

## Minutes

### Martha's Vineyard Commission Climate Action Task Force (CATF)

Friday, March 6, 2020

at the Olde Stone Building, Oak Bluffs

Present: Richard Andre, Dan Doyle, Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Rob Hannemann, Tristan Israel, Bob Johnston, Tony Lima, Kathy Newman, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Alan Strahler, Noli Taylor, Richard Toole, Kate Warner

Guests: Dylan Fernandes, Kaylea Moore

#### ***Key points from conversation with Dylan***

- Will the task force be willing to sponsor some of his work to get people on board with Cape Light Compact, including a tour?
- There are at least 3 proposed energy bills in the Senate: net-zero energy, electrification of transportation, and carbon pricing.
- A \$50 million request for SSA bonding did not go through, although \$10 million for the commuter rail between Buzzards Bay and North Falmouth was approved.
- Dylan was unaware of whether the SSA would ask for its bonding limit to be raised.
- The net-zero energy bill will likely pass, requiring Eversource and National Grid to buy 100% renewable energy by 2047.
- The GreenWorks infrastructure bill includes support for towns to purchase electric vehicles.
- The GreenWorks money is not tied to the state's bonding capacity, so the money will actually be spent.
- Dylan can send us the precise language related to the funding for energy coordinators in the GreenWorks bill.
- The rideshare tax creates a new permanent funding source for regional transportation authorities.
- The executive office could change the permitting legislation related to coastal projects if they wanted, but the various permitting agencies are siloed.
- Dylan offered to send the executive office a letter asking for the formation of a task force to explore a streamlined permitting application.
- The building stretch code is no longer a stretch; the bar needs to be raised.
- The Baker administration has the power to issue building regulations without passing legislation, but hasn't done so.
- Dylan did not anticipate Maura Healy striking down the Brooklyn natural gas ordinance unless it was abundantly clear that it is not constitutional.

- Dylan was not sympathetic about Eversource wanting to raise its cap on solar power, since it is so far behind in connecting existing solar to the grid. He is also wary about Eversource creeping from distribution into generation.
- The Island (rather than Dylan) needs to take the lead on advocating for electric ferries.
- The state would likely not penalize communities for updating their MVP priorities with more relevant information over time.

### ***Information that Dylan requested***

- The new NFPA regulations affecting residential battery storage.
- More information about the streamlined permitting idea, including some examples of what it might look like. (He can put that in a letter to the executive branch.)

### ***Summary of discussion***

- I. Communications: Slack or email?

Members agreed to forego using Slack for CATF communications, in favor of email.

- II. Recap of Feb. 21 meeting with Eversource representatives

Members discussed their Feb. 21 meeting with Eversource representatives, which was meant to establish a long-term relationship surrounding energy resiliency and climate change adaptation on the Island. They agreed that continued communication with Eversource is critical, and they revisited some of the topics discussed at the meeting. One key takeaway was that Eversource's planning depends largely on its projected peak loads, which CATF members argued are low. Eversource had stated that it would respond to local planning that shows a different trajectory for peak loads in the future. Rob Hannemann said the CATF was equipped to determine how the Island's peak loads might be affected by climate action planning. Alex Elvin agreed to resend members a document outlining the Eversource company structure. Rob suggested setting up another meeting with Eversource in the spring, and agreed to remain their primary point person on the task force.

- III. Update on stakeholder listening sessions: conservation agents/commissioners, harbormasters

The adaptation master plan committee gave an update on its listening sessions with conservation agents/commissioners and harbormasters. Both groups had stressed that permitting is a major obstacle to adaptation projects. Ben Robinson recommended looking into Islandwide comprehensive permits, so that Island towns could have active approval from the state for certain kinds of projects. Others agreed that state permitting is onerous and antiquated, and that state permitting policies are in need of reform. On the other hand, some

argued that the high bar for permitting also prevents unwanted projects from happening. Liz Durkee expressed a desire to have another meeting with the conservation reps, in order to explore issues such as when and why local bylaws won't stand up in court. Kate Warner suggested utilizing the Coastal Zone Management conference in June to highlight the next steps in coastal adaptation planning.

The harbormasters that attended the listening session had specific ideas related to harbor protection, including jetty and bulkhead projects, and the effects of sand transport. The harbormasters welcomed the CATF's assistance in terms of permitting.

The first wave of stakeholder meetings will continue to focus on town agencies.

#### IV. Preparation for discussion with Dylan Fernandes

In preparing for their discussion with Dylan Fernandes, members touched on issues related to state legislation, including a pending Senate energy bill; the Massachusetts Municipal Association Policy Committee on energy and environment, with Tristan Israel encouraging anyone interested to seek an appointment; new challenges facing residential battery storage; and the 100% Renewable article. Members also expressed an interest in inviting new Vineyard SSA governor Jim Malkin to meet with the task force.

