

**Green Task Force
Minutes of October 15th, 2013 Meeting**

To: Patricia H. Strauss, Town Clerk
Westport, Connecticut

Members Present: David Mann, Pippa Bell Ader, Robby Gershowitz, Sarah Fox, Steve Smith, George Masumian, Hal Kendig, Cathy Talmadge, Steve Edwards, Izzy Hazlewood

Members Absent: Wendy Batteau, Jeff Baer, Bruce Haymes

Guests: Helen Garten, Melissa Kane, McKinley Byrd

David Mann called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

David Mann first explained the background of the Green Task Force to Democratic First and Second Selectwoman candidates Melissa Kane and Helen Garten. In his explanation, David highlighted that the Green Task Force was established in 2006 to measure the Town's carbon footprint and help Westport residents and business to adopt sustainable practices. The town discovered that Westport's carbon footprint was larger than that of neighboring communities. The Green Task Force's mission has expanded overtime to include educating town residents and business, and advising the First Selectman and town commissions/departments on environmental policy. David also explained that Westport is viewed as a leader in sustainability within the state due to the success of programs like the Westport Home Energy Challenge, Solarize Westport, and C-PACE. David also stressed that all of our projects are either net-positive or net-neutral in their economic impact.

David Mann expressed to Melissa Kane and Helen Garten the difficulties that the Green Task Force has encountered when dealing with various town departments/commissions. This is likely due to the fact that the Green Task Force is only a limited advisory committee to the First Selectman. He also expressed the obstacles that the Green Task Force faces when trying to get projects completed around town, like the problem that was encountered when trying to put an electric solar charging station downtown.

George Masumian expressed his belief that the First Selectman's office and the Green Task Force should work together more closely in the future.

David Mann said that next year he would like to conduct an updated study of the Carbon Footprint of Westport, which would cost approximately \$3,000-\$4,000.

Cathy Talmadge expressed her desire to reform the town building codes in the future.

Helen Garten, the Democratic candidate for First Selectwoman, talked about targeting large commercial property owners for C-PACE projects. She also said that if she is elected, she would do away with the current Downtown 2020 committee, and would create a new committee with members representing more environmentally-friendly groups like the Green Task Force. Helen also asked about energy saving upgrades in the schools, and said that she would encourage the Board of Education to look into upgrades if she is elected. Helen also said that if she was elected, she would look into a way to bring multiple town committees together and she would like to alter the Planning & Zoning Department. Helen also suggested that the Green Task Force improve publicity of the projects that have already been completed.

The Task Force explained to the candidates that the reason HES visit sign-ups have plateaued is because less people are interested in signing up, as the initial participants have already had their homes inspected.

Melissa Kane, the Democratic candidate for Second Selectwoman, said that if she is elected, she would be very interested in working with the Green Task Force due to her background in sustainability. Melissa suggested that the Green Task Force increase publicity for future projects and for successfully completed past projects. Melissa also talked about energy problems in downtown Westport and bureaucratic problems in the Planning & Zoning Department.

Izzy Hazelwood shared the results from interviews that she conducted with other towns across the country that participated in PACE related programs. In Sonoma County, California, the town worked closely with the utility company to gain support for projects. In one Minnesota town, the city collaborated with people who homeowners come in contact with on a regular basis, like contractors and maintenance workers. They also said that putting notices in tax bills, advertising in the Planning & Zoning Department, and advertising in local banks were effective practices. They also said that door-to-door canvassing and emails were not as effective as direct calls were. David Mann then suggested that Izzy draft a notice to put in Westport tax bills.

The minutes from the September 17th meeting were approved unanimously.

Pippa Bell Ader updated the Green Task Force on the status of the Stay Cool Westport program. 19 HES visits have been completed since the program started and \$1,425 has been raised for the Westport Warm Up Fund. Pippa also announced that the program is nearly over.

Steve Edwards updated the Green Task Force on the status of the town solar installations. Currently workers are starting to work on the golf maintenance shed. Steve said he is currently working to with the Planning & Zoning Department regarding canopy solar panels at the Longshore parking lot, but will need to assign engineering to prepare the appropriate reports and file for appropriate permits and variances. The Green Task Force then talked about writing a text amendment regarding solar panel canopies. Steve also announced that the Connecticut Department of Transportation is currently reviewing the request for solar panels for the Wastewater Treatment Plant, because installed the panels would cross onto state property and require an easement or land lease.

The Green Task Force talked about the opportunities for microgrids in town. It was suggested to look at the police/library complex, but the library will soon undergo renovations. It was suggested that Steve Edwards talk to the town of Weston regarding their successful microgrid.

Steve Edwards talked about how his fleet of snowplow trucks is dying rapidly, and desperately needs to be replaced. The trucks were to be replaced two years ago, but the replacement was pushed off. The Green Task Force talked about getting trucks that would run on natural gas, but a natural gas refilling station would need to be set up in town near the Westport-Norwalk border.

David Mann announced that a press release for the We Green Awards was sent out today through the First Selectman's Office. The deadline for submitting nominations is November 15th, and the Green Task Force will be voting at the November 19th meeting.

Sarah Fox talked about the status of the Green Task Force social media campaign. Sarah will soon be merging the Green Task Force Facebook page and the Westport Home Energy Challenge Facebook page. She said that she would continue to update the page on a regular basis, and once the page is finalized, the Green Task Force will send out an e-mail to our e-mail list for people to "like" the page. It was also suggested that the Green Task Force contact other member organizations to "like" our page.

Pippa Bell Ader announced that the documentary *Gasland 2* will be shown at Earthplace on November 7th at 7pm. Pippa was still unsure if there will be a cost to attend the event. Jonathan Steinberg will be speaking at the event, and another speaker is still needed.

Pippa Bell Ader talked about the Earthplace Environmental Debate for First and Second Selectman candidates that will be held on October 21st. The Task Force brainstormed several questions that Matt Mandell will ask the candidates at the forum. The topics of the questions included electric vehicles, aging infrastructure, deer population control, roads, trees, and severe storms.

David Mann adjourned the meeting at 9:09pm.

Submitted by:

David Mann
Chair

Robby Gershowitz
Secretary