

WEAC MEETING Minutes – October 2023

In person meeting, Thursday - 10/19/23 @ 7:30 PM

Members in attendance: Kate La Croix (chair), Maria Costantini, Julie Gervais, Leslie Greffenius, Stephen Harte, Gita Singh (new member) and Tom Philbin (Energy Manager).

Others in attendance: Srirup Kumar (Westwood resident)

Routine business: Approval of the minutes. The minutes of the August 17 meeting were unanimously approved after making some corrections.

Topics discussed w/next steps:

Update on new WEAC members:

1. Kate introduced the new WEAC member, Gita Singh. She announced that Ann Marie Kline resigned from WEAC due to other commitments. Kate will interview a candidate in the next few weeks.

Update on grant request from Community Choice Organics

1. Srirup provided an update on composting at the schools. He noted that the schools source out lunch and there is a lot of food waste. He talked to Lemma Jn-baptiste (Director of Finance and Operation) about the idea of composting in the schools and the costs. They received a quote from Black Earth and are looking for bids from other companies. One important issue is where the compost has to be brought. It would be helpful to find a digester nearby that has minimal visual and traffic impact. In the interim they could rely on Black Earth. They are also looking for state grants to the school districts. Tom added that these are issues to be dealt with before there is buy-in from the schools.

Discussion of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds remaining to the town

1. Kate raised the question whether ARPA funds could be leveraged to support the composting effort. This is money the town already has, but has not allocated to specific projects. Tom explained that ARPA funds could instead be used to pay for an improved air cleaning system for the new school. It was not clear what was the process for deciding which project was more important. Maria said she would not favor funding school composting at the expense of the improved ventilation system. Children spend a large part of the day in the school and a good ventilation system is essential not only for air quality in general, but for reducing the spreading of infection. Installing this system will have long-term benefits.
2. **Next steps:** work on a proposal to request funding for composting
3. Tom gave a brief update on the energy projects in town:
 - a. PPAs have been signed for the solar canopies at the High School and the Council on Aging. The Police station will be next.
 - b. Tom noted that the wind projects state-wide are being canceled because of the economics. This will result in a shortage of renewable energy.

Westwood Day recap and reimbursement

1. Kate reported that only a few WEAC members were available. She canceled the composting because of bad weather and limited number of volunteers. The WEAC booth was successful providing information about Hale and recycling. She was not sure about composting in the future because she thought it was unlikely that the Recreation Department would allow us to have a central station where all the food is brought and sorted. The main reason is that the Board of Health requires a certain number of trash and recycling bins in the food area. She thought that it may be helpful to meet with the Board of Health to understand how much flexibility there is.
2. **Next steps:** Kate will contact the Board of Health in the spring of next year to discuss this issue.
3. **Reimbursements:** a motion was unanimously approved to reimburse Kate the amount of \$66.63 for signs for composting in the food court at Westwood Day.

Hale info session recap

1. The meeting was hosted by WEAC at the library. Trustees and the Westwood Land Trust representatives gave presentations and answered questions. Kate said it was a good meeting with about 15 participants.
2. Town officials are still working on the Conservation Restriction language. It is not clear who is holding up the process. It would be helpful if the process were more open.
3. **Next steps:** Kate will try to get on the Select Board agenda to ask for an update on the project.

WEAC meeting with DPW: topics and scheduling

1. Kate noted that WEAC members have had periodic meetings with DPW. She would like to schedule one in the next few months. A topic that could be discussed is a possible contract for town-wide composting and whether that would save the town money. Maria suggested discussing ways to improve the quality of recycling.
2. Kate or Sue will contact the DPW staff in 2024 to schedule a meeting.

Discussion of bills of potential interest to WEAC

1. Kate reported that Maria had submitted a list of bills being discussed by the legislature that WEAC may want to support directly or through our state representatives. The most urgent one is “An Act supporting electrical load aggregation program in the Commonwealth” (H3852). The bill is sponsored by Rep Tony Vitolo of Brookline and was developed with input from aggregation consultants, including Good Energy. The goal of the bill is to reduce the regulatory burden for DPU and give local municipal leaders the ability to adapt and update the elements of the program, such as specific renewable energy levels, electricity supply options, and format letter to the customer without approval from DPU The goal is to avoid the excessive delays cities and town have encountered in past years. Maria said that Good Energy held a webinar to explain the content of the bill and asked municipal representatives to sign a letter in support of the bill prior to the bill Public Hearing, which was held October 12, 2023. The letter was addressed to the House and Senate chairs of the Joint Committee on Telecommunication, Utilities, and Energy. Maria said that she talked to

Tom about signing the letter, but there wasn't enough time for our municipal leaders to act. She suggested that WEAC send a letter to our state representatives to ask them to support the bill.

2. The discussion of other 3 bills, all pertaining to pesticide regulations, was postponed to the next meeting.
3. **Next step.** A motion was unanimously approved to authorize Kate and Maria to prepare and sign on behalf of WEAC a letter addressed to our state representatives asking them to support Bill H3852.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. The next meeting will be on 12/7/23 at 7:30 PM.