#### V. Discussion with Dylan Fernandes

Dylan Fernandes asked members for their input on what they would like to see as the state takes up more legislation related to climate change, including a Senate bill on net-zero energy. He also mentioned his efforts to work with Cape Light Compact to help people transition to a net-neutral lifestyle. He asked if the task force would be willing to sponsor some aspect of that effort, which he said creates an easy pathway toward energy efficiency.

Dylan reported that \$50 million request related to the SSA did not go through, although \$10 million related to upgrades for the commuter rail between Buzzards Bay and North Falmouth was approved. He said he was unaware of whether the SSA would ask for its bonding limit to be raised, but he expected his office would be the SSA's first point of contact.

Conversation turned to three proposed energy bills — related to net-zero energy, electrification of transportation, and carbon pricing. Richard Andre explained that the net-zero proposal would give towns more weight in setting their own energy requirements for buildings, but he anticipated it would be an uphill battle. On the topic of how town or MVC regulations/policies might be able to exceed the state building code, Dylan said new legislation could potentially be filed. He added that the stretch code is no longer a stretch, and the bar needs to be raised. Marc Rosenbaum noted that changes in the 2018 energy code were minuscule. Dylan said the Baker administration has the power to issue building regulations without legislation, and he has been hounding them to do so, but with no luck. He anticipated that the net-zero energy bill

would pass, requiring Eversource and National Grid to buy 100% renewable energy by 2047. He stressed the need for such a long-term plan to include benchmarks and obligations.

Dylan expected to see changes related to electric vehicle charging stations in the future, and noted that the chair of telecommunications and energy was excited about that prospect. The major GreenWorks infrastructure bill that passed the House includes support for towns to purchase electric vehicles. The bill includes money outside the state's bonding capacity, so the money would actually be spent, rather than left to executive discretion. The money all goes to municipalities, for things like EV infrastructure, microgrids and energy coordinators. Dylan offered to send the CATF the precise language related to the energy coordinators, as it might apply to the new position at the MVC. The bill now goes to the Senate.

Dylan drew attention to a new permanent funding source for regional transportation authorities, where part of a new tax on rideshare services goes to the RTAs. He added that rideshare pools are not taxed, which creates an incentive for actually sharing the rides and cutting down on pollution.

Dylan said he was not aware of concerns arising from new regulations by the National Fire Protection Agency that could stall the market for small residential battery storage systems. The changes may also hinder efforts by the Cape Light Compact to incentivize residential battery storage in the region. Dylan asked the CATF to send him information about the new NFPA regulations.

Members asked about Eversource's desire to have the state raise its allowed capacity for installed solar, but Dylan said he was not sympathetic, since Eversource is already so far behind on connecting existing solar to the grid. Any new ceiling on its solar capacity would need language obligating the company to get projects in the pipeline. He was also wary about Eversource creeping more from distribution into generation. On a separate matter, he said Eversource has been actively opposed to the Community Empowerment Act (or another?), in part because it would require the company to rescind some control over its contracts. Rob Hannemann pointed to the bill as key to achieving the Island's energy goals.

Members discussed the 100% Renewable warrant article, with Dylan saying his first recommendation is for more Islanders to register with Cape Light Compact, and for Island towns to opt in to the compact's renewable energy supply program. However, he acknowledged that some of the credits in the regular CLC package are "bogus." Richard explained that the 100% renewable energy option is actually only 20% renewable in light of the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard, and the package is not generating new clean energy projects. When customers leave CLC and sign up with Eversource basic service, they have to reregister to get back in to CLC, which has caused participation to drop over time.

On electric ferries, Dylan saw that as something the Island needs to advocate for on its own. He offered to help where he could, but emphasized that it needs to be a local conversation. He also argued that people's range anxiety about electric cars is largely unfounded.

Ben asked Dylan for his views on comprehensive permitting for coastal projects, a process that can take years. Dylan said he believed the executive branch could fix the relevant legislation if it wanted, but the various permitting agencies exist in silos. He offered to send the executive branch a letter asking for the formation of a task force to explore a streamlined application, and if that fails, the next step could be to pass a legislative commission to come up with recommendations. He asked the CATF to provide more information, including some examples of what a streamlined process might look like, so that he could put that in a letter to the executive branch. He added that the lieutenant governor might be interested.

On the topic of the MVP grant process, Dylan did not think the state would penalize communities for updating their MVP priorities with more relevant information over time.

On the topic of a new ordinance prohibiting natural gas infrastructure in Brookline, Dylan said he did not anticipate Attorney General Maura Healy striking it down unless it was abundantly clear that the ordinance is not constitutional.