized the consensus that data for a non-holiday collection would be helpful and some granularity on how recycling bins were counted – perhaps on the next count to tally the 18-gallon rectangular recycling bin and larger sized recycling containers. She will also seek some clarification on how multi-family housing areas were counted.

There was a brief introduction to the question of what size totes the Town might be buying – whether 96-gallon, 64-gallon, 35-gallon, etc. Currently trash collected in a single 35 (or 40) gallon container is collected without additional household fee. Additional trash requires a sticker to be purchased. Concern was expressed that larger containers without additional cost to the household would enable a greater amount of trash disposal and is contrary to the goals of reducing trash and increasing recycling.

Ms. Forster suggested a community project on data collection whereby residents might post photos of their trash and recycling. Perhaps this could be a school project. This might provide a visual idea of the volume of trash disposed of every week.

2024 Strategic Plan

Ms. Forster recapped the January presentation of the Strategic Plan before the Select Board. Regarding priorities, the trash contract and sustainable energy at the schools are high priorities and community education supports all the initiatives in the plan. She also noted that the prioritization of the initiatives is a bit fluid. Overall, the Board was appreciative of the presentation and supportive of the plan. The issue of presenting the plan to the broader community was brought up. Stephanie has added the strategic plan to the Sustainability Advisory Committee section of the Town’s website, so people can provide feedback in that way. Ms. Forster received committee agreement that the apparent priorities are first the trash contract, second sustainable energy at the schools, and the third priority was community education.

Community Education

The committee noted that it is time to quickly get planning for Earth Day activities. Some follow-ups to figure out coordination will be done informally by a smaller workgroup. A reminder that Thursdays are slated for SAC updates to social media. Last week the strategic plan was posted. Ms. Forster started a list (social calendar) of themes and ideas for future posts – such as water conservation and energy conservation. Committee members should offer suggestions for themes and actual posts (or reposts) that can be provided to Stephanie.

Renewable Energy in Schools

The week of January 15 the school committee sent the ARPA committee a letter requesting that they consider funding a feasibility study at Steward School. Mr. McDonald offered to follow up to find out that status. Regarding Masco, there was no update on electrification. However, it was noted that there was to be a public presentation on January 31 regarding the turf field project.

Also, it is an opportune time to pitch potential sustainability projects to Masco such as green buildings and rehabbing buildings to be more environmental and sustainable.

2023 Annual Report

The Town requires an update from each committee for their annual report. Ms. Forster prepared the 2023 highlights and accomplishments and shared them with the committee. After some discussion, edits, and additions, Mr. Warren made a motion to accept the annual report update. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Wrap-Up

Ms. Forster summarized next steps. She will schedule time with Mr. Harutunian to go over the trash collection data, timing the next steps, and pulling together information. Zillie Bhujju will share the Masco Google form for recording questions associated with the turf field, Ms. Forster will follow up with the intern on the questions regarding the previous trash collection data and data collection going forward (number of units, size of bins), and removing outlier data.

Adjourn

Raphael McDonald made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Phil Kennedy

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25,;Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.