

**DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING
CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAAC)**

Date: April 16, 2021

Time: 7:00PM

Place: Remote via Zoom

Present: Rick Eno, Pressede Calabi, Alan Field, Adrianna Garber,
Jason Roeder and Ruth Trimarchi, Chair

Guests: None

Absent: Wei Chen

Call to Order

Chair Trimarchi called the meeting to order at 7:00PM, declared a quorum present and initiated roll call. Present were Chair Trimarchi-Y, Ms. Calabi-Y, Mr. Eno-Y, Mr. Field-Y, Jason Roeder-Y and Ms. Garber-Y.

Chair Trimarchi noted that as part of the implementation of a climate action plan, various steps were taken over a two-year period to achieve the goal of hiring a Sustainability Director as summarized below:

- a) The position was unanimously approved by Select Board, Personnel Committee and Conservation Commission in 2019.
- b) First put in the FY21 budget by Town Manager in Spring 2020.
- c) Supported in Town Hall by staff.
- d) Taken out of FY21 budget because of economic uncertainties caused by COVID19 pandemic.
- e) The Town received a Municipal Area Planning Council (Barr Foundation) Grant provided initial seed money to cover salary and benefits with modest match by the Town.
- f) Select Board unanimously voted on 12/7/20 to accept the MAPC grant and directed Town Manager to put the sustainability Director position into the FY22 budget.
- g) FinCom reluctant to fund the position.
- h) Chair Trimarchi made presentation on January 14th to FinCom using PPT unanimously approved by CACC on January 12, 2021.
- i) Town Manager supports the position being put back in the budget.
- j) Select Board Chair, Town Clerk, Town Comptroller, Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager developed language for a Motion from the floor be made at Town Meeting to reintroduce this position into the budget. Town Counsel will probably also be involved in writing the language of the Motion.

Chair Trimarchi noted that a draft letter of support had been distributed to CAAC members, and the goal of tonight's meeting is to review and vote on the submission of the letter. Mr. Jearius will bring to the Planning Board as a potential co-sponsor and she will reaffirm with the Personnel Committee and Conservation Commission on its pre-pandemic vote of support as well as the Select Board's support.

Chair Trimarchi made a motion to approve the submission of the letter of support for putting the Sustainability Director position back into the springtime budget. The motion was not seconded and discussion ensued.

Mr. Field questioned the placeholder besides the name of Rich Mucci. Chair Trimarchi is in touch with him. Mr. Field also questioned how the letter fit into the article that would be made on the floor of Town Meeting. Chair Trimarchi responded that since the FinCom had already voted the position down, the Select Board Chair, Vice-Chair, Town Manager and Planning Board considered the best path forward and asked that the committee consider submitting a letter of support for the position.

Ms. Calabi expressed the opinion that it is not in the committee's purview to make a serious recommendation about funding the position. It is rather the purview of the FinCom to make recommendations relating to funding. She felt that this action of the committee is "out of our lane" and is inappropriate, and doing so jeopardizes the committee's credibility in the community.

She suggested, instead, that the committee wait another 12-18 months for this position, thereby enabling the possibility of gaining funds from the Select Board's proposed surcharge on building permits in warrant article 8. She also believed that delay would maximize the opportunity to find the right candidate.

Mr. Field expressed his opinion that if a committee works long and hard on an issue, one is obliged to respect its collective judgment. Chair Trimarchi noted that the committee has worked long and hard over the last two years on this initiative, and its judgment is indeed respected. She added that while the FinCom is responsible for putting forward a balanced Budget to Town Meeting for consideration and voting, the CAAC is responsible for recommending climate action.

Chair Trimarchi expressed her appreciation for the passionate opinions of members. She said, however, that both the FinCom and CAAC are advisory committees, not elected. The CAAC is advisory to the Select Board; the FinCom is advisory to Town Meeting. While the FinCom is responsible to deliver a balanced budget, it is an entirely routine motion on the floor of Town Meeting for individuals and Committees to add or delete items in the budget. It is entirely within the advisory purview of the committee to offer advice through a "climate lens." She added that this is not merely a financial decision but an ideological decision, and Town Meeting is the appropriate body to vote on this position.

In response to Ms. Calabi's question as what the downside would be to put this position in the following year's budget with construction permit fees in place, Chair Trimarchi responded that some members of the Select Board advised the committee to go forward in this year's budget.

Ms. Calabi opined that the Select Board may be in support of the position, but it is not unanimous in its support of this way of funding the position. She added that the timeliness of article 8 to provide funds from building permits showed another fiscally responsible way of supporting the position long-term into perpetuity.

Chair Trimarchi noted that what would be lost is one additional year in time, and grant money. The representative was in support of this grant. Other members of the Select Board, like Mike Bettencourt, were in support in funding this year. She also noted that she has been “acting” as the sustainability coordinator and can no longer continue to expend this time, and it is time that the Town hire a professional Sustainability Director.

Mr. Eno noted that he would need to leave the meeting shortly to attend another meeting. He hoped for more consensus on the vote and suggested additional time to review the letter and discuss the process moving forward based on facts and not emotion.

Mr. Roeder was not clear on the downside of submission of the support letter. From a political point of view, the FinCom is “not at the top of the heap but in the heap.” The committee can disagree with the decisions of the FinCom. He prefers not to wait any longer, since the path forward has support of town officials, and he is in support of submitting the letter.

Ms. Garber expressed difficulty in understanding the downside of voting yes to the submission of the letter and will listen to further discussion.

Mr. Field thought if the Select Board and other organizational groups thinks this is a prudent path to follow, he has confidence to move forward. Chair Trimarchi confirmed that the Select Board as a body voted approval of the position but did not as a body view or vote on the letter, but members of the Board have viewed and made edits to the letter. The motion would be made from Town Meeting floor to amend the main motion for the budget. The motion will be viewed by Town Counsel and be written in legitimate language for that type of motion from the floor.

Ms. Calabi noted that the committee does not function in a vacuum and is rather a part of the greater town government whole, with professional credibility as a goal. Everything is connected to everything else. She added that persons to whom she had spoken with related experience and seniority would not be interested in a position that was not secure and grant dependent. She urged not going against the FinCom’s decision and the process be observed.

Chair Trimarchi noted that she had already heard from four highly qualified candidates and they had all expressed interest in the position. The intended salary of \$75-100K is high to be commensurate with the professional qualifications of a Sustainability Director not a coordinator.

Chair Trimarchi noted that since the inception of the climate action plan in 2018, each year has been critical in addressing urgent climate issues. She has taken note of members’ statements in the meeting but asked that members follow up and send her bullet points for inclusion in the letter.

Chair Trimarchi called the meeting to adjourn at 7:50PM.