Climate Smart Communities Task Force Meeting Minutes  May 3, 2023

Town Hall, New Lebanon

Present: Kristine Cottom,  Julie Fraad, Winfried Fuchshofen, Bob Gilson, Frieda Pearce, Elizabeth Poreba, Steve Powers, Bruce Shenker,  Cathy Wilkerson

Absent: Deb Gordon, Adelia Moore

The meeting was called to order at 6:35

After approval of the minutes, Steve provided updates:

• The Green Purchasing Community program, which requires that green alternatives be found whenever any purchase is made by the Town, has been approved. Liz will write a press release.

•   An engineer has checked out the Town Hall roof and approved 50 panels. This will be paid for by a $70,000 grant plus an extra $6500 from NYSERDA for the installation. Next year, the Town will get back $20,000 as part of a Federal incentive plan. The only drawback was that the Town had been signed up for Community Solar and needed 60 days to cancel the town hall and garage account.

•So far, no resident has been known to purchase an electric vehicle, so the EV campaign has made no progress.

• The Battery recycling program continues with boxes in 6 locations;  634 lbs recycled. Because alkaline batteries can be (though they should not be) put in the trash, they were not collected at the recent Hazardous Waste collection, so we must pay to have them recycled.

• A school-wide Jr/Sr HS battery competition has been initiated, led by Cornell student volunteers. The class that collects the most batteries wins a cupcake party.

• “Nature Explorers,” the proposed after-school program with NL schools, is on hold under next September because of the need to find a teacher-advisor.

•The Walkable downtown committee is coming up with proposals for sidewalks and bikeways, which will be extended as far as the old Hess station, where the sidewalk might somehow connect to Rail Trail. The goal is to keep students off the road. The school section of the rail trail must be closed during school hours.

• The candidates for the summer Cornell internships have yet to be chosen.

• Representative Molinaro chose not to submit the LVPA’s request for a grant for a water tank.

• Computer Rehab does not pick up computers, so Steve is going to try to coordinate with Kinderhook to share in delivering them to Shenectady.(<http://www.computerrehab.org/>)

• The Nextrex plastic recycling program-is up and running, with a bin at the at Town Hall. Marcie will be sending a flyer about this program via email. <https://nextrex.com/view/grassroots>

• 200 bikes have been refurbished or repaired to date. The 62 bikes currently in Tistrya’s barn are going to be transferred tomorrow to the Erminia’s barn.

Moy & Larry will host a Bike Repair demo on May 20  Frieda will compose flyer for this event, which . will also include a bike give-away. Cathy asked if high school students have been informed. Bruce suggested looking further afield for bike recipients. Steve said that Larry is looking into this.

• The Repair Café-was a great success, with more than 80 items repaired, and great enthusiasm among the attendees.

Bruce spoke about progress on Comp Plan CSC expectations for 2022/3; i.e. “The CSC develop a plan for alternative methods of transportation and routes to promote multi-modal transportation throughout Town, with a focus on the old railroad bed.” -

He reported that the committee is getting in touch with adjacent property owners. If there is a preponderance of positive responses, a feasibility study by Laberge Group will be initiated with ARPA money. Bruce has been in touch with a lawyer skilled in this kind of litigation who is eager to help and will be an asset.

Bob reported that 250 pounds of detritus were collected on Earth Day clean up. The orange bags left along the road by clean-up volunteers were finally picked up.

Cathy reported that the food scrap digester in Chatham will take meat and dairy, but no stickers, filter papers, or any other non-food items. Now the problem is getting kitchen scraps to Chatham. A schedule of pickups by Liz, Bruce and Cathy at Mavericks and possibly Blueberry Hill will begin May 14–Cathy is looking for a spot to bring the collections so that they can then be brought to Chatham.

Steve reported that Jolene had offered to write a grant for New Lebanon to get its own digester. It would require a concrete slab, an electric connection, and a secure location. Kris will research the cost of smaller digesters.

Peg reported, via Steve, that she and a fellow CAC member were trained in water testing and will be starting testing for a wastewater feasibility study. She and Bruce met with Hudsonia to discuss the town’s aquifer.

The Trees for Tribs program is going very well. Most of the the trees and shrubs made it through two winters. This summer volunteers are going to repair and create signage about the trees and about the reasons for the project.

A discussion ensued about ways to enlist town residents in community efforts, such as wastewater treatment or allowing the Rail Trail, which may bring the needs of the community in conflict with landowners’ desire for autonomy. It was agreed that people needed to be convinced of the economic advantage of programs that they might be inclined to reject at first.

Liz reported the Free Store is in great shape because of the efforts of volunteer Alissa Ross.

The next meeting will be on June 7 at Shatford Park.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Poreba