

Princeton Environmental Action Committee (EAC) Meeting Minutes September 5, 2018

Meeting called to order at 7:10pm

Committee members present:

Claire Golding (CG), Chris Samoiloff (CS), Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH), Phil Gott (PG), Phoebe Moore (PM)

Review & Approve Minutes

August 20, 2018 minutes approved 3-0 with edits (CBH and PM abstained as they were not in attendance at the 8/20 meeting)

Public Comment

Rick Rys, Princeton Light Commissioner, presented information on where Princeton stands with renewable energy. He reported that, while there are a number of older solar systems on roofs in town, the rate of new installations is currently low, and that this may relate to the cost difficulties to consumers presented by the net metering policy at PMLD, which does not compensate customers for energy exported to the grid. He also discussed aspects of the contract with NextEra.

Rick noted that the factors related to Princeton moving towards renewable/clean energy sources are complex. The EAC requested that Rick write up his analysis for our review and to use as a resource for the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) currently being drafted.

PMLD 8/31 Meeting Report (PG, CG)

CG and PG reported on an 8/31 meeting held between Brian Allen (BA), CG, PG, to discuss creating a survey or outreach approach to determine if 50 or more households in town are willing to move to renewable energy. The 50-household number is to cover the cost (\$2-3,000) of updating the outsourced PMLD billing system to add the additional rate category that would be required for customers opting for renewable energy through the current NextEra contract.

BA estimates that moving to renewables would cost a household an extra 1.5 cents per kilowatt hour in 2019 and has the potential of moving to 2.35 cents in 2020.

While the EAC has a clear interest in learning more about how best to provide green energy options to the town, it was determined that the EAC needs to first complete the EAP in order to have a clear and integrated approach for gathering information from residents on questions relevant to renewable energy and other initiatives recommended in the EAP. In addition, we will need Select Board approval for any such outreach to residents.

Vote: to table the survey pending the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) completion and to request additional information from Brian Allen related to the costs and benefits of demand-side management. Passed 5-0.

HeatSmart program application report (PM)

PM and CG attended a meeting with BA, Sterling Municipal Light Department Manager Sean Hamilton, and a member of Sterling Energy Committee on 9/4/18. PM reported on this meeting with CG's input. The following summary of the meeting and decisions made at the meeting are below:

- Both Light Department Managers felt that the rewards of this work-intensive, short-deadline application would not justify the efforts. They felt the program was not well suited for municipal light departments.
- There was a discussion between BA and Sean Hamilton about an aggregate buy of mini-splits, which would be based on the HeatSmart program but would be more tailored to the needs of our specific communities. They are going to present this idea to the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) at their October meeting to attempt to realize group savings. They committed to sharing updates with their respective energy/environmental action committees in Sterling and Princeton.
- Given the low enthusiasm for the HeatSmart program this round, the group decided not to apply this year, but to use this potential collaboration to set up infrastructure for applying for future grants – even the next round of HeatSmart, if offered, and if the Princeton/Sterling plan does not work out. EAC discussed our role in application for programs such as HeatSmart and agreed that an important role for the EAC, to be included in the EAP, is to research and support applications for programs like HeatSmart.

Action item: CBH will look into the advantages of Princeton joining the Renewable Energy Trust (\$8,000/year once you join). Being a member of this Trust may allow Princeton to better utilize State programs such as HeatSmart (e.g. increasing rebate sizes or compensation amounts).

Outreach Opportunities

Hey Day (September 15), Earth Day (April 2019), PMLD Senior lunch (September 25), and the Princeton Buzz were all discussed. All of these (except for Earth Day) are immediate, in September. The Committee felt that we need to complete the EAP as a top priority before we do any more outreach, even though we are very much interested in doing this work post EAP completion.

Vote: to postpone any proposed educational/outreach work until after the EAP is completed. 4-0 (PM had to leave the meeting early and was absent for this vote).

Action items: CS to contact Karen Cruise about The Princeton Buzz, CG to contact PMLD about the Senior Luncheon.

Library Outreach Report (PG)

The library would be delighted to put up a list of our recommended reading. The Dewey Decimal system the library uses means environmental books are probably already organized as a group.

Action item: EAC members to send PG a list of recommended (informational/how-to) books and web sites for the list.

CG suggested we approach the library next April about creating a display of environmental books in anticipation of Earth Day.

Communications Method Report (CS)

The Select Board created their *Selectboard Communication Plan*. They discussed a monthly mailing, but decided the cost was prohibitive and they would piggy back on existing mailings for paper distribution, such as the COA Newsletter (also electronic), the Census, Excise Bills, and Tax Bills. And they will use the Town News and Nextdoor for electronic dissemination of news. The EAC will do the same.

Conservation Commission Report (CS)

CS reached out to Brian Keevan (BK), chair of the Conservation Commission, to see if there was any information they could provide that should be added to the EAP beyond what we already have. BK suggested we be put on the September meeting agenda. CBH noted that we already have the information we need for the report.

Action item: CS will let BK know that we have the information needed for the report, but will plan on attending future meetings.

Review next EAP edited section (Waste)

CS, PG, and Michael Knapp (MK) worked on the Waste section and we reviewed in the meeting. The current organizational format is working.

New Business

CBH noted that when we email the group with documents we should just say “see attached” and any discussions should be done at our meetings, not in the email, so as not to violate open meeting laws.

PG proposed that we move the *Review of next section* agenda item to after *Approval of minutes* because the EAP is the most important focus for the EAC at this time.

PG will be away for the next PMLD meeting (and some others in the near future). CBH might be able to attend. **Action item:** CG will bring a sign-up sheet to next meeting for signing up to cover the meetings.

Action Items

- CBH will look into the advantages of Princeton joining the Renewable Energy Trust (\$8,000/year once you join).
- CS to contact Karen Cruise about The Princeton Buzz
- CG to contact PMLD about the Senior Luncheon and proposed survey
- EAC members to send PG a list of recommended (informational/how-to) books and web sites for the list.
- CS will let BK know that we got the information needed for the report, but will plan on attending future meetings.
- CG will bring a sign-up sheet to next meeting for signing up to cover PMLD meetings.

Agenda items for next meeting

- Public comment period
- Review and approve minutes of September 5, 2018 meeting
- Review next available section of EAP
- PMLD meeting sign-up
- New business
- Agenda items for next meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris Samoiloff