Sustainability Committee
Approved Minutes

Thursday, December 19, 2019
Mazza Room

Attendees:
Jill Oberlander, Selectwoman; Patricia Sesto, Environmental Affairs; Ali Ghiorse, Greenwich Community Gardens, Waste Free Greenwich, RTM District 1; Sarah Coccaro, Conservation Commission; Aleksandra Moch, Conservation Commission; Sally Davies, GRAB; Julie DesChamps, GRAB, Waste Free Greenwich, Green Schools; Myra Klockenbrink; Svetlana Wasserman; Rob Liflander, Peregrine Renewable Energy, LLC; Jim Hoffman; Allison Walsh, Green Schools, F&E Control Board, RTM; Fred Camillo, First Selectman

8:00 am. J. Oberlander welcomed everyone and passed out an agenda for today’s meeting. Oberlander asked for a summary of the last meeting since she was not present.

A. Ghiorse offered her insight and “take-aways” from the meeting. The last meeting (December 9, 2019) was with Fred Camillo. The group discussed his ideas for a sustainable committee and brainstormed how to foster a more cohesive sustainable community in Town. This might take the form of a declaration of goals and values for the Town that comes from the Office of the First Selectmen, or it might come from a sustainable committee. Previous research had gone into looking at what other towns are doing, primarily using the city of Rye’s sustainability plan as an example. An item of clarification, the previously circulated minutes from last meeting were not minutes. M. Klockenbrink and R. Liflander put together a draft sustainability plan. Liflander furthered this summary by saying that a vision statement and which key stakeholders to include were also discussed. J. DesChamps highlighted the five sectors covered in the Rye Sustainability Plan, and an additional sixth that can be brought to Greenwich: Buildings/Energy, Transportation/Air Quality, Waste Reduction, Water/Land Use, Community Awareness/Education, and Food Waste Recycling/Composting.

P. Sesto reiterated that there is a clear desire among this group to “do something in town”. Sesto produced a guide for the following discussion, focusing on “who are we?” Sesto asked each committee member to define “sustainable”, as the term tends to have different meanings to a variety of people. Each member proceeded to describe in their own terms. Sesto recapped the definition of “sustainable” as common themes emerged, such as: forward thinking, using what we have and no wastefulness, needing a cultural shift towards sustainability practices, and preserving and protecting natural resources for future generations.

P. Sesto asked the committee how we meet our needs? Committee members expressed their beliefs on how that should be accomplished, such as: a dedicated public education and outreach campaign to shift
the psychological perspective over sustainability, combating fearfulness, and avoiding being too “earthy”. More so, that this sustainability message needs to come from Town leadership, preferably top-down, such as with the Office of the First Selectmen and with support from every Town department and department heads. One committee member expressed concern over the way the Town website is framed, with a lot of negative words (“do not”, “cannot”). J. Oberlander cautioned the group to be careful when linking sustainability measures and programs with an economic value. The committee discussed doing economic analyses to further support implementing sustainable projects that may have a long pay-back period.

P. Sesto asked the committee what is not happening in town right now that they hope this committee will achieve? General consensus in the group was that there is not an awareness in town on what sustainability programs there are (currently) and how to be more sustainable (for an individual or property owner). Other comments were made that there needs to be a cohesive and consistent vision, values and goals coming out of the Town, clarity in terms of the goals and mission of the Environmental Affairs department and other departments (in terms of sustainability), and more ease on the Town website. Other ideas discussed were walkability of the Town, the Town doesn’t have a soft or welcoming feel to it, accountability, town-led initiatives, and defining rolls in Town from the top-down.

Discussion moved to how this sustainability committee would use the POCD and SCT as framework for setting goals. Dialogue ensued surrounding the implementation process and procedure for POCD objectives and actions. P. Sesto encouraged community partners to look through the list of actions, responsible leaders listed for each action, and priority levels, and identify areas where they would like to connect and partner with on action items. Committee members commented that there needs to be creative thinking on how to accomplish the POCD actions and communication throughout the 10-year implementation period of the POCD. One recommendation was to have a designated communications leader from each sector of the sustainability committee to coordinate with town departments and NGO’s.

J. Oberlander discussed the procedure behind budgets that go through the Board of Selectmen, BET and RTM and the process of submitting new job positions, creation of commissions or committees, or allocating resources.

F. Camillo arrived 8:45 am.

P. Sesto asked F. Camillo how he views the creation of a sustainability committee. He responded that he hopes to expand the mission and/or name of the sustainability committee (more than energy and waste reduction), hopes this will improve the quality of life for Greenwich residents, and to use the Office of the First Selectmen as a vehicle to accomplish these goals. Sesto echoed that the Board of Selectmen will be used a vector for communication with town departments and the community: that we need to lead by example.

P. Sesto asked how this committee would advance the POCD goals? General consensus was to look of POCD and set goals based on what is already in the document and what we think is missing. Sesto also discussed using the SCT application as a guide to setting our mission and priorities.

R. Liflander left the meeting at 9:30 am.

Are the right people at the table? /Who are we missing? General agreement was that Town department heads are missing from the table, but need to be included. A. Ghiorse stated that this committee should first set goals and then find the people to help implement. A. Moch recommended including the Chamber of Commerce in discussions, as they are a liaison for the business community.
J. Oberlander began wrapping up the meeting by discussing her views of how the meetings succeeding this would be organized. The committee agreed to meet biweekly until we define our mission and set up the committee.

**Goals:**

1. Determine timeline and if we need a budget.
2. Determine measurable actions to accomplish within the next few months (for example, events around Earth Day)

**Action items:**

1. Identify who should be at this meeting?
2. Develop a mission statement.
3. Develop a statement of intent of Town Policy that can be presented to the Board of Selectmen.
5. Develop more information and research on Rye’s Sustainability Plan. Is it necessary to meet with their committee?

**Next meeting:**

Thursday, January ____ at 8:00 am. Next date will depend on Mazza Room availability. Committee agreed to meet biweekly until a clear mission and direction is determined and then meeting will move to once a month. Agreed on a 75-minute meeting.

The meeting finished at 9:52 am.

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Jill K. Oberlander
Co-Chair

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Sarah Coccaro
Recording Secretary