

Minutes

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

Friday, July 17, 2020

Zoom

Present: Cheryl Doble, Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Beckie Finn, Rob Hannemann, Tristan Israel, Joan Malkin, Kathy Newman, Erik Peckar, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Alan Strahler, Richard Toole, Durwood Vanderhoop, Kate Warner, Norman Willard

I. Discussion of Cape Cod Commission Regional Policy Plan amendments

Discussion of the proposed amendments to the Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan continued from the previous meeting. Members agreed that the proposals did not necessarily warrant action from the CATF, which is already working in several projects for the Vineyard, but should be taken into account. Alex Elvin said he would forward the proposals to other MVC staff who are working on a 10-year review and potential update to the MVC Island Plan.

II. Discussion of open-space preservation in regard to climate change planning

The conversation shifted to the topic of open space protection, which will likely be addressed in the Island Climate Adaptation Plan. Ben Robinson noted the importance of working with Island planning boards as that process continues. He and Cheryl Doble planned to set up a meeting of the All-Island Planning Board in the near future.

Beckie Finn raised the question of the carrying capacity of land, noting the abundance of new development on small lots in Edgartown and Oak Bluffs. Ben pointed out that existing infrastructure is one limitation on growth, especially in Tisbury, with its wastewater regulations. He said regulations and policies related to open space should focus on saving not just terrain but natural systems. Joan noted the MVC's desire to quantify the carrying capacity of the Island as a whole, in terms of population. Beckie suggested conducting an Islandwide buildout scenario that shows the effect of impervious surfaces and other development on natural systems. Members proposed adding the open space discussion to a future meeting with MVC special projects planner Dan Doyle.

III. Update on draft DRI energy policy

Ben gave an update on the revised DRI energy policy, which was nearing a final draft for presentation to stakeholders and the MVC. The policy will apply to commercial and residential construction and renovations, as well as parking areas, that come before the MVC as Developments of Regional Impact. The policy indicates energy standards, power sources, and other guidelines for DRI applicants, and will also guide the commission in weighing the benefits and detriments of DRI projects. Its main goals are to 1) reduce or eliminate the consumption of fossil fuels, and the emission of greenhouse gases,

associated with DRIs, 2) maximize the energy efficiency of DRI buildings, parking lots, and other structures, and 3) improve energy resilience.

Members of the DRI energy policy committee are Joan Malkin, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Rob Hannemann, Richard Toole, and Rob Doyle. The committee has met about 20 times this year, including with commercial building commissioner Steve Turner, to refine the policy draft. It has also met with MVC council in response to the MA Attorney General's recent decision to deny a bylaw in the town of Brookline that would have banned the installation of fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction.

Among other things, the policy guides new residential and commercial projects to include onsite solar energy generation for 100% of their projected use, but applicants can propose various alternatives. The policy does not include guidelines for energy storage or building materials, as neither was considered straightforward enough to apply specific standards at this time.

Future amendments to the policy could tie the solar guidelines to the portion of renewable energy being provided by the grid (if the grid portion goes up, the solar portion goes down), but that is yet to be determined. Amendments could also address the topics of energy storage and building materials.

Committee members planned to present the draft policy to Island building inspectors and the MV Builders Association for their feedback. CATF members encouraged the committee to also get feedback from Island realtors and other groups.

IV. Presentation on the Buildings and HVAC energy working paper

Marc Rosenbaum gave a presentation to supplement the CATF energy group's working paper on buildings and HVAC. The presentation covered the topics of current energy use in Island buildings, decarbonization strategies, weatherization, air source heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and rebates available through Cape Light Compact, with special attention paid to the methods and benefits of deep energy retrofits. Marc also gave a similar but more extensive presentation in January that is available on MVTV by searching "Beyond Fossil Fuel Homes."

Discussion following the presentation focused largely on the importance of education and how to better utilize the programs offered by Cape Light Compact on the Island.

Kate Warner asked if there is a certification process for heat pump installers, since so many people are doing that work and the quality is not always good. Marc said the installers at South Mountain are trained, but lower-cost options are less reliable. He noted a certification program offered through Mitsubishi, and the potential for job creation on the Island, where there is a shortage of good HVAC and refrigeration techs. He pointed out that refrigerants are GHGs, so poor installation is especially bad for the environment, although better refrigerants are being developed.

Ben stressed that existing buildings are a much larger source of energy consumption than new buildings, so energy efficiency efforts should focus on retrofitting the existing buildings, but not

everyone has the money to do that. People need to change out their heating systems every so often, so they should be educated as to the benefits of heat pumps and other technologies.

Erik Peckar asked if there was an easy metric, like dollars saved per square foot, which could be used for educational purposes. He also noted that CLC can be a big part of the solution in terms of home energy audits. But others saw CLC as not very well integrated into the Island community. Richard Toole, who is the Oak Bluffs representative for CLC, said the problem is that there is not enough representation on the Island, with Tisbury currently without an appointee. He suggested that the boards of selectmen should be more proactive in appointing representatives.

Marc mentioned a new program through the Mass Clean Energy Center that pushes electric houses, but was unaware of how the program has affected the Island. He added that the MV Builders Association has an education committee, but that work generally reaches only a certain portion of architects, engineers, and builders on the Island.

Members agreed there is a significant need to provide education to the industry more broadly. Richard suggested establishing an Islandwide building department, with a sub-department for energy efficiency. Norman Willard suggested having education materials on the SSA ferries, and establishing a not-too-onerous Island certification process that requires builders and contractors to become certified for energy efficiency. Kate said CLC already offers that type of certification program, but the challenge is getting people to take part. Ben saw a need for many different avenues for education, including working with the high school career tech program. Kathy Newman suggested soliciting the newspapers for more coverage of energy efficiency issues and technologies. (Ben and Kate are already working on a climate column with the MVTimes.) Erik said Vineyard Power is already working on homeowner education, although realtors have been pushing back to some extent.