

Minutes

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

Friday, January 3, 2020

at the Olde Stone Building, Oak Bluffs

Members and staff: Dan Doyle, Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Rob Hannemann, Tristan Israel, Bob Johnston, Ben Robinson, Alan Strahler, Noli Taylor, Adam Turner, Kate Warner

Members of the public: Phil Wallis

- I. 2019 recap, 2020 outlook: goals, needs, strengths and weaknesses
 - a. Preliminary work still to do

Task force members tried to prioritize their next steps, including the establishment of a webpage or other online method of collecting and sharing information; the completion of a climate vulnerability assessment; and initial outreach to the public. Liz Durkee pointed out that the MVC anticipates hiring an intern to help gather information that will help inform the public process. Alex Elvin asked whether the task force envisions separate adaptation and mitigation plans, or a single plan that incorporates both areas. Ben Robinson responded that the idea was to have a website instead of a written document, but that the task force needs to find a web designer to carry that out. Noli Taylor suggested having a single online clearinghouse or calendar to support both the mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Rob Hannemann noted the importance of having at the outset a master plan strategy, along with an understanding of the issues that are likely to arise in each sector. He said the energy transformation committee envisions a plan that encompasses the transportation, electricity, and building sectors, with both near and short-term strategies. He said more detailed strategies could be developed on a one-to-five-year timeframe. He welcomed the idea of melding the adaptation and mitigation plans together, and suggested a joint meeting of the adaptation and energy committees to identify areas of overlap and develop a working structure for the plan.

- b. Looking toward implementation

Looking ahead, Ben said he did not envision the task force having a stop date, but rather transitioning toward implementation, with some components of the final plan taken on by towns, some by an MVC climate coordinator, etc. He again pointed to the website as a major hurdle, and suggested reaching out to Marty Homlich, who has been involved with the Possible Dreams Auction and was the chief marketing officer for Hewlett-Packard.

Rob noted a perception that citizens desire change but are held back by their politicians. He saw that perception as flawed, and said he had confidence in town leaders, with whom the task force should be working hand-in-glove. Tristan Israel agreed, but argued that you have to lead the horse to water. He added that some town leaders are resistant to change in general. He said concrete guidelines tailored to town boards would be helpful, and Rob added that the master plans should include strategies for driving issues at the policy level.

c. Public outreach strategy

Kate Warner said she felt it was too soon to develop a website, but referred members to the book *Climate Action Planning*, which serves as a manual for mitigation and adaptation planning in communities. She emphasized that a lack of community support can inhibit the ability to obtain funding later on. She noted the importance of the 100% Resolution at the annual town meetings, but pressed for more concerted outreach as well, through the task force, community workshops or other means. She also stressed the importance of having relevant documentation at the ready before meeting with stakeholders. Along those lines, she envisioned a climate coordinator at the MVC helping lead the task force forward in a meaningful way. She saw a need to eventually create an implementation team and to have people in a position to speak for their towns in terms of financing, but saw the first step as gathering documentation that can be shared with the public.

Bob Johnston argued that people would be more willing to support a future they help to create. He suggested holding a public session on how to engage the Island as a whole, pointing out that the Cape Cod Commission recently completed a series of listening sessions that covered 15 towns on the Cape, working with a Boston-based firm that designed and hosted the sessions.

Bob mentioned that Jane Seagrave and Julie Wells at the Vineyard Gazette have offered to partner with the CATF, ICAN and Vineyard Future Works on a public survey related to the climate crisis. However, Tristan noted that a survey is only as good as its questions, and he would rather see efforts to inform people about concrete actions they can take. Liz suggested bringing adaptation committee member and outreach expert Megan Gambos into the conversation, in terms what a survey should aim to accomplish. Kate questioned the need for a survey, arguing instead for a meeting with Megan to design a way to reach the Island community. Rob added that Yale University has already done a survey that shows people's attitudes toward climate change, including in Dukes County. He agreed to email those results to the task force.

Members discussed ways to further involve Island media, including a regular column or "Climate Corner" in one of the newspapers. Noli said the MV Times has already moved in that direction with an online Slack channel in place for sharing ideas. She imagined the task force paying someone to compile five practical strategies that could go in the papers once a week. Dan noted that applications for Edey Foundation funding that could pay for such an initiative were due in about two weeks, and he offered to help develop a proposal.

