

Minutes

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

Friday, June 19, 2020

Zoom

Present: Cheryl Doble, Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Rob Hannemann, Bob Johnston, Joan Malkin, Kathy Newman, Erik Peckar, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Alan Strahler, Richard Toole, Kate Warner, Norman Willard

Members of the press: Brian Dowd (MV Times), Eve Zuckoff (WCAI)

Ben Robinson opened the meeting by acknowledging Juneteenth, and the importance of more firmly grounding the committee's work in environmental justice. He highlighted the issue of wealth disparity in particular, and a [recent study](#) in Nature Communications that concludes that wealthy lifestyles will need to change before we can solve global problems like climate change and biodiversity loss. He noted the Vineyard's tourist economy, and urged the committee to consider ways to address climate change that will benefit communities around the world that have suffered as a result of the affluence that others, including many Vineyarders, enjoy.

I. Update on grants

Alex Elvin reported that the MVC has submitted a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant proposal for phase 2 of the Island adaptation plan, and has partnered with Nantucket on a separate MVP proposal to develop a supply chain resilience plan for the two islands. He pointed out that both projects would involve public workshops on the Vineyard, with some overlap, so the MVC and Nantucket will need to coordinate their schedules and messaging so as to avoid confusion and "workshop fatigue." Much of the outreach would take place in the winter-spring of 2021 and 2022.

The town of Oak Bluffs and the MVC have also applied for a Coastal Zone Management grant to develop a storm tide pathways study for the Island, showing in detail the flow of water during storms. Liz Durkee provided an update on the grant, and added that the project will link to National Weather Service data and tie in with the MVP adaptation planning process.

II. Report on CATF energy group working papers, and presentation on electricity sector

Rob Hannemann announced the completion of four working papers that set the stage for an energy transition master plan for the Island. The four papers provide baseline data, goals, and initial strategies related the electricity sector, transportation, HVAC/buildings, and energy efficiency. The overall goal is to provide a comprehensive roadmap to eliminate fossil fuel use on the Island by 2040, in line with the proposed 100% Renewable warrant article, and the 2019 MVC Climate Crisis Resolution. The CATF energy working group includes Rob Hannemann, Richard Toole, Marc Rosenbaum, Alan Strahler, and

Kate Warner. Next steps include updating the energy baseline data over time, further refining an energy model that the group developed in order to understand the impacts of various actions, and developing the master plan. Vineyard Power has assigned its interns to work on refining the baseline data and energy model this year.

Rob gave a presentation on the Electricity Sector paper, including some initial strategies. The paper assumes that electricity demand will more than double by 2040, but that higher efficiency will lead to a 35% decrease in overall energy use during that time. Some of the strategies include establishing microgrids for essential services, underground wiring (Rob pointed out that undergrounding is more feasible than utility companies often suggest), and community solar arrays. Rob stressed that meeting the goal for 2040 will not be possible without offshore wind.

Other key strategies in the paper include public education, policy adoption and amendments, and Island and regional partnerships. The Electricity Sector paper and/or baseline data have been shared with Eversource and Cape Light Compact.

Further discussion focused on the energy transformation in regard to buildings. Kathy Newman noted that while the MVC understands the Island's energy goals in general, commissioners may not always be able to properly vet the energy aspects of Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs), and she suggested developing a module or checklist to help guide the process. Ben mentioned that the MVC is in the process of updating its energy policy for DRIs, but that even then the commission will need to rely on outside experts to interpret materials submitted by applicants. Norman Willard suggested the formation of a regular group of experts that can be brought in as necessary, in order to avoid disagreements about which experts to consult for DRIs.

Joan Malkin stressed value of the new DRI energy policy in light of the large projects the MVC will likely see in the future. But she said the bigger challenge is to influence the many projects that don't come to the MVC or other local boards for review. Along those lines, Marc Rosenbaum noted that most development on the Island is for housing, and those projects typically don't come to the MVC. But he also pointed out that four of the six Island towns have adopted the MA Stretch Energy Code. He said the advantage with the stretch code is that it requires energy modeling, and building professionals to periodically be onsite. He added that a wider push in the state to change the stretch code to a zero-energy code, which could sweep up more types of projects in the future.

As one indication of the Island's readiness to adopt clean technology, Liz drew attention to the recent vote in Oak Bluffs to approve a new town hall that is both solar-capable and all-electric.

III. Presentation on Vineyard Wind Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Erik Peckar gave a presentation on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has required for the Vineyard Wind project. The draft SEIS analyzes future offshore wind development along the East Coast, and has been released for public comment. BOEM planned to hold a [series of five public hearings](#) this summer: June 26 and 30; and July 2, 7, and 9. The public comment period closes July 27. Erik emphasized the importance of establishing

these first offshore wind projects along the East Coast, and encouraged CATF members to attend the hearing on June 26. He also planned to draft a letter of support for the CATF to sign. Alex agreed to draft a letter that the MVC could discuss and sign at a future meeting.