



Town of Barnstable Infrastructure and Energy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, October 7, 2024, at 5:00PM

This meeting of the Barnstable Infrastructure & Energy Committee is being recorded and will be posted for future viewing on the Town of Barnstable website. Under MGL Chapter 30A Section 20, anyone else desiring to make such a recording or transmission must notify the Chair.

Remote Participation Instructions

The Infrastructure and Energy Committee's Public Hearing will be held by remote participation methods. Real-time public comment can be addressed to the Infrastructure & Energy Committee utilizing the Zoom link and access code for remote access below:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://townofbarnstable-us.zoom.us/j/81185779775?pwd=IWwpaqeEVrQXL3rbEwApx5INmtAB6b.1>

Meeting ID: 811 8577 9775

Passcode: 568500

Infrastructure and Energy Committee Members present: (On Zoom)

Barry Sheingold, Chair; John Solomon; Rob Wilson; Jane Ward; Christopher Gloninger

Infrastructure and Energy Committee Members absent:

William Beal

Others in Attendance: (On Zoom)

Chris Gadd, Communications Assistant Department of Public Works; Lisa Sullivan, Regional Coordinator, Green Communities, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (MassDOER); Kristin Terkelsen, Town Council; Gordon Starr, Town Council

Agenda:

Call to Order

Barry Sheingold, Chair, called the October 7, 2024 meeting of the Infrastructure and Energy Committee (IEC) to order at 5:01 PM. The meeting of the Infrastructure and Energy Committee was held remotely. Barry introduces Lisa Sullivan, Regional Coordinator, Green Communities, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (MassDOER), who was invited to provide more

information on the Green Communities designation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Barry Sheingold, Chair, moves to discuss the September 23, 2024, minutes. Hearing no requested edits, Jane Ward moves to approve the minutes. John Solomon seconds. Committee Unanimously approves the September 23, 2024, minutes.

Old Business

a. Green Community Designation

Guest Speaker: Lisa Sullivan, Regional Coordinator, Green Communities, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

Barry Sheingold, Chair, gives the floor to Lisa Sullivan from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (MassDOER) to present on Green Communities. Lisa introduces herself and thanks Barry for inviting her to the meeting. Lisa starts with an overview of the Green Communities initiative and her work with MassDOER. She explains that her office serves as a hub for all towns and cities in Massachusetts as it relates to grants and federal funding for improvements related to clean energy, not just those who have achieved the Green Community designation. Geographically there are 295 Green Communities in Massachusetts. This includes the entirety of Cape Cod, except Barnstable. Sandwich will be designated a Green Community later this year.

Lisa reports that MassDOER awards \$20 million per year in grants to qualifying communities, which funds energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy projects. Lisa shares information on how much grant money neighboring communities have been given and explains the formula used by MassDOER to determine an estimated grant amount for the Town of Barnstable for \$220,000.

Lisa explains the basic process for a town seeking Green Communities Designation which starts with a “101” presentation, followed by local approval to proceed, then meeting five criteria to be designated a Green Community. These criteria are: Adopt as-of-right siting for Renewable Energy/Alternative Energy, Research and Development, or manufacturing; Adopt expedited permitting process; Create an Energy Reduction Plan to reduce energy use by 20% in 5 years; Adopt Fuel Efficient Vehicle Purchase Policy; Minimize life cycle cost in new construction and some additions/renovations, including the adoption of the Stretch code. MassDOER is able and willing to provide technical assistance if needed.

Lisa provides a cursory look at each of the criteria and how the Town of Barnstable has met or can meet each of the criteria.

- As-of-right siting: Lisa believes the Town of Barnstable has a bylaw establishing as-of-right siting but has not had it confirmed in writing.
- Expedited Permitting: Typical planning boards already have an existing rule/regulation in place to address items within the required 365-day time limit.
- Energy Reduction Plan: An initial baseline project was started in 2020/2021, but Lisa is unsure if the project was completed. Regardless, an updated baseline assessment would be required.
- Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy: Barnstable has an existing policy; Lisa recommends reviewing against the MassDOER Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy and potentially adopt the MassDOER version. Lisa noted exemptions for specialty vehicles such as police

cruisers and emergency vehicles.

- Minimize Life Cycle Costs: Adoption of the Stretch code accomplishes this item. Lisa notes that as with the Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy, adopting the MassDOER Stretch code means adopting future changes/additions set forth by MassDOER. The standard code and Stretch code are updated every three years.

