

Minutes

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

Friday, July 3, 2020

Zoom

Present: Cheryl Doble, Alex Elvin, Christine Flynn, Rob Hannemann, Maisie Jarrell, Bob Johnston, Joan Malkin, Kathy Newman, Ben Robinson, Marc Rosenbaum, Tom Soldini, Alan Strahler, Noli Taylor, Richard Toole, Kate Warner

I. Discussion of outreach to Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP) Zero-Energy Schools Toolkit

Noli Taylor gave an update on plans to transition the high school bus fleet to electric vehicles, which appear to be on hold. The high school has decided to lease six gas-powered buses to meet its immediate needs, but has discussed addressing the issue at a meeting in the near future. Noli said she would be at the meeting, and asked if other CATF members also planned to attend. She added that some high school students have been involved in advocating for electric buses, but it's important for people focused on climate change to attend the meetings.

Noli also emphasized the need for a building or energy expert to serve on the high school's building committee, since the committee currently does not have adequate expertise in that regard. Ben suggested making presentations to the transportation and/or building committee, but Noli said the greater need is for the committee to include a member with knowledge of buildings and energy. She said the issue is not so much a lack of support, but a lack of technical expertise. Ben suggested involving the high school's Protect Your Environment Club, and acknowledged that a new committee member should come from within the high school community itself.

Ben said the required technical expertise should come at least partly from the MVC, since the high school building project will be reviewed as a DRI. Others agreed that the MVC staff or Land Use Planning Committee should communicate to the high school what is needed for the DRI review, including compliance with the MVC energy policy, which is in the process of being revised.

Richard Toole noted the controversy surrounding the high school's plans for a synthetic field, which he said has created some tension between the high school and MCV, and which is looming larger on people's minds at the moment.

Joan Malkin added that if the LUPC were approached by the high school prior to the design phase, it would likely recommend hiring an expert, which the school might not like, but which would need to happen at some point. She said the DRI process should be communicated to the high school. Kathy Newman argued that instead of simply telling the high school to hire an expert, the LUPC could outline

specific standards or features the school design should incorporate. Ben noted that those guidelines would likely be included in the new energy policy.

Rob Hanneman said he would find out who is on the current building committee, since there was no public announcement about that. He also recommended having an initial discussion with school committee members to ask their advice about how to move forward, and he urged CATF members to spend some time getting to know their local school committee representatives.

Ben asked if Noli could start putting together an engagement strategy to address at the next CATF, and if Marc Rosenbaum could develop a fact sheet with basic information about efficiency, cost savings, and other considerations for the school building. Rob suggested adapting the NEEP Zero-Energy Schools Toolkit into a one-pager for the school committees to review.

Marc said the outcome of the building process will depend almost entirely on who the school hires as its design team, adding that the “usual suspects” would lead to failure, and the MSBA presents a barrier as well, since might pick an unqualified team. He said advanced energy measures for buildings are often seen as too expensive, but they aren’t if the design team knows what it’s doing. Kate asked Marc to provide some potential names for a design team, and examples of successful school buildings elsewhere. Marc pointed to the Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Cambridge, designed by Perkins-Eastman, as one nearby example. Noli agreed that the CATF should be able to provide concrete suggestions as to who to consider for the design team.

Members agreed to continue the discussion at their next meeting.

II. Cape Cod Commission Regional Policy Plan amendments: Implications for CATF and MVC

Members discussed a series of proposed amendments to the Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan, which the group 350 Cape Cod had submitted by petition last year. The amendments aim to further reduce carbon emissions in the region, but the Cape Cod Commission has resisted, arguing that the RPP already includes climate mitigation goals. The commission was expected to discuss the amendments on June 25, but the discussion was postponed. Joan recommended adding the amendments to a future CATF meeting, and considering each proposal and its relevance to the Vineyard.

