

MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 6:30 pm
Town Hall, 40 Center Street
Fairhaven, Massachusetts

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ann Richard at 6:30pm, via Zoom

Present: Chairperson Ann Richard, Karen Gent, Leon Correy, Wendy Drumm, Susan Spooner, Jim Anderson, Deidre Healy and Sustainability Coordinator Whitney McClees.

Alternates Present: Christin Ritz

Guests: Eliana DaCunha, Gary Lavelette

CHAIR PERSON'S WELCOME AND MEDIA NOTIFICATION ready by Whitney McClees

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT read by Ann Richard. There was a press release about adding this acknowledgement to our meetings and received a lot of positive feedback from emails. Jim Anderson asks if we received any negative comments and no there was none.

MINUTES

Motion to approve the February 16, 2021 meeting minutes is made by Jim Anderson, seconded by Wendy Drumm, unanimous by roll call (6-0).

2021 TOWN MEETING ARTICLES

Ann sent out the information that was shared with us with the language that could be used.

Wendy comments on the 10-cent fee to know if the fee reduced the use of plastic bag consumption in towns that have adopted this.

Whitney clarifies it's simply a request to authorize the select board to petition to the state legislature not to start imposing the charge. It's an article to petition not to charge. A charge is more effective than a plastic ban. Ann does not think now is the time to pursue these articles. Leon Correy is inclined to agree that it is not the right time where we are still coming out of a pandemic, there is unemployment, people are trying to get by but still supports plastic reduction just now is not the time to impose a charge. Jim comments he is also sensitive to the timing issue; would it be possible to break out a small portion of the document that would be less controversial to start the journey with a smaller step than the full document proposes?

Wendy also agrees on the timing and was impressed at the content of the document but it's a lot for a town to take on. Perhaps with the ban on one item such as straws.

Susan Spooner comments as written that it might be "too green" for members of the town meeting to vote in a beneficial fashion. She doesn't think this should be let go and education is important but also timing does seem to be an issue.

Christin Ritz comments that now might not be the right time to impose cost and agrees with Jim that we should start somewhere even if its small like the straws and maybe businesses could even save if they are only giving them out when requested. Maybe this could get more people to buy into the idea in smaller steps.

Karen Gent comments that we could just move forward with requesting for the petition to the state but hold off on imposing the charge if it passes. She agrees with the timing and pointed to

the backlash online of the small increase in cost with the community aggregation that now would not be the time to impose any new charges even if they are small.

Whitney agrees we should get the ball rolling on the petition because the more towns that do the more likely it is for the state to take action and maybe pass something that's statewide vs by each individual town. With any change like these other big bylaws are proposing having the appropriate education out there on what the language means, the rollout, why it's important is a lot of work. Maybe we could have another subcommittee to help with this.

Diedre Healy joins at 7:00pm.

Leon has 2 points. Although it would just be a petition when it comes back down we need to act as a group in making our recommendation as if our decision is final. The other part of that is that it functions as a punishment as a fine, what if we propose an incentive instead?

Jim has 2 points as well. Not all trash is equivalent in terms of landfill. Some trash is an eye sore; some is dangerous to wildlife and there could be a distinction and we need to talk to business owners about what would be the easiest for them to adopt and what are the downsides. For example, splash guards on hot beverages. They should give us some advice.

Eliana DaCunha would like us to reconsider and understands us not wanting to overburden businesses. On the first law, the plastic reduction bylaw, the only thing it asks is plastic items be given upon request only. For the plastic bags there's nothing effective we can do right now in terms of banning them as the main goal is not to ban them and switch to paper but to use reusable bags instead. The charge would encourage people to bring their own bags. In terms of the polystyrene bylaw, the goal is to ban Styrofoam because it poses a huge risk to human health and safety. She could call businesses to see if they could switch to other materials.

Ann agrees we should talk to businesses first before just bringing straight to Town Meeting. We just got a new Health Agent so that's another reason to wait.

Susan states convening a meeting with business owners is a great start. Where the sugarcane containers are made. As long as we can provide alternative options that aren't cost prohibitive it'll be easier to start a discussion.