Barry Sheingold, Chair, inquires about the Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy, noting an uncertainty about whether the Town policy matches the MassDOER policy which was recently updated. Lisa explains that the MassDOER policy was updated in February 2024. She is uncertain of when the Town of Barnstable adopted or updated their policy on fuel efficient vehicles, so it is likely the Town's policy would need to be updated. Lisa recommends adopting the MassDOER policy, which would also keep the policy updated when MassDOER makes any changes.

John Solomon poses a hypothetical situation where the Town adopts the MassDOER Stretch Code, which is then updated with a change that is not liked by the town. John asks what would happen in that scenario, is there an "escape" so that the town is not locked into an unknown. Lisa explains that this would be possible, it would be executed in the same way as the project started, with a vote by Town Council. This would result in a loss of the Green Community designation. Lisa noted there are three towns in Massachusetts that have rescinded the Stretch code; 256 communities enforcing the Stretch code; 45 communities enforcing the Specialized Option code, which is more stringent than the Stretch code; and 50 communities enforcing the base energy code.

Lisa continues her presentation, explaining that prescriptive codes do not guarantee good insulation, and this is why the Home Energy Rating System (HERS) is utilized. Lisa further explains the HERS Rating, noting that since starting in 2006, the average home has become 49% more efficient. Lisa provides an overview of the HERS process, noting that the building official remains as they would in any construction process. The testing for HERS focuses on several items including duct tightness, insulation inspection, and a blower door test. After the testing is complete the home receives a HERS rating. Lisa also notes that the rating is based on the code in effect at the time the building permit was pulled, which she then clarifies as when the permit is applied for.

Councilmember Terkelsen asks Lisa what percentage of HERS tests do not meet the HERS rating on average, within a year. Lisa responds that very few fail to meet the HERS rating as new constructions are modeled to fit the rating. However, items do occasionally "fall through the cracks", which is why MassDOER enforces and checks annually, including annual reports by the town. In the case an inspection doesn't meet the HERS score, it is likely a small item, such as an Energy-Star appliance not being installed at the time of inspection. Barry Sheingold, Chair, adds additional information, stating in his consultations with the Massachusetts Home Builders Association that they indicated a temporary occupancy could be allowed conditionally while the issue is resolved. Lisa further notes that the issue heard by MassDOER is mainly related to additions and renovations, not new builds. Lisa notes that a public hearing was held by MassDOER on September 16 to discuss potential changes to the Stretch code as a result of this.

Lisa provides a timeline of the adoption of and updates to the Stretch code, starting with

Residential Low Rises in January 2023 because of climate legislation.

Lisa moves on to provide additional context on residential new constructions. She notes that many builders already design within the Stretch code as they are doing so in other communities outside of Barnstable.

Lisa discusses the incentives for builders and developers to adhere to the Stretch code. She notes that all-electric homes are generally cheaper to build, there are financial incentives from MassSave, and tax credits from the federal government. Lisa notes that MassDOER is working on updated cost information on both residential and commercial models and will provide that to Barry once it is complete.

John Solomon asks for clarification on how a “life cycle” is determined by MassDOER. Lisa responds that it is calculated as the length of a standard mortgage (30 years). This is to help the average homeowner break down the information and know when to reasonably expect a return on their investment.

Lisa explains that, if the Town were to decide to continue this effort, MassDOER would do a workshop with Town Council and bring in a code expert either in person or virtually. This would provide a chance for the town to ask more technical questions.

Jane Ward inquires about the estimated \$220,000 grant and what it could be used for, citing past work with the Health and Buildings Roundtable at the National Institute of Health and concerns over ventilation requirements. Could the grant money be used for new HVAC systems in school? Jane related this to the current issue with mold in some Barnstable school buildings. Lisa responded that the grant money could be used to improve the HVAC systems, but not mold remediation. Grant money cannot be used for fossil fuel boilers but can be used for heat pumps. Lisa also noted that both the base and Stretch code have been updated to require ventilation, citing the importance of ventilation to public health. Barry Sheingold, Chair, requests clarification on whether both base and Stretch codes have ventilation requirements. Lisa responds that they do, with the difference being that the Stretch code requires energy recovery due to ventilation. Lisa notes there is a hotline she provided to Barry that can help answer those more technical questions.

Lisa finishes her presentation by providing clarification on “the grid” and the concerns of overloading the electrical grid with additional infrastructure. She explains that electric heat pumps and related appliances have a reduction in the amount of electricity they utilize, which helps the grid. She also provides updates from the September 16, 2024, public hearing and indicates changes to the Stretch code will be made as a result of that hearing.

Barry Sheingold, Chair, indicates his appreciation for Lisa attending the meeting and providing the information. Barry opens the floor to any additional questions for Lisa.

