

Minutes

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

Friday, May 15, 2020

Zoom

Present: Richard Andre, Cheryl Doble, Dan Doyle, Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Rob Hannemann, Tristan Israel, Joan Malkin, Kathy Newman, Erik Peckar, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Alan Strahler, Noli Taylor, Richard Toole, Adam Turner, Kate Warner, Norman Willard

I. Update on MVP Action Grant

Adam Turner gave an update on phase 1 of the MVP Action Grant to develop an Islandwide climate action plan, for which he has requested a 90-day extension from the state. That would push the end date for phase one to September. MVC intern Tony Lima, along with staff, have completed a listing of about 430 resources (plans and policies, guidance documents, climate action plans, etc.) that will inform the next phases of the MVP process, including the development of booklets and presentation materials for each town and the Island as a whole in phase 1. The MVC has also developed a stakeholder list for phase 1.

Phase 2 will involve hiring a consultant to conduct a series of public outreach meetings, develop adaptation strategies and draft the plan (likely a stand-alone website, in addition to a written document). The scope for phase 2 was included in the original MVP Action Grant application last year, so can be adapted for the new grant round, which ends June 11.

II. Collaboration with Nantucket

Members discussed an invitation from Nantucket special projects manager Chuck Larson to collaborate on Nantucket's MVP Action Grant, which focuses on supply chain issues. Ben Robinson and others welcomed the opportunity for more regional collaboration, but it was unclear how the MVC could best contribute. Suggestions included joining as a co-applicant on the grant, providing technical assistance via the MVC staff, sharing the CATF's energy baseline modeling reports, and writing a letter of support for the grant. Some argued that the MVC would not have the capacity for a shared grant proposal, but there was support for writing a letter on Nantucket's behalf. Adam noted a number of other grant proposals that the MVC is working on before June 11, but agreed to lend a hand to Nantucket. Ben planned to schedule a Zoom call with Chuck Larson to further discuss the options.

III. Update on sustainability planner job application review

Adam gave an update on the review process for sustainability planner applicants. About 140 people applied for the position, and a committee of 6 (Adam, Ben, Kathy Newman, Joan Malkin,

Alex Elvin, and Lucy Morrison) had narrowed the list to 50 and created a rating system based on 6 factors to further narrow it down. Committee members had mixed opinions about the applicants, but they agreed more information is needed to make a decision. Several CATF members highlighted the importance of being able to grow in the position, work hard, and think outside the box. Others recommended asking the next round of candidates to describe climate change programs or initiatives that have inspired them, and to provide more detail about their climate change-related experience. The committee planned to draft a list of questions for the next round of candidates to answer in writing.

IV. Update on energy working papers

Rob Hannemann gave an update on three working papers that the CATF energy working group is developing. The papers focus on transportation, buildings, and the electricity sector. Alan Strahler and Tom Soldini have been developing ideas and data surrounding transportation. Marc Rosenbaum has undertaken a similar effort related to buildings. Both of those topics converge on the issue of transforming the electric infrastructure, including renewable energy on-Island, and the need for Eversource to provide additional loads in the future. The electricity sector working paper was shared with Eversource. Each of the three papers will include ideas for strategies, but are not intended to serve as strategic plans. Rob said the energy working group had concluded that having a planner help set up a framework for a document that communicates the efforts underway in transportation, buildings, and energy should be the next step. However, he noted that having only one or two MVC staff members dedicating some of their time to climate change planning was not enough.

V. Increasing staff and planning capacity

Members discussed various possibilities for increasing staff and planning capacity in regard to climate change, including the following:

- Formalize the CATF's relationship with Cape Light Compact as a partner
- Clarify how the new MVC sustainability planner will fit within current MVC staff work on climate change
- Establish contact at Eversource who can serve as a staff liaison, or have them "loan" us a staff person for a year
- Obtain an intern sponsored by Cape Light Compact (many students may not be able to return to school in the fall, so they could potentially be available)
- Vineyard Power may be able to dedicate one or more of its summer interns to climate action planning
- Pursue programs at the federal or state level, or through the Harvard Kennedy School or MIT, where employees or students could be brought in to help with planning for 6 months or a year
- Review MVC staff mission in general, with a focus on climate change (MV Commissioners could make a formal statement to that end); however, funding for

additional staff would depend on additional town funding, which is currently strapped due to the coronavirus

- Build on the concerns and mobilization surrounding coronavirus to highlight the need for more staff support in the area of climate change planning (some felt that should wait until we get through the summer and can look back on the situation more clearly)

Members also discussed the timing of an annual report on CATF activities that could be presented to the towns. One obstacle would be that all the towns are hoping to keep their town meetings as short as possible. Rob and Liz agreed to draft one-pagers on the work of the energy groups and adaptation master plan committee, respectively, and Alex agreed to contribute data about funding and grants. Joan argued that even ideas that did not come to fruition should be included, and Ben stressed that the report should point to the need for the Island to focus on climate change issues more robustly.

VI. Increasing diversity on CATF

Ideas for how to increase representation on the CATF included reaching out to Elio Silva and Brazilian clergy or parishioners for a list of potential members within the Brazilian community. Alex said he would also send an email to the Wampanoag Tribe's Natural Resource director Bret Stearns, and the tribe's environmental coordinator, Beckie Finn, about tribal representation. Norman Willard said there may be specific funding available for an expanded task force.

VII. Review of action items from previous meetings

Working with schools: Members agreed that the timing might not be right to ask a member of the school community to join the task force, since their attention is elsewhere. However, some suggested involving students to larger degree, in part because that would provide an avenue to more Islanders in general. Kathy suggested offering a short online class in energy, since students seem not to have enough educational content given the stay-at-home situation. Ben said he would get in touch with Louis Hall on that topic, and Kate Warner recommended contacting Josey Kirkland at Mass Audubon as well. Richard offered to contact Cape Light Compact about their involvement in providing information to schools.

Streamlined permitting: Alex agreed to work with Liz, Tristan Israel, and Cheryl Doble to develop a theoretical framework for streamlined permitting on the Island, which Dylan Fernandes had asked for as a first step in his recommending the formation of a permitting task force at the state level.

Stop and Shop: Ben suggested drafting a letter to Stop and Shop leadership, seeking information about their long-term energy efficiency plans, and to establish a long-term relationship along the lines of the one being formed with Eversource. Alex will find out what sort of communication is still ongoing in regard to Stop and Shop's DRI projects, and Ben planned to send an email to Eunice Yeoman, whose name had come up at an earlier meeting,

and who may have additional contacts at the company. Richard added that the topic of reducing food waste should also be part of the discussion.

VIII. Other business

Liz provided an update on the adaptation master plan committee's listening session with planning board representatives on April 30. The session focused largely on regional collaboration, the need to coordinate bylaw changes across the Island, and how to shift people's motivations away from profit and towards sustainability. Alex planned to send a summary of the session to CATF members.

Members agreed that Covid-19 and climate change present many of the same challenges, in terms of health, business, seasonal economy, etc. but that it's too soon to fully get their heads around the impact of the pandemic. Ben noted that climate change is generally more predictable than a pandemic, so we can more effectively prepare for it. Kate added that this year's hurricane season is expected to be especially active, and it's only a matter of time before the Island gets hit by a natural disaster that eclipses the coronavirus. Along those lines, Kathy suggested asking Paul Karasik to draw a cartoon about Covid-19 and climate change that could run in one of the newspapers.