



CLIMATE RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

www.westport-ma.com/climate-resilience-committee

Regular Meeting Minutes of:
Thursday, March 9, 2023

John Bullard, Chair
Shana Shufelt, Vice Chair

CRC, Subcommittee Members, Staff & Others Present:

- John Bullard, Chair
- Shana Shufelt, Vice Chair
- Michael Burris – Town Planner
- Amy Messier – Assistant Town Planner
- Jim Whitin
- Bob Daylor
- Dr. Michael Yogman
- Jeff Cantin
- Mike Sullivan
- David Cole
- Jake McGuigan
- Mark Rasmussen
- Joseph Ingoldsby
- Phil Weinberg
- Wendy Nicholas
- Lily MacDonald – Westport Middle/High School
- Kit Wise
- Constance Gee
- Laura Gardner
- Courtney Rocha

John Bullard called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

1. Introductions:

Lily MacDonald from the Westport Middle/High School mentioned that the school environmental club will be making a pollinator garden filled with native plants located on a grass island in the back of the High School. Ms. MacDonald mentioned that the club gave a presentation at the elementary school where they talked to students about pollinator gardens, brought awareness of environmental issues and encouraged future participation. Ms. MacDonald stated that the reason for choosing to create a pollinator garden was due to the new middle/high school being new and thought it could use some welcoming character, along with representing the Town as a farming community. Furthermore, bees and pollinators are under a great deal of stress from climate change, and a pollinator garden directly addresses this issue. Another project that was briefly discussed was the environmental club doing interviews with farmers or doing a presentation with the school. David Cole stated that he contacted Around the Bend Farm which expressed their interest in working with the environmental club, Mr. Cole will arrange a meeting soon. Jeff Cantin mentioned the idea of having the students of the environmental club interview representatives of different sectors of Town that are affected (both population wise and industry wise). If the students are provided media equipment, they can create content that could be used down the line for media engagement relating to a future grant from the Buzzards Bay Coalition. Jeff Cantin made a motion that the Climate Resilience Committee endorse the Buzzards Bay grant application, seconded by Michael Sullivan, the motion carried, with Mark Rasmussen abstaining from the vote.

2. Courtney Rocha – MVP 2.0:

In 2017 Westport went through a prescribed planning process to become MVP certified, which enables the town to be eligible for action grants through MVP. Ms. Rocha mentioned that they are now updating the planning process, which will require communities to go through MVP 2.0 in order to be eligible for action grants. The first round of action grants will be released in April and will be a “pilot round” in which five communities per region are chosen. Ms. Rocha believes that Westport is a good candidate for this round, since the town was certified very early on, and the towns plan needs to be updated, and the town has shown interest in developing a climate action plan and doing community engagement. Ms. Rocha stated that Westport is not eligible for a Climate Action plan for an action grant this round, and recommends that Westport apply for a planning grant through MVP 2.0. MVP 2.0 consists of the following;

- A two year process (RFR in April, start in June, be completed by June 2025)
- Year one (\$30,000):
 - Expansion of the core team
 - Receive innovative training on best practices for equity, environmental justice, climate change and engagement
 - Once the core team has gone through the equity training, this enables them to look at their priorities from 2017/2018 and expand and update them. The end result of this is not a big plan, it’s looking at previously highlighted priorities and re-evaluating them, and then updating priority actions (this enables eligibility for future action grants).
 - Hire a vendor who will meet the requirements of the program
 - The core team, vendor and MVP representative will then go through the plan together and update it accordingly.
- Year two (\$50,000):
 - Receive 50k of seed money to do a seed project (mini action grant) geared towards climate change

Michael Burris requested that a motion be made to support the Planning Board in putting together and submitting a grant to the MVP 2.0 program on behalf of the CRC. Mr. Rasmussen motioned to support the Planning Board in putting together and submitting a grant for the MVP 2.0 on behalf of the CRC, seconded by Mr. Whitin, with no opposition, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Michael Burris – Grant Updates:

Mr. Burris stated that he has submitted two grant applications to the Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program (BBNEP), which included the following;

- The first grant submitted was prepared by Buzzards Bay on our behalf to request funds (approx. \$300,000) to replace fifty six septic systems in the LET with a neighborhood denitrifying wastewater system in order to reduce the LET’s nitrogen load within Buzzards Bay. The requested funds would also go towards initiating the public engagement process with the LET neighborhood and develop the systems design and secure the permitting necessary for that project.
- The second grant submitted (approx. \$25,000) was a small grant for Westports MS4 permit, in which the requested funds would help identify illicit discharges into our stormwater system, and for the testing of the stormwater run-off to determine the type of pollutants within the water.
- (SNEP) Southeastern New England Program: a grant to help implement our TIWRMP to help make progress towards reducing nitrogen contamination from septic systems and also take steps to prevent nitrogen from getting into our waterbodies through stormwater. Implementing vegetative buffer strips near agriculture or large areas of impervious surfacing could be done as a pilot program to see what kind of interests there are in the community to incorporate these, and evaluate the success of these installations and their ability to filter our nitrogen within the

stormwater. Mr. Burris also noted that the nature of this program would need to have private property owners as partners in order to participate in this kind of initiative.