Jane Ward asks if there is any data on the amount that communities are saving each year by being Green Communities. Lisa replied that she did not have a cumulative list or average cost savings, but MassDOER does have a website that lists every grant award publicly.

Jane follows up, asking if there is any data in a per capita fashion to address for changes in community size. Lisa responds that she is not aware of any data broken down per capita, but

that MassDOER does do building stock changes to address growing communities.

Lisa concludes by advising the committee to talk to neighboring communities, all of whom are Green Communities, to ask them how it's going and work with them to address potential concerns the committee may have.

Relevant Updates

Barry Sheingold, Chair, updates the committee that the proposed changes to the Stretch code have been reviewed by, and submitted on behalf of, the Town of Barnstable. Jane notes her appreciation for the process as it is tedious and detailed. She also notes concern over a lack of cost-benefit analysis regarding health and health improvements as part of the Stretch code.

b. Food Waste

John Solomon informs the committee that he continues to work on two main opportunities: Large commercial generators and recycling at the transfer station.

Large Commercial Generators

John is in the process of setting up a meeting with the Director of the Health Division (Thomas McKean). Thomas has indicated he is open to a meeting but has not provided dates. After conferring with Barry, it was decided that John will send a follow-up email to Thomas to get a meeting on the calendar.

Transfer Station

John notes that he has been working with Chris Gadd and the Department of Public Works to improve the food waste separation initiative. The DPW noted that food waste separation has been increasing steadily but has noted concerns of contaminants such as bags and non-compostable food waste. The committee requests information on the following:

- Confirmation on what exactly is or isn't able to be composted, especially bags. The committee raised concerns that there are bags on the market that claim to be bio-degradable but are not compostable, and if that could be causing issues.
- Clarification on using paper bags instead of plastic to dispose of food waste.
- Is there any data on usage available regarding the food shed, such as the number of people who use it or the amount of waste recycled.

Chris Gadd notes he will reach out to the Transfer Station to get answers on the questions posed.

Rob Wilson notes that the existing sign on the food waste shed about what is/isn't compostable is tedious, and may warrant a redesign.

c. Climate Change and Climate Science

Chris Gloninger speaks on his attendance at Climate Week 2024 in New York City. Aside from the expected "greenwashing", the common theme was rolling climate change into all levels of government planning and the path moving forward. Chris notes recent examples, including Hurricanes Helene and Milton, that are now becoming much more likely due to the warmth of waters in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of Climate Change. Chris also discusses storm surge and how the shallower areas of the Gulf of Mexico and Cape Cod Bay enhance the risk of storm surge, while the rest of the Cape is steeper, resulting in less storm surge.

Rob Wilson asked how much cloud cover affects water temperature. Chris Gloninger responds that much of the warming in the oceans is deeper than just surface level. Clouds mainly affect the surface, so do not affect the water as much as it may affect the land due to the time it takes to affect water temperature. Chris Gloninger also noted that while Universities like Harvard are looking into concepts such as Solar Geo-Engineering, climate action is needed regardless.

New Business

- a. Additional Updates from Committee Chair
Barry Sheingold, Chair, was contacted by Solar Simplified, a company who provides community solar and can offer discounts on energy bills. Jane noted that we should be leery of off-Cape companies and requested clarification on how the process works. Jane notes there are good companies on the Cape that deal with solar energy. Barry notes this is not a high concern but will provide an update at the next meeting.
- b. Discuss Next Meeting Agenda
Rob Wilson poses a question regarding installing an electric vehicle charger on his property and charging his neighbors/others to use it. He questions what regulations that may require. Jane notes this is a worthwhile and relevant question as the availability of charging stations can be a limiting factor in the decision to utilize electric vehicles. It is suggested that Rob follow up with the Town of Barnstable Conservation Commission to further investigate this.

Motion to Adjourn

- a. Barry Sheingold moves to adjourn the meeting. Jane Ward seconds. The committee voted unanimously. The meeting is adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Next Meeting: October 21, 2024, at 5:00 PM

DRAFT Upcoming Agenda for October 21, 2024

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of October 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes
3. Old Business
 - a. Green Communities
 - i. Relevant Updates
 - b. Food Waste
 - i. Relevant Updates
 - c. Climate Change and Climate Science
 - i. Relevant Updates
 - d. Solar Opportunities
 - i. Relevant Updates
 - e. Increasing Access to Electric Vehicle Charging in Neighborhoods
 - i. Relevant Updates
4. New Business

- a. Additional updates from Committee Chair
 - b. Discuss agenda for next meeting, November 4, 2024
5. Motion to adjourn

Respectfully submitted by Christopher Gadd, Communications Assistant, Barnstable Department of Public Works.