

Environment Committee Meeting, March 10, 2021 (via Zoom)

Present: Barton Rubenstein (Chair), Andrew Bartley (Member), Jack Frink (Member), Donna Harmon (Member), Ralph Wooden (Member), Marnie Shaul (Town Council Liaison), Stephen Surko (Town Council Liaison), Patty Friedman (PNRC Liaison).

1. Minutes of the February 10 meeting were approved.

2. Somerset Truck Discussion

- Jack explained that he had heard that the Town's truck is old and needs about \$5k of repairs so was wondering if the Town should replace it with an electric vehicle (EV) instead of repairing it.
- Hence the Town Manager, Matt, has requested the EC to make a formal recommendation to the Town Council.
- Several Members pointed out that no EV trucks were yet available in the market and that in a few years there would be more choices.
- Jack and Barton suggested that in the interim the Town lease a new conventional truck or buy a used one.
- Andrew suggested that in addition the Town buy "Green Credits" to offset the trucks CO2 emissions.
- There was an extended discussion on how to finance for the truck and whether the EC should make any recommendation on financing, as well as a discussion on "Green Credits".
- All Members agreed that replacing the existing truck with another conventional vehicle is a stopgap measure and that the Town's long-term intent should be to replace its vehicle(s) with EV(s).
- Jack motioned that the EC recommend to the Town Council that the Town purchase an EV truck(s) to replace the conventional truck(s) once suitable EVs are available, but that in the interim the Town lease a new truck or purchase a used one to replace the truck that needs repair.
- The motion was seconded by Donna and unanimously approved by the EC.

3. Clearview Recommendation

- Barton explained that Clearview is one of the alternate suppliers of "renewable green" electricity available through Pepco, and has consistently offered the lowest price for "renewable green" energy supply.
- Andrew pointed out that Clearview is approx. 2 cents/kWh less than Pepco's current rate¹.
- There was some discussion amongst the EC members on the potential savings and referral payments with the general view that a switch would be a good idea.
- Andrew motioned that the EC recommend to the Town Council to switch its electricity energy supplier to Clearview.

¹ The Town's average annual electricity consumption is approx. 190,000 kWh so a 2 cent/kWh reduction in cost will save about \$3,800.

- The motion was seconded by Donna and unanimously approved by the EC.
- Steve suggested that the EC explain to the Town Council what the financial impact of the switch would be.
- Barton clarified that Clearview is cheaper than Pepco.
- Barton will provide the relevant price info to the Town Council.

4. Apiary (Bees) Update

- Barton provided an update on discussions with the proposed beekeeper included a potential alternate site for the apiary near the small stream on the south side of the Town. In discussions with the beekeeper, for a variety of reasons it seems there is a general preference for this alternate location rather than the original proposed location on Wisconsin Ave.
- Barton pointed out that a decision on the apiary needs to be made asap so the hives can be moved within the next month or so.
- Patty pointed out that the neighbors to the alternate site should be advised of the proposal to make sure they do not have any objections.
- Marnie mentioned that Jeffery Slavin had some questions about the selection and procurement of the apiery provider.
- Barton committed to provide sufficient info on the process to the Town Council for them to decide.

5. Climate Emergency Declaration and Paris Climate Agreement

- Marnie and Steve suggested that it would be easier for the Council if the two matters, the Climate Emergency Declaration and the Paris Climate Agreement, were treated separately.
- There was an extended discussion amongst the participants about the merits of separating the matters. In particular, it was pointed out that signing on to the Paris Climate Agreement involves various issues and tasks that need further research examination and evaluation to come up with an action/implementation plan.
- Andrew suggested some changes to the text of the declaration and agreed to provide them in writing by morning of March 11.

6. Other Items

- Solar Panel Project – Andrew provided an update on the project explaining that the contractor was unable to offer a site visit but was confident in the accuracy of its proposals. Andrew pointed out that a significant number of trees would need to be removed to maximize solar panel electricity production. Barton suggested that an alternate location for the panels within the Town should be researched.
- Vehicle Charging Stations – there was an update and wide-ranging discussion about the location, number of charging stations, who would use them, whether they would become redundant, what the cost is, can they be removed, etc. Marnie pointed out that Pepco requires the stations to have 24 hr access so ruling out the swimming pool parking lot. Jack motioned that the EC continue to recommend to the Council that two charging stations be installed. The motion was seconded by Donna and approved by the EC.

- Budget for outreach about leaf blower ban – Steve pointed out that the leaf blower ban requires outreach to the community and that the EC should request up to \$2000 in the FY22 budget. Jack motioned that the EC recommend to the Council to establish a FY22 budget of up to \$2,000 for general environmental education outreach covering but not limited to the leaf blower ban and sustainable gardening practices. The motion was seconded by Donna and unanimously approved by the EC.
- Carbon Offset Credits – Barton explained that the Town had several sources of CO2 emissions including heating of the Town pool and the vehicles that could be offset with carbon credits. Marnie suggested that these credits be included in the Town’s FY22 budget. Andrew motioned that the EC recommend to the Council that it include in the FY22 budget, funds to procure carbon credits to offset the Town’s carbon footprint. The motion was seconded by Donna and unanimously approved by the EC.

7. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.