

Minutes

Net Zero Planning Group of Green Marblehead Committee

Oct 7, 2021

This meeting was the regularly scheduled GMC meeting (first Thursday of the month) , but also occurred 2 days after the Net Zero Workshop, so it was spent reviewing the Workshop and trying to set out our next tasks.

In attendance: Jason Silva, Brooks Winner, Becky Curran Cutting, Andrew Petty, Alexa Singer, Eileen Mathieu, Joe Kowalik, Michael Hull

1) Debrief of Net Zero Workshop:

People felt the Workshop on Oct 5 by zoom, chaired by Brooks Winner, had gone well, but that we have a lot to do. There was a bit of concern that with 52 participants, there were stakeholders who had not participated, and that to move ahead, it was important to reach out to them.

Issues that came up in breakout groups:

Need for:

A carbon calculator; feedback to the community on a regular basis, showing how much progress we are making towards our goals, via town website; ways to incentivize people to change the type of vehicle they purchase, and change their heating systems to electric; need for some specific comparisons: if I do this it will have this impact, so that involves people and guides their decisions, also incentives to help people make lower carbon choices vs the choices of convenience, need to bring the choices right in front of people, so that people who want change can see concrete things to do.

Discussion of the need for both collective and individual action, what to invest in as the Town, Brooks Winner mentioned Natick has developed benchmarks for goals for 2030, and has set up ways to show how they are doing getting to those benchmarks.

Discussion of encouraging electrification of heating but making sure that lower income households can participate, MLP has some obstacles too, need to identify where on the road map we need help from state or feds to change behavior through rebates.

Discussion of Time of Use rates: Andrew Petty felt it was counterintuitive to be encouraging people to “go electric” but charge them more money when they come home from work, run their laundry, or dishwasher or watch TV or work on their computers, Joe felt that it will encourage people to be more efficient. Joe is also looking for a way to see who qualifies for lower rates, so that lower income folks won’t be penalized by time of use rates. Brooks Winner suggested that the rate design will play a role.

2) Next Steps:

Alexa Springer emphasized that we need to find more ways to communicate with the public, encouraged Brooks Winner that we do a survey to draw in more townspeople; encouraged Jason Silva and Becky Curran to make sure that info gets out to people, via social media, to different groups, parents, council on aging, etc. She felt that we should be planting seeds in people's minds, keeping people engaged, getting more input.

On the issue of how to motivate people, and what the role of the Town or MLD or the state could be in changing behavior, Jason Silva pointed out that money talks: we're going to help you by rebates, lower rates if you make the environmentally responsible choice, and it will cost you more if you don't make the environmentally responsible choice.

Becky Curran pointed out that there are many plans already in place, in Marblehead, on affordable housing, complete streets, etc; tap the work already done and work from there. Someone mentioned Arlington as an example.

Mike Hull said the trades are very willing to work with Stretch Code changes, and they understand that a tighter home, with much more insulation, is cost effective for the homeowner. He feels that plumbers, builders, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), electricians will supply an cost/benefit analysis to the customer (that might be holding back because of initial cost of improvements) to show the payback from greener and more efficient choices.

Andrew Petty pointed out that we need to front load this process, and urgently reduce the # of NEW gas units, by education and incentives, because these are long term investments, and people won't be willing to then go electric in a few years if they have just put in a gas furnace.

Brooks Winner pointed out that air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) are much more efficient than gas furnaces.

Jason Silva: Residents may be able to deal with one big project as a one-off, one-time expense in their budget, but town/state/feds need to have motivators, rebates, so that all the several changes needed, like new heating systems, tighter houses, new water heaters, induction stoves, electric vehicles, are affordable and can be done rapidly.

3) The question of how to engage others, including zoom focus groups was raised

Ideas included Mini Home Show or Fair to demonstrate new technology

Green Building Tours of Abbot Hall, MMLD, Lisa Wolf's net zero house, maybe a green house tour of homes retrofitted with Air Source Heat Pumps, Air Source Heat Pump hot water heaters, induction stoves, electric car chargers, solar, etc.

Joe Kowalik suggested that we urgently get any multiunit new buildings to NOT be powered by gas. The Mariner Project and Ted Moore's new construction came up. No final steps were planned yet on these, but all agreed that we should engage with these projects.

Brooks Winner suggested that Town Warrant articles to update the stretch code to net zero, have developers and contractors get behind. There are some questions about what towns can pass in warrant articles, example Brookline's town meeting passed a by-law preventing any new gas hookups, but has been overruled by Attorney General.

- 4) Summary of next steps and plans: get recording of workshop and slides, and pdf of jamboards, Brooks will translate these into a survey. He will send to Jason, and to us, to edit and then Jason will post on Town website to try to engage others who missed the Workshop.

Other groups to reach out to: Gerry 5, Contractors, architects, fisherman, tradespeople

Submitted by Eileen Mathieu

October 29, 2021