III. Transportation working paper presentation

Tom Soldini gave a presentation on the Transportation Strategy Working Paper, one of four papers that the CATF energy group completed this year. The presentation focused on possibilities and challenges in regard to light vehicles, commercial vehicles, mass transit, off-road vehicles, maritime vehicles, and aviation. It also provided an overview of the “very optimistic” scenario of increasing electric vehicle use to 100% for cars and trucks, and about 40% for SSA ferries, by 2040. The scenario also assumes 100% conversion of the VTA fleet to electric buses by 2027. Other maritime vehicles and aviation face more serious obstacles associated with the lack of available technology and the longer lifespans of boats and aircraft. Altogether, CO2 emissions from transportation would drop to about 120,000 tons today to 79,000 tons by 2030, and 31,000 tons by 2040. At the same time, the demand for electricity for

transportation would increase from almost nothing today to about 29,140 MWh by 2030 and 82,000 MWh by 2040. Transportation currently represents about 40% of energy use on the Vineyard.

Tom pointed out that our ability to rapidly transition to electric vehicles will depend mostly on global trends such as government and industrial commitments to reducing emissions, progress on technology and design, and the pace of the global economic recovery following the pandemic. However, he emphasized that Martha's Vineyard could get ahead of the curve by increasing public education, transportation efficiency and conservation; providing local incentives for EV usage; developing a strategy for public EV charging stations; and other measures. Working with Eversource to prepare the Island grid for the increased demand for electricity will be key.

Discussion following the presentation focused on next steps. Kathy suggested finding a coach to turn the working papers into action, and perhaps forming an advisory board for that purpose. She said the MVC's new sustainability/resiliency planner may have some role in that process as well. Rob stressed that the next steps will include a simple, short roadmap to achieving the energy goals. He said that will mean clearly laying out what actions are most important and most cost effective, the order in which things should happen, and what the impacts will be. The next step after that will be to execute the plan, which will require significant human resources over time.

Ben noted the importance of identifying critical decisions that government agencies on the Island will need to make in order to facilitate EV adoption by the public and the SSA. He added that the "very optimistic" scenario is a big hill to climb, and that it will only get steeper the longer we wait. Kate added that effective marketing of the plan and strategies will be essential, and that the future MVC sustainability/resiliency planner could play a role in that process. Ben suggested coming up with a list of other Island groups who should receive the transportation presentation, possibly including the MVC Joint Transportation Committee, and Island businesses such as Keene's and Cottle's. Rob said the plans were not quite ready to take on the road, but finding early adopters will help instill a sense that transitioning to EVs is possible on a larger scale.

Tom noted the importance of Eversource, and identifying people in the company with enough influence to ensure continued action. Rob added that Eversource representatives have been avidly consuming information from the Task Force. Alex Elvin agreed to reach out to the Eversource representatives who attended the Task Force meeting in February, to schedule a follow up to discuss the working papers.

Ben said he was in touch with professor Leah Stokes at UC Santa Barbara, who studies the national energy sector, and he planned to ask her for feedback on the working papers and presentations in terms of the national context.

IV. VTA charging station: Update and next steps

Alan Strahler gave an update on the VTA charging station in Edgartown, which town voters this year decided to put on hold to allow for further study, after hearing the concerns of abutters. The town has since formed a nine-member committee to decide whether or not to install the charging station on

Church Street as originally proposed. Alan said the committee will have only an advisory role, and the decision will need to return to voters, most likely at a special town meeting in the fall. Supporters of the project were not given a chance to speak at the annual town meeting in June, so Alan saw the special town meeting as an opportunity to state their case, and emphasize the broader context of climate change mitigation on the Island. He said the advisory committee would conduct its work in the next few weeks. Tristan Israel urged people to take advantage of the debate as a learning opportunity, and to prepare for similar opposition in the future.

V. Review of June 26 BOEM public hearing

Alex provided a brief update on the June 26 BOEM public hearing related to the Supplemental Environmental Impacts Statement for offshore wind developments along the East Coast, including Vineyard Wind. Several CATF members attended the online hearing and provided comment. There were no opponents who spoke at the meeting, although Ben noted some concern that opponents in the fishing community planned to appear at the hearing scheduled for July 13. Alex agreed to contact Richard Andre to see if there was a strategy for responding to those concerns at the hearing.