

Minutes

MVC Climate Action Task Force

Friday, October 16, 2020

Zoom

CATF members present: Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Tristan Israel, Ben Robinson, Joan Malkin, Richard Toole, Rob Hanneman, Kathy Newman, Dan Doyle, Noli Taylor

I. Update on Adaptation booklet rollout preceded by update on DRI Checklist

Ben noted the MVC Checklist revisions were passed and that a placeholder item related to Big Homes was struck from the final version as part of the ultimate vote; nonetheless, the message that very large homes are a concern to the Commission had been sounded to the island community. A recent article in the Vineyard Gazette focused on house size trends. Richard believed this may be analogous to a demolition in recent years visible from the VH harbor, which helped raise the profile of historic structures, lost to the wrecking ball.

Ben surmised the Adaptation booklets are a good gateway for requesting down island towns to establish their own Resilience C'tees; Chilmark has shown how these committees can be very effective in working across town boards and committees; Liz reminded we need to mention that an island wide plan is the ultimate goal. Ben went on to note that a graphic indicating organizational structure will be important to help combat inconsistent messaging.

Rob suggested that perhaps the path taken to secure funding for the Adaptation booklets could be replicated for the Energy working papers; all Mitigation working groups could use the graphics and professional services involved with this. Ben stated he would talk to Adam Turner regarding potential funding. Liz added that the booklets were funded through the Phase 1 of an MVP grant.

II. Update on Climate Coordinator candidate

Joan informed that there is a finalist who is a strong candidate, recently out of school with a lot of enthusiasm. Kathy added she was articulate, and thought about things in 3 dimensional ways and Ben noted that her work products look good. Dan added that MVC had a meeting with the candidate this past Wednesday.

III. Update and Discussion on Salt Marsh Resiliency DCPC prospect

Ben reported that Oak Bluffs Planning Board (PB) and Conservation Commission (CC) met jointly to discuss a District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC) concept for key properties in town; this might be called a Salt Marsh Resiliency DCPC. Liz added this would be an example of managed retreat, whereby the Town would get 1st Right of Refusal, which would then be turned over to MVLB; she went on to say the scope is now expanded to look at comprehensive viability of the salt marsh; a subcommittee is now formed to meet with Shellfish Constable, and others.

Liz suggested this could serve as an island pilot and that the property taxes lost to town is not a significant value; Brush Pond is one area of immediate focus. Ben added that Adam Turner and the CEO from MVH were in attendance as well. He shared that this work also pairs well with Carbon sequestration goals.

Joan opined whether the Cape could benefit as well from this concept, and wondered if they've assessed a concept for something similar. Liz noted that the Town of Chatham does not allow new building in the flood zone. Joan was concerned it might constitute a taking and Liz said she would forward a court case that dealt with this issue.

IV. More Discussion on Outreach

Ben pointed out the agenda items prompt the question how do we improve outreach and better engage the public. The need for town by town committees was duly noted; AQ has a Special Town meeting on Nov 14th and will likely support the aspirational 100% renewable article. Rob indicated that Bill Lake should be the spokesperson on this article for Aquinnah. Ben and Noli noted others should speak up as well to amplify the issue's importance. Noli indicated she plans to do that.

Kathy pondered if MVBA might serve a role in galvanizing support to get the 100% Renewable article passed. Ben added that at least some of their Board members recognize they need to be more active in generating ideas and take more ownership / leadership on the issue; many of their members realize it's cost effective to go all Electric; on the converse, there are likely some members who may be climate deniers or resent any form of additional mandate/extreme change of practice.

Alex said he would circulate the letters to the group written by John Abrams and Marc Rosenbaum regarding MVBA opposition to some key principles of the Draft MVC Energy Policy.

Rob added that the Energy working papers will go through a 2nd review and will ultimately include recommended strategies.

A reminder was also issued that a big part of our island likely reads only the MV Times, and not to overfocus on the Gazette.

V. Climate Change Educational Resource

Liz reported that the Permanent Endowment Foundation may provide some funding to create an educational booklet designed for a ranging knowledge base and wide cross section of the island community. There will be chapters on land, food, economy, etc. VSC might be involved? Joan suggested VCS should work with science teachers to ensure there is valuable content included in the resource for instructional work for students. Ben noted the larger issue of engaging the schools should be revisited. Liz inquired about Felix Neck and the MVRHS Career & Technical Education program as potential stakeholders as well.

Joan spoke of the value in getting the booklets in the hands of faith-based leaders to tout the value of the booklets and its content; She noted Cathlin Baker from WTFCCC is very adroit at this and she has strong credibility amongst her peers. Kathy asked if anyone knew the name of an island interdenominational group.

Tristan reminded he is on the Board of WMVY, and there may be an opportunity to do some free programming with them. He also noted MVTV could assist with a video segment piece; the group discussed potential strong orators for this work; Liz harkened back to her former disc jockey days from decades back.

VI. Wildfire

Tristan updated that a DCR group will attend a State Forest tour with Rep Fernandes in the near future. Rob noted that homeowners in high risk wildfire areas need resources to assist them in mitigating their risk. Liz replied that WT Climate and Energy C'tee has a long list of actions homeowners can take to make their properties more resilient.

Richard raised the concern that some mixed messaging might be in order if clear cutting is recommended, given the need to maintain carbon sinks for sequestration purposes. Joan expressed an interest in finding photos of the damage that happened on our island during past wildfires. An Op Ed to Gazette or Times was discussed and Alex agreed to send contact info for the Vineyard Gazette archivist to Dan so he could follow up on photos.

Ben indicated the most recent wildfire was 8 acres in 1987 and said he would email David Foster to see if he has an interest in drafting an Op-Ed; the group agreed he would be the best fit to draft the letter.

VII. Grant opportunities

Alex is sending a letter of interest to MEMA; MV needs a valid HMP in place to qualify; AE indicated total award amount from State is 600K; our MVP request was 125K; and the guidance he received was we should ask for no more than 100K; 25% match is in order. He noted that Adam Turner reported that MVC has a good chance at an MVP grant, next round.

Alex went on to add that the Barr Foundation is a good opportunity to fund mitigation activities and may be a fit for the carbon sequestration project; Letters of Interest are submitted on a rolling basis; BR said once we get something back from Woodwell, we can take it on and draft that letter.

Alex agreed to send his notes on Climate funding opportunities; most are designed around mitigation; some allow for the Foundation Board to solicit projects from outside the Foundation's community.

VIII. Miscellaneous

Dan will serve in an interim administrative role once Alex rolls off Climate related work into a full time DRI Coordinator role, though Alex noted he will attend meetings as a member.

Joan noted that Jay Grossman has agreed to be a write in candidate for an MV Commission seat, representing Chilmark, as Rob Doyle will not be running again.

Rob alerted the group of the Cape Cold Climate Change Collaborative; they put together conferences, annually to promote cross pollination of ideas and best practices; a virtual [Net Zero conference](#) is taking place on 10/23. Registration is on their website. He suggested that perhaps a faith-based outreach opportunity would emerge there.

Kathy asked if it would be beneficial for Adam to attend these meetings more. Ben noted he has encouraged the same and the group agreed that Adam should be dialed into the work and the developments discussed at the meetings given he is often the face of the MVC on this work across the towns. Alex has continued to invite him.