



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

ASHLAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, April 26, 2021

Time: 7:00pm ET

Location: Zoom Video Call

Present:

- Ash Ratanchandani – Chair
- Rob Moolenbeek – Vice Chair
- Kevin Mullins – Clerk
- Chuck Lidz - Member
- Matt Marshquist – Member
- Mark Moniz- Member
- Margaret Musoke - Associate Member
- Frank Nakashian (S. Coordinator)
- Cara Camerato Hulme – Resident
- Florence Seidell – Resident
- Mark Dassoni – Resident (end of meeting)

❖ **Progress updates on NetZero plan items**

The meeting kicked off by reviewing the research of the 4 groups/initial focus areas:

1) Building Energy Use Disclosure Policy - Matt lead supported by Ash and Rob

Updates:

- Jillian (from Natick) coordinating meeting with towns of Wellesley, Westborough, Natick, and Ashland to talk through building energy use disclosure policy
- Research shows Towns doing a volunteer pilot to get used to how the program runs – more incentive based. And then expanding to a larger program after that.
- Question around what kind of tool would we use to standardize assessment - looking at EPA

Discussion:

- Important to align with other towns
- Incorporate into the Net Zero plan for now
- Chuck looked into building info from Rich/assessor's office - seemed amenable to everything asked; Chuck will follow up on specific timeframe (and see what he will receive it)

2) Incentivize electrification for building owners – Margy lead supported by Cara and Maggie

Updates:

- Cara looking at federal incentives (and what opportunities we may be able to leverage); Margy focusing on solar opportunities
- Maggie researching how people in town get information (and awareness levels)

Discussion:

- Cara shows draft logo for Ashland Sustainability; Frank showed logo for Sustainability created by Ashley Place; Cara/Kevin/Matt to connect on logo needs, alignment, and next steps (with Ashley); Potentially leverage student participation from high school (for Net Zero logo)
- Start thinking about next set of initiatives (put this set in net zero plan)

3) Partner on clean energy outreach programs – Rob, Frank, and Mark

Updates:

- Final interviews to narrow down to 2-3 candidates (from 11) for solar pv, air source and ground source heat pump vendors as part of RFP (Frank) – goal to select one vendor for each

Discussion:

- Future discussion point – co-marketing opportunities (and how do they help with incentives, education, etc.) – Mark brought up clean peak programs (and asking vendors of their knowledge/use)
- To ask about capacity to implement

4) Expand public charging stations – Lead Chuck supported by Frank and Kevin

Updates:

- Frank updated on the design review committee presentation a month ago (on zoning incentives and best practices for electrification and solar in parking lots and buildings) & and the ensuing follow up meeting a couple of weeks ago
- Discussion around town providing definition for key aspects of best practices (different use cases)
- Design review committee would bring recommendations to Planning Board (Note: they are currently updating design review guidelines and optimal time to incorporate elements of sustainability)

Discussion:

- Discussion around optimal frequency to connect with other committees (discussed idea of quarterly cadence/roundtable with planning board and design review committee)

- Flo to reach out to her friend/contract on Design Review Committee about success working with Planning Board – Flo also brought up upcoming planning board meeting and need to ask right questions about where/when to consider sustainability

❖ **Marketing update – Kevin**

Conducted first Facebook ad test

- *Around Composting program which is at 80% to goal of 500 to reduce costs for all participants in program)*
- Ran paid ad on Facebook (organic posts have limited reach on Facebook given FB's business model shift over past several years)
- Geotargeting (Ashland region and part of Holliston)
- Time with Earth Week – and tag pertinent pages to expand reach
- 3 days (\$2/day) – to learn about audience for ads/impact

Results:

- 529 post reach with 122 post engagements (liked/shared/comment)
- 23% engagement (More than 1% is considered good)
- Black Earth shared on their page (potentially reaching hundreds/thousands more people)

Next Steps:

- Determine impact of ad (any additional sign-ups); Potentially re-run ad and expand geotargeting to more of Holliston (potentially leverage connection with our contacts there)
- Update Ashland Sustainability Committee description on Facebook page – also examine town website and ensure alignment and consistency – Ryan O'Leary contact
- Discuss Net Zero goals with team and determine where marketing is more beneficial (what can be measured vs. what is an awareness campaign)
- Be ready to promote solar challenge program – once finalized; also start teasing elements of the plan in the months leading up to plan release (drip campaign)

❖ **Net Zero follow-on**

- Ash to start to build a rough outline of content we plan to share for the plan
- Awareness of EVs become an extension of EVs expansion – natural connection
- Discussion around staying close to school bus electrifications - Ever

❖ **Geothermal pilot**

- Eversource is evaluating potential geothermal pilots in the communities they serve (per Chuck - networked geothermal wells in the street where gas companies already have an easement for pipes – homes could do both heating and cooling off them)
- They made an offer to consider Ashland at a recent Select board meeting
- The Select board is largely supportive, with Rob specifically extremely supportive.
- Chuck has volunteered to represent the Committee (agreed to be committee)

❖ **Sustainability Coordinator updates (Frank)**

- Solar and clean heat challenge
 - Review Team scored all proposals
 - Holding interviews week of 4/26
 - Target of vendor selection by end of week
 - Program rollout to follow
- Suggestions on Design Review Committee
 - Created a memo on suggestions for the design review committee to implement for sustainable strategies on parking lots
 - Chuck, Kevin and I discussed with the Design Review Committee on 4/15.
- Mass MVP Resiliency Grant
 - Working with Evan White, Town Engineer on proposal for a climate change risk assessment for the drinking water supply.
 - Not the lead on this

❖ **Other business**

- High school interested in building gardens at the high school – Rob to find out more information and timeline – it was mentioned that Black Earth open to donating soil for community gardens
- Environmental Club (Ashland HS) – donated 50 seedlings planting around town
- Town’s Democratic Council – reached out with interest in learning more about Sustainability Committees plans and connect with more people in town (Ash happy to present/help – but making sure committee was OK with it – all were comfortable with this)

Approve Meeting Minutes: Minutes from March 29, 2021 approved by Committee members.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm ET