Town meeting has been postponed to June; we don't need to decide on this right now. Diedre questions what is the reality of this passing right now, if it doesn't pass we still need to continue pursuing this. Our committee will not be dissuaded by any thought that it's not cost effective, because not doing anything is more costly.

If anyone wants to reach out to Eliana to help with her efforts, she left her e-mail.

EARTH MONTH ECO CHALLENGE

The Eco Challenge has been sent out to the group and is something we do every year and starts on April 1st and is a full month event. Hastings Middle School has set up their own team. Christin reached out to the middle and high schools as well as the council on aging to join. We missed the timing to be in the council on ageing newsletter but they will still encourage people to join. The schools will be involved.

Diedre will be sending out an agenda of online earth day events that will be happening in April. There are opportunities for cleanups, art events, and lots of different ways to participate.

COMPLETE STREETS

Jim updates- the document is a long list of potential projects knowing that not every project will be funded but eventually more money could come and projects on the list could get addressed. Now they are working on prioritizing the list to submit to the state.

SEED EXCHANGE/SEEDS FOR SENIORS

Seed Exchange is up and running at the Millicent Library and the seeds have already had to be refilled. Seeds for Seniors received a donation of \$100.

RECYCLING

Susan has been working with the board of public works. We started out in 2014 with a percentage of recycling at 13.4% and our best month ever for recycling was in 2015 at 26.8%. During Covid the percentage was 19% but trash tonnage was way up. The more trash we have the higher the dump fees will be and they keep increasing. What can we do about this as a committee? She brings up issues with ABC throwing out recycling and not doing their jobs properly- we need to work with them.

Whitney has previously worked on recycling public outreach with the board of health in 2018 and comments that we only have one recycling truck driver for the town and a lot of the issue was residents not properly sorting their recycling, not breaking down boxes etc that he couldn't pick up and he is also legally not allowed to leave the truck as a safety issue. In her opinion it's more of an issue on education rather than being on ABC. We need a wider spread effort on outreach and education for residents to be compliant.

Leon Correy agrees with Whitney that we cannot blame one person/ABC and need to put the responsibility back on the residents and provide reminders and more education to them.

Gary Lavelette did promotional work with the DPW and someone asked why a lot of people aren't recycling. The story is our previous health agent did a great job with the public about what can go in recycling but it aggravated a lot of people because they were being reprimanded and bins were constantly being turned sideways, bins weren't picked up, and notes were left about their violations which lead people to not want to recycle at all out of frustration. The effects of this carry on today and not as many people recycle now. Gary is supportive of recycling and also brings up there are condo associations that don't have recycling and should.

Whitney comments that they had to leave notes about what is acceptable because certain items can damage the machines and one bag of garbage can cause all of the recycling to be unusable because of contamination.

Jim asks if recycling is an income generator in Fairhaven like it was in his previous community.

Whitney answers, not really because we pay by the ton to a central facility however textiles donation bins generate revenue to fund hoarding programs and other smaller things but generally no it's not.

Wendy comments when she was in Providence, she was on a committee to encourage recycling and when residents found a message on their container it made a huge difference.

COMPOST BINS

Compost Bins were able to be purchased at a discounted rate in previous years, see if this and rain barrels is something we can sell again.

2040 MASTER PLAN

Whitney- LEED for cities recording, Kat is not here to report if she was able to watch that meeting.

SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATORS REPORT

Whitney report Green Communities designation grant report has been completed, LED lighting solution at the rec center. In the process of submitting another competitive grant. We are moving forward with the EVs and got approval from Eversource. We should be seeing installation in the coming months. Finishing up on the MVP planning grant.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Next meeting is April 20th, 2021. Ann would like to continue with the online zoom meetings as its increased community involvement. Whitney comments there's a possibility that the state will allow remote public meetings to continue post pandemic.

ADJOURNMENT

Jim Anderson motions to adjourn and is seconded by Leon Correy. Vote was unanimous by hand raise (7-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Gent