Climate Smart Communities Task Force November 2, 2022

New Lebanon Town Hall

Present:  Adelia Moore, Bob Gilson, Winfried Fuchsofen, Frieda Pearce, Liz Poreba, Steve Powers, Bruce Shenker, Cathy Wilkerson

Absent: Kris Cottom, Deb Gordon

The meeting began with a presentation by Audrey Kropp, of the Cornell  Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties, on the Climate Smart Resiliency Planning Project.  After a year of working with the community, the Project  had  recommendations for the town for implementing climate adaptation actions. These actions would both mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change by addressing vulnerabilities. She noted the Town’s strengths — a FEMA  approved Hazard Mitigation plan adopted in 2018, a  comprehensive plan updated in 2021, a  Climate vulnerability report 2021 (by Cornell students) and membership  in  National Flood Insurance Program.

As for recommendations, the following actions were recommended: 1) training municipal employees in risk mapping tools such as lake and overland surge scenarios 2) storm preparedness outreach to inform the public of disaster resources through website and social media 3)\ public information plans so residents are  aware of evacuation routes 4)  a stormwater management plan 5) budgeting  for improved  infrastructure resiliency 6) adoption of ordinances to protect wetlands

Task force members agreed to read the plan and to let Steve know if they approved or not before November 15, so that the Town Board could approve it, assuming that  the Task Force will.

Regular business began about 7:20

After approval of the minutes, Chair Steve Powers provided the following updates:

-  Heat Pump campaign: after achieving the goal of 5 purchases, 8 more residents have purchased heat pumps. The County is creating a Heat Pump campaign and future New Lebanon purchases will qualify for the County. Meanwhile, 5 heat pumps will be installed in the Town Hall on November 14, to be followed by an additional 6 once the Town receives the grant for the initial five heat pumps. This installation will save the town about $8000 in heating costs as well as earning points toward Silver certification. New Lebanon is now the regional leader in the CEC program.

-  EV Campaign: not much movement. Steve contacted the local Ford dealership but has not heard back. The only way he is getting information about EV purchases is through word of mouth.

-  Community solar: Bob expressed frustration with NYSEG’s inaccurate billing. The best course seems to be contacting our state representative after the election.

-  Battery recycling program: 550 lbs of batteries have been collected and recycled  from 6 boxes throughout town, and more batteries arrive daily.

- Comprehensive Plan: . Four bike racks have been delivered and installed (by Steve and Donny). A location for a rack at the Post Office Mall behind the bank, has been agreed upon. A survey about sidewalks and street crossings will be conducted. Tistrya reports that the State is much more amenable to  plans to modify traffic patterns than it was previously. Bob noted that a waste water treatment system for businesses in town needs to be considered before sidewalks. Steve said that was part of the plan. Steve said he wondered about the feasibility of using low carbon concrete for sidewalks, but Winfried noted that such concrete is very expensive.

- ZRC: Steve reported that he is now a member of the Zoning Regulations Committee, which is looking to change zoning laws to facilitate solar installations in New Lebanon. A map is being created that will show potential sites. He is taking classes with Scenic Hudson in this connection.

He noted that the 2022 Environmental Bond Act, if approved by voters, would provide substantial increases in funds for CSC’s.

Composting: Cathy reported that composting is “plugging away,” though pickups of coffee grounds at Stewart’s will cease as soon as certificates of appreciation are presented to all early adapters of composting: Maverick’s, Blueberry Hill, Stewart’s. the Country Squire, and the Farmers Market. The plan is to launch an educational program about composting next summer. Meanwhile, Cathy brings about 5 buckets of food scraps to the Chatham Resource Recovery Center weekly, while pre-consumer food items are shared with a local pig farmer. Steve is sending a press release to the Columbia Paper and the Eastwick Press about the program thus far.

Social Media/Education subcommittee: Adelia said that  the committee will have a planning meeting to discern how its mandate  differs from that of the Taskforce as a whole.

Repair Café: The October 12 event was canceled. The next one is Nov. 15

Bike repairs: 200 bikes refurbished or repaired to date; working on requests for many families

Free Store: Liz reported that the room in the Town Hall has been reorganized by volunteer Alissa Ross and is much more inviting,

Next meeting: Steve proposed that the next meeting be a party at M&M’s. Members approved the proposal.

Adjournment 8:01

Next meeting date –December 7

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Poreba