

WEAC MEETING Minutes – December 2023

In person meeting, Thursday - 12/7/23 @ 7:30 PM

Members in attendance: Kate La Croix (chair), Maria Costantini, Steve Harte, Sue McGown (vice chair), and Beverly Rainforth

Others in attendance:

Routine business: Approval of the minutes. The minutes of the October 19, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved after making some corrections.

Topics discussed w/next steps:

Vote on the Vice Chair position: A motion was passed to nominate Steve Harte as vice chair for the rest of the year

Recap of meeting with Missy Hollenbeck (municipal Coordinator): What new projects or "Did you know" articles can WEAC identify re: waste management issues?

1. Kate provided a summary of her conversation with Missy Hollenbeck. Missy works for MassDEP and is the Municipal Assistance Coordinator (MAC) for the Southeast District, which includes about 80 towns. Missy reported that contamination of recycling is a big issue in Westwood and other towns. People do not understand what can be recycled. Kate asked what WEAC could do to help DPW. Having a meeting with DPW was thought to be a priority. DPW could get a Technical Assistance grant to support recycling if it has enough points (points are earned based on the effort the town makes towards educating the residents on best recycling practices.) Other ideas were to write articles for the Hometown Weekly and ask the COA Director to include some recycling tips in COA Newsletter. There was also the suggestion of contacting the school principals. Kate proposed mailing a flier to each household, if not too expensive, and/or posting it in selected locations around town. WEAC should also take advantage of social media.
2. **Next Steps.** Continue this discussion at the next meeting
3. Steve mentioned that he volunteers at New Life Furniture Bank in Walpole, which is a nonprofit organization that accepts furniture and household items and makes them available at no charge to those in need. Perhaps Westwood could explore the possibility of partnering with Dover, where there already is a collection center for furniture. He will look into that option. Other suggestions were 1) to ask New Life to help us on the "curb alert" (bulk collection days) and 2) to partner with the High School Environmental group. Kate has been in touch with the teacher responsible for that group in the past.
4. **Next steps:** Steve will look into ways for WEAC to support New Life Furniture

Discussion of pesticide bills, continued

Approved on January 18, 2024

1. Maria reported that there are several bills on pesticides in the legislature. The Pollinator Network provided a sample letter that organizations could send to their state representatives to ask them to support these bills. Kate read the draft letter, which asked the state reps to support three bills:

S.521/H.783, “An Act relative to the pesticide board”

This comprehensive pesticide reform bill would establish a task force of key stakeholders to assess whether the pesticide board has the tools it needs to be an effective steward of public health and environmental protection and to make recommendations for improvement.

During the 2021-22 session, this bill (H.4601) was recommended “ought to pass.”

S.540/H.814, “An Act empowering towns and cities to protect residents and the environment from harmful pesticides”. This bill would return power to communities to protect their families, food, and water from harmful pesticide exposure.

S.487/H.825, “An Act relative to pesticides” (was reported favorably to the House Ways and Means Committee.) This bill would create an online portal and database for pesticide use reporting records with clear, online public access to the annual data and require that pesticides be proven safe before being used on playgrounds and fields where children learn and play.

After some discussion the group decided to remove the reference to bill S.540/H.814 from the letter. A motion was passed to approve the letter as edited and to authorize Kate to send it to the Westwood state representatives.

2. **Next steps:** Kate will send the amended letter about the pesticides’ bills to Mr. McMurtry and Mr. Michael Rush in the new year.

Update on Community Choice Organic

1. Sue reported that she had a meeting with Srirup Kumar (a Westwood resident who is spearheading the composting effort in the schools) about a grant application for \$22,000 to conduct a feasibility study to implement a composting program in the elementary schools. The application was sent to the Westwood School Department.
2. **Next steps:** Sue will contact Srirup to find out what progress there has been.

Discussion of electric buses

1. Steve reported that there are several groups who are trying to procure electric or clean buses with the focus on communities that have a disproportionate amount of pollution. He mentioned that there was a meeting to provide information about possible sources of funding. There will be a follow up meeting on January 18.
2. **Next steps:** Steve will reach out to Lemma Jn-baptiste.

Question from WHS Environmental Group: source for speakers.

1. Kate was approached by the group’s representative about the possibility of WEAC funding a speaker. WEAC will consider if there is a formal request.

Received January 22, 2024@11:48AM
By:Westwood Town Clerk

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. The next meeting will be on 1/18/24 at 7:30 PM.

Approved on January 18, 2024