

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

**Date:** April 29, 2021

**Time:** 7:00PM

**Place:** Remote via Zoom

**Present:** Wei Chen, Rick Eno, Prassede Calabi, Alan Field, Adrianna Garber, Jason Roeder and Ruth Trimarchi, Chair

**Guests:** Diab Jerius, Mariano Goluboff, Thomas Howley, Carolyn Starrett Mike Bettencourt and Town Manager Lisa Wong

**Absent:** None

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**Call to Order**

Chair Trimarchi called the meeting to order at 6:02PM, declared a quorum present and initiated roll call. Present were Chair Trimarchi-Y, Ms. Calabi-Y, Mr. Chen-Y, Mr. Eno-Y, Mr. Field-Y, Jason Roeder-Y and Ms. Garber-Y.

Chair Trimarchi read the following opening statement:

“We are all here out of a shared passion that we need to do what we can about climate change at a local level. I trust this. We are discussing details here of how best to do this. We all come to this table with unique skills and personal interests, from skillsets in renewable energy, to university level education, to high school student involvement, to electric cars, to state government expertise, to passion about lowering carbon emissions from buildings and energy, to increasing community resilience and preparedness to the known impacts of climate change due to existing GHGs in our atmosphere. We’re diverse and we are a ‘young’ committee that has only been in existence for 7 months. We made it through our first steps of voting on Rules and Regulations and designed Projects built around the specific interests of members to focus on one or another aspect of the Climate Action Plan, which we are charged with implementing. As you know the #1 recommendation of the 2020 CAP, and also a recommendation in the 2011 CAP so over a decade now, is to hire a Sustainability Director. This is our first big challenge as a committee.

I’d like to note that we are part of a larger climate team of 26 people spread over three Committees that I have Chaired or Co-Chaired for the past 2.5 years. Collectively we have:

- updated the CAP and got a unanimous vote to adopt it from the Select Board last June;
- worked closely with a hired consultant and oversaw the professional updating of the GHG Inventory in 2019;
- applied for over \$343,000 in grants, landed \$77K and have \$120K still outstanding;

- brought 17 public events to Winchester including the MA Secretary of EEA, Katie Theoharides, Jonathan Buonocore from the Harvard School of Public Health, Julie Wormser of MyRWA, Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Michael Day, among others.
- Our Select Board, Town Manager and others have been speakers and participants in the MVP process, and we have done much more to raise public awareness of climate change in Winchester and to build the consensus needed to have public support for our work.

All of this has been preliminary work for the past two and one-half years. Now we need to roll up our sleeves and start the really hard work. It's great to have a Plan on a shelf, to have jump-started a modest stream of climate grants, and to have inspired many sectors of Winchester to talk more about climate now than used to happen.

People have said that I have been serving as the SD for Winchester for a while now, and I always respond that our *team* has been serving as a de-facto Sustainability Coordinator for years now. Through these various actions we have brought our Town to a point where we are ready to benefit from hiring a professional to bring Winchester to the next level. Volunteers cannot keep writing grants. Wei, Ken, Kim and I collectively spent hundreds of hours on the most recent EVIP grant, and many more hundreds of hours on previous grants. I for one cannot continue to work 30-40 hours a week on issues like this without the support from the Town of having a professional staff person solely dedicated to working on the climate.

For those who don't know, here are two quick things that the Sustainability Director will tackle that are not the responsibility of anyone else in Winchester's Town Government:

1. Tackle energy issues beyond the municipality, which accounts for only 3% of GHGs in Winchester. Our Energy Coordinator, and the EMC, do a great job of addressing this 3% of the pie, and are quick to point out that the balance of carbon pollution mostly originated in the residential sector.
2. Begin to work on the other one-half of the CAP. one-half is the reduce carbon pollution, and the other one-half is to increase community resilience. This includes things like health risks due to heat, vector borne diseases, blooms that shut our waterways, residential green infrastructure, and protecting Winchester's tree canopy, among other ways to build depth into our Town.

