



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

MINUTES OF MEETING GREEN ASHLAND AD-HOC COMMITTEE MEETING OF JANUARY 5, 2012

Location: Town Hall Lower Level Meeting Room

Present:

Carl Hakansson (Chair)
Matthew Marshquist (Recording Clerk)
Kevin Johnson
Brett Walker
Alan Weene
David Manugian (ex officio) – Town Planner
Mark Purple – Assistant Town Manager

Meeting called to order 7pm.

Due to an oversight, we were unable to vote on the minutes. Matt will distribute the minutes for the last meeting via email and they will be voted on at the next meeting.

As of Right Siting:

David shared a draft of the letter from town council approving as-of-right siting zoning for renewable energy with the committee. This was requested as part of the process for fulfilling this requirement by Joanne Bisetta, the Green Community Coordinator. This should be approved by the next meeting.

Carl has secured a date of March 23rd to appear before the Board of Selectmen and discuss our article for the town meeting, as well as the fuel efficient vehicle policy. At their last meeting, the Selectmen approved an item which would require notice by February 1st of any items to appear at town meeting.

Fuel Efficient Vehicles:

Carl discussed John Petrin's concern about saving money when purchasing used vehicles which may not meet the requirements by a mile or two per gallon, but would save the town substantially in cost. Carl's proposed solution would be to use grant money to offset the higher cost of the fuel efficient vehicles.

Brett suggested we could use after market technology to improve the fuel efficiency of the older vehicles to bring them up to the required MPG. Carl believes it would be best to have a policy which clearly conforms to the requirement, to avoid the possibility that the application would be rejected based on this. Mark noted that using grant money to offset the higher cost of more fuel efficient vehicles is the sort of purpose the green communities grant money is useful for. The MPG requirements actually only apply to a small portion of our vehicles. Most DPW, Fire Department and Rescue vehicles would actually be exempt. The committee agreed that the policy will conform to the requirements and allow for the use of grant money to offset the higher vehicle cost.

Per Brett's suggestion, we may also include in our energy reduction plan the use of grant money to purchase after-market parts which will improve the fuel efficiency of our existing fleet vehicles.

Stretch /Code:

If we are following Preston's proposed schedule, we should begin doing PR outreach by February 1st. We would have two public forums on the stretch code starting the week of March 1st, one for builders and one for the general public. The committee discussed the timing of the two. David noted that with zoning review, they tend to focus on builders first, then the public. This can help to prepare for any technical questions which may arise at the public forum. If the first forum is for non-builders and builders do attend, it can limit the amount of time available for questions from the general public.

Carl asked if there was any pushback from builders expected.

David noted that it is possible, due to the increased expense. At a previous meeting Preston noted that one area builder had already adopted the stretch code. However, another local builder may have helped to scuttle the adoption of the stretch code in Framingham.

Carl proposes that we may want to start with an article explaining why this is a good idea. The Warren woods momentum really began with a front page article which described the efforts of a small group in town to purchase the woods. Brett asked if we should consider doing an appearance or show on WACA. Carl agreed that this could be a good thing, we need to get something out ahead of opposition, which can snowball. The goal is to have this clearly articulated so everyone knows what they are voting for at town meeting.

Energy Reduction Plan:

Marcia and Carl have been reviewing other energy reduction plans for ideas. They should have an executive summary for next meeting.

Baseline:

Matt contacted Mark Purple, who put him in touch with Diane Mortensen. She reviewed the list of unassigned accounts and provided department information. Brett went through that list and re-organized the accounts in the tool.

We will further organize the accounts to fit within the following departments:

DPW
Police
Fire
Administrative
School
Water/Sewer

For most water/sewer accounts they will only include electric data. Chestnut Street and Bracket Street pumping stations are the largest and may include gas heat. Other pumping stations include: Cedar Street, Fountain Street, Endicott Street and Johnson Street.

Carl thanked David Manugian for providing maps of the town to assist us as we discuss the various buildings and facilities which we are tracking for the baseline.

What remains to be done at this point is review the accuracy of the account data in the tool, particularly the square footage, occupancy and year built data for all buildings. Kevin will do this work. He has the permits and/or records with occupancy information and square footage.

We also need to add more information on the vehicle fleet fuel usage. Mark is pursuing this information, which may be quite detailed, as vehicles are required to enter their id and mileage each time they fill up at the town pump. He is not sure that it goes back as far as 4 years, or whether there is continuity in the data. It should cover all town vehicles.

Some fuel usage data exists within the tool as well, the committee will need to determine if there is any overlap. The goal of this information will be to break down fuel usage for the town by department. We will not be tracking by individual vehicles.

Matt noted that the data in the tool has revealed some interesting facts already. The Warren and Mindess schools are dual fuel accounts, which use both natural gas and oil for heating. For this reason large amounts of oil may be purchased by an account one year, but not in the next. Kevin explained that the oil fuel is a backup, and may also be used strategically depending on the price of natural gas.

During FY 2008, the cost of natural gas at the town buildings appears to be approximately three times as high as any year following. Mark noted that the town had switched to competitive pricing agreements reached by the town three years ago. The town now benefits from one rate for all accounts. There may be positive stories like this which the data will highlight. The committee proposed highlighting these stories.

Mark also mentioned that the Selectmen recently approved competitive pricing agreements for town residents, whereby residents will have the opportunity to save on their home electricity bills. (Reduced to \$7.18 from \$7.80.)

We discussed a Virtual Net Metering project involving a solar farm in Bellingham which contacted Mark. They get credits for what they sell, and more credits if they sign up a municipality. The Green Communities Act allows for virtual net metering. It sounds a little

unusual, but they have done the math on a similar agreement for Framingham State. Occasionally the utility provider wants the school to power down and operate at less than full capacity. In fact, Kevin is on a similar plan for his home electric bill. It allows the utility company to raise and lower the temperature in his house depending on peak demand. If he is home he can override this, but it doesn't impact his comfort when he is away.

Finally David discussed the email from Matthew Selby to the committee. Brett had inquired about the feasibility of doing a solar project on the Howe Street landfill site. The town had conducted fatal flaw analyses on two locations, Howe Street and the 175 Butterfield Drive. "According to the report by Meridian Associates, the landfill could support a 730 kW PV array with a potential annual production of 915 MWh."

The town applied for a separate grant to study the Nyanza cap site, but that grant was not funded by the EPA. It is possible we could use grant money from the Green Communities Act to apply for a fatal flaw study of the Nyanza site.

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday February 2nd at 7pm.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20pm.