

Marbletown Environmental Conservation Commission (ECC) and Climate Smart Task Force
Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2020

Attending

ECC:

Tom Konrad, Chair
Alan Newman
Iris Marie Bloom
Amy Moses
Doug Adams
Jason Zimmerman, CSC Coordinator

Marbletown Board Members:

Daisy Foote

Eric Stewart

Sustainable Hudson Valley:

Melissa Everett

Ben Eckstein

Dave Conover

Lower Esopus Trail Project

Mary McNamara

Sustainable Hudson Valley, 100% Renewable, and Buyer Program updates

SHV will continue to work with ECC (implementation is “fun part”).

Outreach plan: Planning a 2nd press release, website (<https://sustainhv.org/programs/climate-solutions-lab/100-renewable-communities/>), and purchase program. Also plan meet-ups. Hope to pilot one meet-up this year, possibly virtual. Press release just about green buyer program.

Additional ideas: New Year resolution party--after new year's--for talking about 10 steps.

Melissa reports that 40-50 have participated in the buyer program. About a dozen have signed contracts. Thinking about group purchase program for 2021, possibly to be announced at new year's event.

Melissa and Tom have been presenting the 100% pledge program to groups elsewhere, including in Saratoga and Columbia Counties. They presented to CCL (Citizens Climate Lobby). Need to communicate with Hudson Valley, Rondout Valley Business Association and SUNY (need to connect to SUNY New Paltz re Green Group Discount). Also need a business version of the pledge that reaches out to car dealers, HVAC dealers, garden suppliers, etc.

October 31st is the last day for this round of Green Group Purchase sign-ups.

Wood is a big deal in the plan and maybe develop a talk next year. However, NYSERDA will probably always be opposed to wood stoves, they prefer pellet stoves which have lower particulate emissions because they do not rely on humans to operate them properly. Best approach is to write letters to the editor (LTEs) about more efficient wood stoves and plan an education campaign. Also need folks to write letters to the editor about their experience with high efficiency wood stoves.

From the business side: a Zoom meeting about the solar and wind financial market. Right now there is consolidation in the marketplace. Solar installers are gaining market share. RVBA will cosponsor a Fossil Fuel Divestment talk (zoom) with Tom and Doug. A useful article on divesting from fossil fuels is here:

<http://www.altenergystocks.com/archives/2020/10/step-by-step-fossil-fuel-divesting-with-mutual-funds/>

SHV is mailing a postcard about the group buyer program to targeted homeowners in Marbletown. Website is pretty well done. Going up tomorrow. Suggested: “Energy Coaching Session” more appealing than energy consultation. Currently, people in the program don’t work with low-income households. Energy Navigators -- Volunteers from Cornell Cooperative Extension -- do work with low income.

Tompkins County is a model for us.

<http://ccetompkins.org/energy/get-your-green-back-tompkins/energy-navigator-volunteers>.

Lower Esopus Trail Project

Presenter: Mary McNamara, Lower Esopus Watershed Partnership

Lower Esopus “Water Trail” Project (10 miles, from Tongore Park to Kingston) started in February by assessing in-stream wood that blocked down the river. Working with others, they have cleared wood. They need access sites to the river every few miles. Trail now begins with Tongore Park. There is access at New Beginnings. Currently, Hurley needs a take-out spot. Hope is to coordinate with the O&W rail trail for an access site. Working with New York City for a protocol on releases from Ashokan Reservoir to Esopus; in the works for the past 10 years. Ulster Water Quality Commission is also getting updates on the project. (Slide show presented).

The 4-mile stretch in Marbletown is extraordinary, with eagles, bear, and turtles. It is excellent habitat! But there is an e coli problem.

It will be exciting to increase protection for water quality and erosion control.

Two films feature the Esopus: focus on stewardship - “Mountain River” and “Voices of the Esopus.”

STRETCH code

NYSERDA is looking at STRETCH code

(<https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Energy-Code-Training/NYStretch-Energy-Code-2020>). Daisy says that it needs a narrative for people as to why they should adopt it.

Currently, it is too technical. Nevertheless, there is a good chance for passage at Marbletown Board. Concern over the need for a 3rd party to come in.

Daisy plans to bring it up again in January, focusing on new construction. Estimated to add about \$2500 dollars extra to construction, but there is significant energy savings and could be a seller benefit. Beacon has passed it. Marbletown could use it as a selling point. Homes can still use oil or gas, but would need less fuel.

Dirt fill issues

Daisy is also working on a regulation on fill dirt. Marbletown is going to get sizeable housing projects. We could have a problem with potentially toxic fill dirt. The new law would allow the Town to prevent folks dumping toxic soil. Dirt suppliers would have to register with Building Department. If the material is not local, then they will have to test it. The Building Dept. would oversight. The building site developer will have responsibility to get it tested. It would encourage developers to use local people for fill. 250 yards of fill is the proposed trigger.

There was a lot of discussion on whether 250 yards is the right number. Also what to test for. Would we test for Arsenic, Asbestos, Lead, Benzene, (BTEX chemicals), PCBs? The contact person may be Larry Reachle (sp?) of DEC.

Bennet Solar Farm

Iris' letter supporting the project had been agreed on by several members, and it had been updated to show that Juliette Bennett and Scott Greathead had agreed to not cut milkweed between June 1 - Nov 1, and to plant more milkweed in other areas to benefit the Monarch butterfly and other pollinators, since 12 of the 13 acre Solar Farm is currently prime Monarch habitat. However, two members of the ECC were not ready to support the letter. Tom said that the letter was off the table.

Alan felt he did not have the facts, and so Iris suggested another walk-through of the land. Eric followed up by organizing a walkthrough, for ECC and Board members. Alan agreed to organize a visit to New Beginnings Solar Farm. Doug asked whether there had been any impropriety last year, in 2019, when the zoning was changed to accommodate closer setbacks. Tom Konrad said that he had been directly involved in that zoning change, and that there was no impropriety.

We discussed the Ridgewell solar project, which also has close setbacks; all of the neighbors who will see those solar panels are fine with it. We discussed the issue of environmental justice. Iris said that the timing for climate action is urgent, and that people of color and poor people living near oil, gas and coal facilities have years taken off their lives due to those facilities' toxic impacts. Doug expressed concern about the people in Kripplebush who may have their viewshed impacted. For the sake of time, ECC tabled the discussion, to re-consider making a statement after every member of the ECC was satisfied regarding the facts of the Bennett Solar Farm.

Additional items

No contact from the person promoting greener concrete.

Iris mentioned an excellent sign-on letter about refrigerants policy is circulating. This is important because refrigerants have extremely high greenhouse gas emissions and most homeowners, business owners and contractors do not know how to prevent those emissions. Iris will circulate the letter to ECC.

Meeting ended at 9:14 pm