- A year ago Town Meeting voted to support the creation of the position of a SD, which again is the #1 recommendation of the CAP and is also called for by the Master Plan and the All Hazards Mitigation Plan.
- Then the Personnel Board unanimously voted to actually create the position.
- Then the Town Manager put it in the FY20221 Budget but it was pulled due to covid considerations.
- So then CAAC identified a small grant to help bridge FY22 and partially defray the costs during covid times. Specifically, Kim Roeland, Ken Pruitt and I worked with the Town Manager with additional help from the Town Planner, to submit and were awarded the MA State grant of \$52,250 for salary plus benefits to hire a Sustainability Director.
- Then the Select Board took this action on 12/7/20, and I'm reading from their Minutes:

‘Climate Resiliency Grant – Ms. Wong informed the Select Board that the Town had applied for \$55,000 and we were awarded \$52,250. The grant will be used to support hiring a Sustainability Director which will give us 10 months of funding to get the position started and the additional funding will be in the FY22 budget. \*Motion That the Select Board accept the Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant from MAPC in the amount of \$52,500 to fund a Sustainability Director position through November 30, 2021, and to support the additional funding for the position in the FY22 budget (estimate 40-50k plus benefits). Verdicchio - Goluboff Monday, December 7, 2020 Select Board Meeting 4 | P a g e Roll Call: Verdicchio, Welch, Shapiro, Goluboff, Bettencourt.’

Mike Bettencourt at that time was the SB Chair. Accordingly, the Town Manager put the SD in the FY2022 Budget. Fincom removed it from the FY2022 Budget.

As appointed members of the designated Town Committee charged with leading the Town on climate issues, specifically charged with implementing the Winchester 2020 CAP, we are expected to do just that – lead on climate.

At our last meeting I proposed a letter of support for a Motion to amend the Budget to again include the SD, which will allow our elected Town Meeting members to consider this issue. All members got a great deal of time to ask questions and present their concerns. We chose to not move forward with the proposed letter at that time because of substantial concerns by one member, and subsequent uncertainties due to that about how Town Government works and what our role is within Town Government.

Which brings us to tonight. We want to pick up the thread from the last meeting. Taking into account the concerns of one member, with questions from others, we now have v10 of a proposed letter before us. Before we turn our attention to the letter, I’d like to invite the current Vice-Chair of the Select Board to give any additional background or comments he’d like to offer.”

Mr. Goluboff expressed his “shared passion” with the committee on climate action and what can be done at the local level in Winchester. Of critical importance to that endeavor is the hiring of a uniquely qualified individual with the relevant skillset to lead the community as Sustainability Director. Toward that effort, Town Meeting voted to support the creation of the position of Sustainability Director, which is the number one recommendation of the CAP and is also called for by the Master Plan and the All Hazards Mitigation Plan. He acknowledged the achievements of the committee thus far which has acted as a *de facto* sustainability director, but emphasized the need for a dedicated professional to devote the time necessary to gain a variety of state grants. This position would work collaboratively with the energy coordinator position on climate resiliency issues just as heat, vector borne diseases, etc. He expressed his unequivocal support of a letter to Town Meeting members proposing an amendment to the budget to include the sustainability director position.

Mr. Goluboff stated that “climate change is the number one most pressing issue of our generation and decades from now we will be judged by how we respond it.” Given that the position is seeded from one-half each grant and tax money, he could not support the Finance Committee’s decision to remove this position from the budget. He noted that the position in other neighboring communities has become self-sustaining with grant awards close to \$1M. He expressed a sense of

urgency by noting that the force and frequency of thunder storms in the Northeast over the last 3-4 years reminded him of the climate he experienced growing up in his home state of Texas. He firmly supports the committee's letter to Town Meeting members. He suggested that to avoid any surprises on Town Meeting floor, that the letter will notify members of the proposed amendment and the reasons for it ahead of time.

Mr. Field noted that legislation has been passed to accomplish ambitious goals through 2030. Winchester cannot move forward to work toward common goals of electricity, transportation, heating, etc. without a sustainability director. Having a sustainability director in the budget as of July 1, 2021 ensures that valuable time is not lost in having that resource intact.

