

**Green Marblehead Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2023**

Present: Thatcher Kezer, chair, Becky Curran Cutting, Andrew Petty, Alexa Singer, Lisa Wolf, Joe Kowalik, Brooks Winner, John Livermore, Eileen Mathieu, members of the public including Elaine Leahy, Petra Langer, Kurt James,

Thank you to Brooks Winner.

Updates and discussion on Net Zero Planning:

- a) Renew the Charter of Green Marblehead Committee (GMC) with Select Board; change our title/purpose to be “Net Zero Implementation Committee”.

Discussion regarding composition of committee: keep the same composition and invite department heads who have different resources when we need to involve them, rather than change the committee appointees. In the past, we had school superintendent, town business manager, and building inspector on the committee. Thatcher will look into that.

Vote: Unanimous by roll call.

- b) Thatcher to post the Town Sustainability Coordinator position soon, after consultation with Becky on job description, already has been classified so a salary has been established, and hopes to have the position filled by Jan 2024. Members recommended some sites on which to advertise the position, including Idealist, MAPC, Mass CEC
- c) Currently posted/Waiting to fill: Building Inspector and Human Resources Director
- d) Eileen referred the group to recent articles in local paper revealing that Danvers and Peabody are applying for Green Community Status this cycle, and both are MLP towns.
- e) Becky is applying for a grant for a consultant to Old and Historic Districts Committee to help them review their guidelines in light of energy efficiency and fossil fuel free technologies that are available but may not be historic, and to look at what could be changed.
- f) Becky working on applying for MAPC grants; we reviewed what types of grants other towns have received, and many ideas were floated. Becky shared some ideas she had and some that MAPC had indicated would not be likely to succeed. One grant suggestion made that seemed to include a number of promising aspects was planting trees and shrubs and a community garden at Marblehead Housing Authority properties, possibly Broughton Road for Community Gardens, and specifically Farrell Court Senior Housing which Sustainable Marblehead and MHA have already done some planning for but there is no funding yet. Becky will work on this over next 6 business days.

Implementation of Net Zero:

- a) Thatcher suggested that we develop a master list of action items from the Net Zero appendix, and divide into ones we can accomplish rapidly, and ones that need planning, stages, steps to accomplish.

- b) Thatcher asked that each Committee member review the action items in the Net Zero Plan appendix, prioritize, and categorize as above and bring that list to the next meeting.

Green Communities Designation:

- a) Process and Timing:

The question was raised whether Green Marblehead Committee could jumpstart the Green Community Designation application process in the next few months, so that when the new Town Sustainability Coordinator is hired, the Town would have already achieved Green Community Designation and have its first grant. This would allow the Sustainability Coordinator to have access to grants and funds for their initiatives, in 2024. Otherwise, waiting until the Coordinator is hired in January 2024, means the Town will have to wait to apply for Green Community Status in late 2024 which would not provide funds, if we were designated, until starting in 2025.

There are several steps to becoming a Green Community, including levying the Renewable Energy Charge by the Light Department, satisfying 5 criteria from DOER, and applying online by Dec 29, 2023, or waiting a year until next application cycle with deadline December 2024. Many were aware of these, and they were discussed below.

- b) Renewable Energy Charge:

Marblehead Municipal Light Board (MMLB) chair Lisa Wolf is willing to have discussion about MMLB levying the Renewable Energy Charge (REC) in next month or two. MMLB will be making rate changes, lowering the PPA in November, so it might be a logical time to add REC.

Joe Kowalik, General Manager of MMLD, has reservations about levying of the REC because of its perpetuity, and wants to have someone from Mass CEC and DOER come and discuss with MMLB. He did not choose to allow National Grid to provide electrical service a new housing development (some of whose units are on Marblehead side of the town line, some are in Swampscott and Salem), but arranged for it to be serviced by MMLD, in his explanation because MMLD already serviced the site. He further explained that it seemed to him immoral to have Marblehead qualify for Green Community Designation by virtue of having a few residences within Marblehead town lines be served by National Grid. Others pointed out that a number of Municipal Light Plant towns have qualified for Green Community status because of that loophole.

- c) Other Criteria for Green Community Designation:

The committee reviewed criterion 1, which requires that zoning bylaws allow a) “business or light manufacturing” overlay zone to allow a) renewable or alternative energy production, b) renewable or alternative energy R+D, or c) businesses that manufacture renewable or alternative energy components. This led Becky Curran Cutting to state that if any zoning bylaw changes were needed, to meet Criterion 1 or 2, that this would have to be worked out during the second half of 2024 and brought to Town Meeting in May 2025. This is because the planning board is currently involved in an 8-month process to make zoning bylaw changes to meet the MBTA rules regarding housing within certain distance of public transit

and will be bringing those changes to Town Meeting in 2024. This process involves drafting zoning bylaw changes, public meetings, rewriting drafts of the zoning bylaws considering public input, writing warrant articles, and is very involved and time consuming, so there is no way a different zoning bylaw issue can be evaluated and brought forward during the same time frame.

d) Develop a Vehicle Policy for Fuel Efficient vehicles:

This was briefly discussed, and it was recommended that a staff person should assemble such a plan and list, not a subcommittee of GMC, due to problems with Open Meeting Law and coordinating such a group. Brooks said that MAPC can help develop that Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy by providing info from other towns, etc. Thatcher provided several examples of fuel efficient vehicles the Town has purchased recently, including an electric mower for Park and Rec and a Ford Lightning pickup truck which is all electric for the Highway Department.

e) Final Plan re Green Community Designation effort:

It was decided to contact Mark Rabinsky, DOER, Northeast Regional Coordinator for Green Communities. The hope was that he could attend our next meeting, in October, and answer questions about zoning bylaws and the Green Community Designation process. Thatcher (as chair) will invite him to our next meeting.

Next steps:

Brooks suggested that another major role of the Implementation Committee could be education of residents, and that to keep momentum going while we wait for the hiring of the Sustainability Coordinator, we could kick off residential efforts in energy efficiency, and offer a seminar on rebates, tax credits, other incentives, for green changes to your home or car. He suggested that we have National Grid and Mass Save be on the panel and be specific re rebates for EV, home upgrades, home appliances, and tax credits through the IRA passed in 2022. Could cohost by Green Marblehead Committee, with MMLD, and Sustainable Marblehead

Adjourn 4:45 PM

Next meeting Thursday, October 5, 3:30 PM, hybrid: zoom/in person at Abbot Hall, Selectboard Room