4. Acceptance of 1/12/23 minutes: Mr. Whitin motioned to accept the minutes of 1/12/23, seconded by Mr. Yogman, with no opposition, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Subcommittee Reports:

- **Engagement & Fundraising:**

Mr. Cantin stated he was potentially pursuing an MVP grant, however as mentioned above, the MVP 2.0 is what the CRC will aim for going forward. Mr. Cantin brought up a potentially grant opportunity in which he plans to reach out and work with the Westport Middle/High School on, and will have something to report at the next CRC meeting.

- **Water:**

Mark Rasmussen summarized a report on salt marsh loss, specifically relating to the study done in 2017 on the six island marshes in the west branch of the Westport River. The summary highlighted the reasons for salt marsh loss, rate of loss, salt marsh migration, and susceptibility and adaptation of marshes. Mr. Whitin recommended that Westport should try some experimental thin layer deposition either on the landward marshes or on the west branch island marshes. Mr. Rasmussen stated thin layer deposition is not yet permitted within the state of Massachusetts, however, if Westport could coordinate a dredging project it could be an opportunity to try for and aim for thin layer deposition. Ms. Gee recommended that “no wake” zones should be placed within the west branch near the salt flats in order to decrease the amount of wave activity against the marshes. Mr. McGuigan agreed with Ms. Gee about the increased recreation on the river with boats and kayaks.

- **Infrastructure & Safety :**

Bob Daylor stated that there is no specific update at this time.

- **Health:**

Michael Yogman stated that he has worked with Lily McDonald from the Westport Middle/High School and talked about health impacts, specifically the unique vulnerability of children and engagement with them. Mr. Yogman mentioned that the conversations highlighted specific topics such as; electric vehicles and limiting idling, pollinator gardens, school lunches and supporting local agriculture, the importance of composting, green spaces and planting trees. The goal of speaking on these specific topics is to encourage youth to talk about them with their parents and the community in the hopes to increase the participation in the Environmental Club. Mr. Yogman also touched upon the increased amount of anxiety within the younger population, in which Mr. Bullard mentioned that Westport superintendent Tom Aubin mentioned that Westport is one of the few communities within Massachusetts that has joined a national lawsuit against the major purveyors of social media for increasing the amount of anxiety in students.

- **Agriculture:**

Mr. Bullard stressed that agriculture is especially important in Westport and that the committee needs to engage in the near future.

- Laura Gardner, the head of the local climate project who runs the local chapter within Southeastern Massachusetts was present and presented to the committee information on a campaign to get more use of renewable energy called the “Aggregation Program”. This programs goal is to get 70% of renewable energy by 2030 by incorporating more renewable infrastructure (offshore wind, etc.). Ms. Gardner stated that the Aggregation Program purchases energy over a three year period rather than a six month period like Eversource, therefore saving money for people who are involved in the program due to their fixed

rate. Ms. Gardner encouraged interested members to speak to the Select Board and advocate for the increase in renewable energy used within the Town. Mr. Whitin recommended that Ms. Gardner make a presentation at one of the monthly SRPEDD meetings.

6. Other Business:

- Open Meeting Law Update: Michal Burris updated the committee on remote meetings and stated that remote meeting allowance has been requested to be extended through March 31, 2025, and that he will update the committee once the bill is voted on. Mr. Bullard emphasized that the ability to meet remotely has been a tremendous asset that allows a large attendance.
- John Bullard recommended adding an additional subcommittee for impact of the climate (sea level rise, wood-boring insects, etc.) has on historic resources, such as old structures and graveyards, etc. Mr. Whitin motioned to establish a sixth subcommittee for historic resources, seconded by Mr. Yogman, with no opposition, the motion carried unanimously.

7. Date of Next Meeting: Thursday, May 4, 2023 at 5:00 P.M.

Mr. Sullivan motioned to adjourn, seconded by Whitin, the motion carried unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Accepted 5/4/23