

Climate Smart Communities Meeting

Minutes

June 2, 2021

Shatford Park, 6:30 PM

Present: Waqar Akhtar, Marc Anthonisen, Kris Cottom, David Farren, Deborah Gordon, Tistrya Houghtling, Jessie Hughes, Adelia Moore, Peg Munves, Steve Powers, Sharon Powers, Bruce Shenker, Cathy Wilkerson, Bob Gilson (took notes), Christine Dreyfus, Joel Priest, Marianne Anthonisen, Emma Anthonisen

The meeting was called at 6:30 pm. Steve called for an approval of the May meeting minutes. They were approved as submitted.

Steve made the following announcements:

- The Town of New Lebanon Climate Smart Communities Task Force has received a \$5,000 grant from NYSERDA in recognition of the Town achieving four actions in the Clean Energy Communities program. We will receive another \$5,000 grant in support of our Community Solar program.
- There have been 14 signups to date to receive solar credits through Ampion. Task Force members agreed to reach out to at least 2 people each to encourage more signups.
- We have started a battery recycling program. Boxes have been placed at the Town Hall, the Post Offices, Country Squire, and the farmer's market to collect dead batteries. We will also be able to recycle old phones.
- Steve is working on an electronics recycling day for the town. Only devices with a screen: televisions, computers, etc. will be charged \$.35 a pound by the company collecting them.
- Progress is being made on the installation of the electric vehicle charging station. A group of volunteers cleared the site. We are now waiting for the installation of an electric pole and hookup. Hopefully, things will be up and running in June. Potential users will access the site by an app.

Global Climate/Local Resiliency: Steve introduced Waqar Akhtar and Jessie Hughes, two graduate students from Cornell University who have been working with the Town as part of our Climate Smart Communities initiative. During the past semester, Jessie and Waqar have been studying the potential impact of Climate Change on the Town of New Lebanon. The result is a 46-page formal consulting report entitled: *Global Climate/Local Resiliency*. The report will be available online on the Climate Smart Communities tab of the Town webpage.

One of the key questions Jessie and Waqar asked is: What are the key climate hazards that can impact critical assets in the Town of New Lebanon. The report looked at hazards and vulnerability, internally and externally. They looked at global, regional, state and local information. Based on their research, the primary hazards for our area are: flooding, drought, snow and ice, invasive species and hurricanes. New Lebanon has already started to experience water shortages that have forced local farmers to adjust the way they farm. In addition, the LVPA has had at least one instance when they have gone to draw water to

fight a fire, and the pond had dried up. Steve Powers discussed the need to look into a water storage tank for the LVPA.

As part of their inquiry, Waqar and Jessie interviewed critical stakeholders: farmers, members of the planning board, emergency personnel, members of the CAC, local business owners, etc. They analyzed data from their interviews, then prioritized assets and identified hazards.

In the future, the weather will become more extreme: rain will be more extreme; drought will be more extreme, temperatures will be more extreme. As the weather becomes more extreme, it will become more likely that there will be flooding in the town center, conversely, there may also be drinking water shortages. With droughts may come more forest fires, and extreme snow and ice could impact perennial plants. In addition, Kris noted, extreme weather will bring power outages, which will leave people without drinking water. In response to a question from Kris, about the potential need to shift resources for changes in fauna, Marc said as the climate warms, species will migrate north in search of cooler weather.

Waqar and Jessie's report laid out an action plan for short term goals over the next 3 years. They created a map with critical pinpoints indicating areas that are particularly prone to flooding, noting that the current flood maps are outdated. They also suggested creating a new emergency plan for the town. They suggested applying for grants to help the town achieve its environmental goals, as well as to develop environmental education programs to help bring the community up to speed. Adelia stressed that it is important that we find a way to engage younger people in the process.

The CSC and the CAC can have a profound impact stewarding the town toward more sound environmental practices. Tistrya stressed that it is important that we create a new flood mitigation plan. Marc said that we can consider adding that to the pipeline of future projects.

Trees for Tribs: David Farren reported that the CAC was well along with their planting in Shatford Park. About 70 of 500 bareroots have been planted to date. David noted that there has been some negative feedback from the community, and that some measure of accommodation will be needed. David said that now that we are able to meet in person again, he will begin an education program to explain the benefits of Trees for Tribs to the community. Steve said that there is a need to submit a Trees for Tribs report to DEC by the end of the month in order to get points for creating riparian buffers.

Social Media: Adelia Moore reported that she has been working on getting 175 reusable tote bags. Ampion funded the purchase of the bags. The bags are made of 80 percent recycled materials. The bags will be handed out to New Lebanon residents at the Farmers Market to help promote our solar initiative with Ampion.

Adelia said that we have been actively posting on Facebook to raise consciousness about our efforts. One of the programs promoted is the bike recycling program. So far this spring we have placed 20 bikes, and there are 20 more ready to go. Tistrya suggested that we

consider doing a bike of the week post to generate more interest. Since CSC is a town entity we cannot solicit for donations for the bike program, we can however accept them.

Adelia is working on creating a Repair Café. There is a need to find volunteers with repair skills. The plan at present is to have the first Café in conjunction with a Music in the Park event.

CSC Bronze Status: As part of his graduate work at Cornell, Marc Anthonisen has produced an annual report about New Lebanon's efforts to achieve Bronze Status through the state's Climate Smart Communities initiative. All told the Town completed 22 actions out of 112 available, totaling 130 points to achieve Bronze. We are now working toward Silver. We are currently working on 9 actions, an additional 3 have been completed. We will need an additional 19 actions to achieve Silver. Marc noted that there is always a need to pursue a couple additional actions to have a buffer in case something is rejected. He said that so far, only 6 New York State municipalities have achieved silver.

County CSC: Bruce attended the county CSC meeting. There are now 18 members of the committee. They also are fortunate to have an intern from Cornell for the summer. They are currently working on locations for EV charging stations, and identifying projects to pursue on a county level. Cathy Wilkerson said that a County-wide zero waste initiative would allow towns to collaborate.

Tistrya said that the county has adopted the CSC Pledge.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.