Liz later suggested forming a small outreach subcommittee, with members to include Megan Gambos, Noli Taylor, Kate Warner and Alex Elvin.

d. Grant opportunities

Rob asked if the MVC could create a list of current grant programs that could support climate change initiatives for towns, businesses and individuals, in regard to both adaptation and mitigation. The list could be updated periodically. Ben reported that he and Kate had met with VTA administrator Angie Grant, who recently wrote a grant for purchasing electric busses for the high school. Ben said that conversation also explored the issue of microtransit, or using smaller vehicles that provide more detailed trips on the Island. Angie had said their federal funding would not allow students to share a bus with nonstudents, except in the late afternoon. Noli suggested looking into that issue further.

e. Island leadership

Noli pointed to the importance of top-down solutions, in addition to personal choices, but Ben argued that the CATF should remain nonpartisan, focusing only on concrete solutions. Noli said she has been working on a climate change questionnaire to help vet people running for public office on the Island. Along those lines, Tristan noted that the County Commission will appoint a new Steamship Authority governor, and MVY Airport Commissioners, this year. He disagreed that climate change was a partisan issue, since it affects the planet as a whole.

f. MVBA and other public outreach

Ben reported that he had spoken to Martha's Vineyard Builders Association president Newell Shinn, and that the association planned to hold board meetings on Jan. 8 and Feb. 13, and a full membership meeting sometime in January. Ben had drafted a letter to Newell, outlining the task force's work and topics relevant to the building industry. He hoped task force members could meet with the MVBA in the near future, but he also noted that the group opposes certain MVC policies. He said it will be important to establish a partnership with the association and to impart a sense of urgency moving forward.

Liz relayed that Megan Gambos felt it was important for the task force to develop a template for working with stakeholder groups on the Island, and others agreed. Ben stressed that it will be critical for solutions and strategies to emerge from the grassroots. He called the climate crisis an issue related to safety and economic wellbeing, not just the environment. In terms of outreach to the summer population, he mentioned having spoken with the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival about developing a series of events in the summer. He also recommended partnering with a well-known figure, such as a farmer or scientist, to help advance the CATF mission. Tristan mentioned that he is on the board of MVY Radio, which could be another channel of communication, especially in the summer. Rob suggested working out the various marketing ideas in the next couple of weeks.

Liz recommended a listening session in February (prior to concerted outreach) to introduce CATF initiatives and gather people's observations about the changing climate. Rob said that would dovetail with efforts surrounding the 100% Renewable town meeting article, including a public listening session that the Vineyard Sustainable Energy Committee (VSEC) plans to hold in Chilmark in March. Dan Doyle noted the importance of childcare during public sessions, which may be the only way some parents can attend.

II. Public comment and other discussion

Martha's Vineyard Museum Director Phil Wallis thanked the task force for its work, which he said aligns with the museum's programming for 2020. He encouraged the task force to utilize the museum as a venue for public events and listening sessions. He also noted the large number of nonprofits on the Vineyard, and he believed many would pursue climate change-related funding if they knew where to go. He argued that if everyone changed their attitudes toward climate issues by 10%, it would be a game changer.

Rob Hannemann drew attention to the Benson Bill (H2810), which proposes a state-level carbon tax. He said Cape residents had approached him about Island towns providing a letter of support, and he planned to bring it up with the VSEC. But he also wanted the task force to be aware of the bill. Alan Strahler said the Edgartown energy committee was already planning to write a letter of support. Rob noted the existence of a handful of other bills related to climate change, and stressed the importance of following such developments at the state level.

Rob reported that Marc Rosenbaum has completed a comprehensive model of the Island energy system, which will allow for an examination of various pathways in pursuing the Island's energy transformation goals. He said the next steps include developing a set of scenarios to explore. Ben reported that he and Liz had discussed questions surrounding sea-level rise projections and the implications for shorelines with the director of the USGS office in Woods Hole. He anticipated utilizing the Woods Hole office as a resource in the future.

On the topic of the building industry, Phil cautioned that builders were among the more skeptical thinkers on the Island. He recommended putting together five or ten data points to present to them, and to distill the science to simple facts related to tides, temperatures, etc. On the other hand, Ben noted that builders share a vision of economic prosperity that brings them together, and puts them in the realm of key stakeholders, in terms of how climate change will affect their business.