Mr. Eno agreed that the sustainability director position is number one priority for the town, but questioned how the process is navigated. Is the committee's responsibility to state the urgent need and allow those in official roles determine the mechanism for funding this position. Chair Trimarchi noted that the purpose of this evening's meeting was to agree to support a motion for the committee to send a letter of support for the position to town meeting members.

Mr. Bettencourt noted the advisory role of the committee. The budget is a reflection of the values of the Select Board. Article 8 is only one funding source. He suggested alternative funding the position by assessment of town fees. Building other than affordable homes may come with built in fees as a way of calling attention to climate impact. At any rate commitment to funding for the position needs to be long-term.

Mr. Howley stated that climate action presents a real health challenge to the community. The issues are so challenging and the opportunities so complex that without the ability and training of a person in leadership, the community will not gain enough traction to accomplish what needs to be done. With a goal of 2030, a substantial amount of progress needs to be made. He suggested that it is the responsibility of the community to speak clearly and unequivocally to fund the position. The committee must lead that charge. Town Meeting needs to hear clarity of recommendation on climate.

Mr. Jerius considers it a failure of town government, in light of the critical state of global warming, that it has not funded this position.

Ms. Starrett stated he agrees with Mr. Jerius' and Mr. Howley's comments that this represents a huge crisis and we must do everything we can to get the position funded.

Ms. Calabi noted that while she is in favor of the position, she was concerned about the process. She fears it send the negative message that the committee is liberal-minded and not concerned about financial impacts of its requests. She believes postponing the position to the FY2023 budget instead of the current one will go a long way from the resident perspective in supporting the efforts of the committee. In any event, she believes considering the broader picture of the needs of the town as a whole, and not just focusing on advancing its own agenda, will advance the overall mission of town government.

Chair Trimarchi noted that it is the role of the committee to “worry about climate” and to give Town Meeting is best advice on fully vetted research that supports the need for the position.

Mr. Roeder stated that to say nothing is not an option. The committee needs to be proactive in making the statement that this position needs to be funded now.

Town Manager Wong stated that she agreed with Mr. Howley that Town Meeting needs to hear from the committee, although an advisory committee, is one of the town’s strongest advocates of climate action and sustainability. The committee has the history and background to address Town Meeting. She also stated that in terms of fees, the town does not tie fees to one item or position.

She also stated that although she has appreciation for the difficulty of the work of the Finance Committee, an understanding on its part is crucial not only from a financial perspective but to understand the town priorities are set in number of different ways, and are embedded in the master plan and the climate action plan. It is incumbent on them to make sure that the budget is not only fiscally responsible but reflects the values are embedded not just in individual members but take into consideration values across the town. Plans in the making over a decade in various versions, vetted publicly and researched, need to be considered in the overall picture. She added that there are tradeoffs in this budget. Making decisions from a policy perspective or financial perspective, consideration needs to be given for the best advocacy for the position, even if this committee does not have a strong financial role.

#### **Letter to Town Meeting Members**

Discussion ensued on the contents of v.10 of the letter with suggested amendments (see attached letter that will be sent tomorrow morning.) On Town Meeting floor Ruth, as a member, would make the motion to amend to add funding back in budget and Mr. Howley would second.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Field and seconded by Mr. Eno, it was unanimously voted to support version 11 of the letter with four changes as amended and to be signed by members of the CAAC. Chair Trimarchi-Y, Ms. Calabi-Y, Mr. Chen-Y, Mr. Eno-Y, Mr. Field-Y, Jason Roeder-Y and Ms. Garber-Y. Motion passed 7-0.

#### **Adjournment**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Field and seconded by Ms. Calabi, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Chair Trimarchi-Y, Ms. Calabi-Y, Mr. Chen-Y, Mr. Eno-Y, Mr. Field-Y, Jason Roeder-Y and Ms. Garber-Y. Motion passed 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:34PM.