

**BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Remote Meeting Via Zoom Conference Call
February 25, 2021 MEETING**

MINUTES

Present:

Committee Members: Bert Cohen, Peter Britz, Cliff Lazenby, Larry Lariviere, John Kennedy, Rebecca O'Brien, Tracey Cameron, Pip Clews

Guests: Representative Jackie Cali-Pitts, Tom Morgan, Valentina Giordana, Aubrey Gewehr, Peter Furst

- I. CALL TO ORDER
 1. Meeting called to order by Larry at 6:33pm.

- II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM January 28, 2021
 1. Approved with date correction (correct date of meeting was January 28, 2021) on a motion by Bert, seconded by Cliff.

- III. OLD BUSINESS
 1. Bert will check in with Carrie about looking at website.
 2. Bert will also connect with Betty about HB315.
 3. Draft priorities for 2021 reviewed

- IV. NEW BUSINESS
 1. Update Community Power Coalition of NH CPCNH
 - a. Rep. Cali-Pitts, co-sponsor of Senate bill 289, gave an update on the bill as it stands—which she described as not perfect yet, but getting closer. They have not seen updated version yet, but she believes it will pass. Aggregation is possible, but won't happen quickly.
 - b. Some committee members expressed concern about the bill getting in the way of Portsmouth's (or other City's attempts) to pursue aggregation.
 - c. Bert reminded the committee that *Drawdown* represents the context and shared goals of all of this work and reminded us that we're all trying to get to the "there."

- d. Cliff shared that one of the benefits over individuals choosing different suppliers and sources on their own is that it takes some of the leg work out of it for the individual and ensures that all options are properly considered and vetted, offering a sense of confidence and facility to the community they might not experience doing it on their own. He also suggested that beginning to explore community power and aggregate at the city level to get the conversation started in Portsmouth would be wise.
- e. Peter noted that York is trying to get people to sign up and might be worth looking into.

2. Solar Farm Letter

- a. Tom Morgan (city planner) wrote a letter to the City Council in August asking them to consider the amount of solar power available in the city and to look at making minor changes to city zoning ordinances that would make solar farms more feasible to develop in Portsmouth. Solar fields are amongst the top 10 most important solutions indicated in *Drawdown*.
- b. Discussion ensued about encouraging the use of solar in Portsmouth, both in farms and residential applications. Questions about the amount of open space, market for and tolerance by neighbors were raised.
- c. Bert expressed that he feels the committee is at a new level and that with limited meetings and person-power, we should focus on *Drawdown* solutions as our next step, working within our city's framework as an "Eco Municipality." Solar is number eight, so using *Drawdown* as a guide, it should be something the committee supports.
- d. Peter will start and Cliff will draft a recommendation from committee in support of removing impediments to developing solar farms. They will keep Tom in the loop and also suggest bringing in the Conservation Commission as the discussion moves forward. After a vote on these recommendations at next meeting, recommendations will be submitted back to Planning Board.

3. Renewable Energy Discussion

- a. Peter Furst, a resident of the South End, came as a result of conversation with local city planner. He expressed how difficult it is, living in an historic district, to implement solar or other renewal resources because of HDC restrictions. He suggested that small tweaks could allow for ease of implementing and getting approval for sustainable improvements.
- b. Peter F. will make a list of a few recommendations to mitigate these challenges that the committee will review and pass on to the City Council after the next meeting.

4. Priorities for 2021

- a. Becca provided a condensed version of *Drawdown*: “Drawdown Review,” that offered “more palatable” access to the basics of how individuals, cities and governments can approach solutions and reduce sources of emissions.
- b. Becca presented a draft list of priorities for 2021 for the committee to adopt as a guide. Time did not allow for a full review of these, but this will be top priority for next meeting.

5. Other Business

- a. Becca welcomed as newest member of committee.
- b. Aubrey sent a link to Bert that the two of them will discuss.
- c. As the first action of the *Drawdown* project, Valentina presented that the Drawdown Action group (SeaRei.org) had chosen “Plant-Based Diet” as their first solution to tackle. They are organizing an event between April 22-25 in which they will ask restaurants to put at least one completely plant-based meal on the menu. They will also invite people to join the effort from home. The event will include a series of zooms with speakers highlighting the carbon footprint of food. Rotary will likely be the main sponsor with help from residents who can support GATHER and local restaurants by purchasing gift cards and/or meals. Contact Valentina Giordana (valegiordana93@gmail.com) with suggestions or connections to local restaurants.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

1. Meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.
 - a. Next Meeting March 25th, 6:30-8:30pm, facilitated by Pip and recorded by Becca

Respectfully submitted by Pip Clews