

Draft minutes Article 36 Task Force, Thurs Aug 26, 2021

Met in person in Tracy Hall (Cushman, Lamperti) and online via Zoom/phone (Gere, Cicotelli)

Also attended by members of the public Linda Gray, Linda Cook, Geoff Martin (regional energy coordinator)

Task force works on consensus basis, without roll call votes.

Previous minutes adopted by consensus.

Changes to agenda: no discussion of possible district geothermal.

Agenda adopted by consensus.

No public comments offered on items not on agenda.

Cushman reported on previous evening's presentation to the Selectboard. Cushman will circulate slide show he presented to the SB on Task Force initial work plan.

Task Force discussed recent updates of our work to Conservation Commission, Energy Committee. Other town bodies will be consulted in weeks ahead to hear their ideas.

Task Force asked SB whether our schedule meshed well with their budgeting and warrant article schedule. The sense he and other TF members received is that the schedules mesh, and SB will continue to work via Gere to make sure our outline meets their needs.

We also did not receive specific instructions how to proceed in weeks ahead to consult with town manager and public works offices under interim leadership. Gere said there is recognition on SB that new TM and DPW must know that climate issues are one of the top issues in the town, "everybody on the Board" holds this view.

Cushman noted recent action by neighboring Hartford's Selectboard on climate change. We will want to draw on lessons from other towns like Hartford and Woodstock, which is undertaking overhaul of their municipal building.

Cushman and Martin have had discussions on working together. Martin said Woodstock also had SB approve developing a climate action plan for Woodstock, and possible

other local towns may be interested in regional climate action plan, to be discussed at a pending meeting.

Cushman also noted that Senator Sanders at a VECAN meeting emphasized climate spending in a huge spending bill working its way through Congress. Norwich should attend closely to availability of federal funds, beyond the million dollars or so already made available to the town through coronavirus relief measures to date.

Cushman emphasized need to have public involvement in our meetings and the committee discussed listserv notices, Google mechanisms, and a second public input session to be scheduled in September. Lamperti supports this and notes it was on our tentative agenda. Consensus developed to prepare for public input sessions in September, and Task Force agreed to this consensus. Gere noted public should get a few weeks of notice of our interest in hearing their ideas. Ciccotelli suggested having input during regular meeting. Linda Gray, member of public, said a committee like this is formed to provide its own expertise, not just public views, based on TF research.

Next regular meeting is 23rd. In September we are to finalize action list and in October to present an initial draft of warrant articles and TF report, which Lamperti said might be optimistic. Analysis of recommendations would take some time.

So September is when our ideas coalesce, October or early November will have analysis and early drafts, said Cushman. We are aiming toward late September, about three weeks before our next regular meeting on the 23rd to beat the drums so people can come forward, give them a full airing at a regular meeting, and perhaps a special meeting to complete our work. Consensus to take this approach.

Gere said TF has been straightforward that public submissions are not a guarantee of acceptance. We need to think about what metrics we use in decision making would be helpful.

Task Force then added various ideas mentioned by public, Selectboard and task force members to the developing action list, which is kept available to the public on read-only Google Docs URL. This list does not represent consensus, but rather is a brainstorming tool under constant revision as new ideas come up. Public can also request copy of this document from any TF member. Link is posted with past agendas and can be cut and pasted into browser.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19jhlhaVpcRAQr_VvRBrN7F4-4YUXa89t

Linda Gray suggested a Google Form for people to submit ideas, Task Force agreed by consensus, Lamperti will arrange that.

Lamperti said that for each action on the list we will try to develop an estimate of reductions that may be achieved by each action. Also technology developments. Then we will come up with recommendations. If the five percent reduction contemplated in the first year under Article 36 were followed for 20 years, that would get us to zero. Cushman noted that Article 36 did not specify a 20 year time line and that 5 percent was the goal for the first year, FY2020. We have a baseline for 2019 and will soon see what 2020 performance actually was.

Cushman said he will be proposing a recommendation to require “climate impact statement” for all significant town actions.

Gray mentioned possible action: adoption of Geoff Martin’s green procurement policy.

Ciccotelli is interested in life cycle analysis of proposed recommendations. He is also interested in conversion land use to forest or other natural sequestration. Cushman said ideas that are not direct consumption of fossil fuels could be added to the list as a subject for later consideration after our work on direct consumption of fossil fuels by the town government.

Cushman raised question of whether our financial support of Advance Transit involved direct use of fossil fuels. Lamperti says TF member Eva Rosenbloom has examined this; she was absent at this meeting. Accounting issues will be accounted in our emissions reporting.

Lamperti emphasized that we need to keep our focus on direct consumption of fossil fuels.

Gray mentioned other broader issues include fuel use in Fire District, library, school — all “back pocket” issues for later discussion.

Ciccotelli said he supports moving forward on the basis of narrow focus, the “pure” Article 36, with broader ideas postponed.

Lamperti said in coming month we will add to action list with new ideas, but we will also get started on filling in “impacts” of each action. We can do that in one to one conversations, groups of no more than two, to put numbers in the column for climate impacts. Members of the public can provide input as well.

Geoff Martin has an “A Fleet Tool” for examining vehicle technology and estimating fuel savings to compare different options while looking to replace a vehicle, and quantifies potential reductions in emissions. He also suggested “telematics” installation in vehicles to track fuel use and assess driver behavior. He also mentioned how some corporations have an “internal carbon market” which encourages fuel conservation within an organization.

Cushman said it is important to recognize the Social Cost of Carbon which economists recommend to get people to recognize the invisible costs incurred when no penalty is imposed for carbon pollution. Lamperti said the first step is just getting the information on consumption.

Gray said the rubric might also consider how quickly something could be implemented, and obviously some sort of estimate of budget impact. Something one could implement quickly, even if it cost more than something else, might weight the scales.

Cushman said we will be driving a process that ultimately will look at every vehicle in town, when it will be replaced, what technology will be available, and what budget would be — by year four, by year twelve, etc. Some things may be delayed up to ten years. It makes for a more orderly and efficient process and satisfies the need for predictability and respect for the tradeoffs that are involved.

You don't want to be locking in the wrong technology, he said.

Gray noted two webinars in September on EV technology for heavy duty equipment, and Cushman said he had registered.

Cushman asked for other comments. There were none. Consensus to adjourn. Meeting adjourned approximately 8:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by Cushman to town clerk on Aug. 31 at 9 a.m.

