

Town of Lexington

Sustainable Lexington Committee Minutes of Meeting of February 23, 2021

A meeting of the Sustainable Lexington Committee (SLC) was held by Zoom conference. A quorum of nine was present.

Members Present: Cindy Arens, Celis Brisbin, Paul Chernick, Archana Dayalu, Marcia Gens, Rick Reibstein, Todd Rhodes (vice-chair), Dan Voss (chair), Charlie Wyman

Members Absent: None

Other Attendees: Stella Carr (Sustainability Director), Jeffrey Rhodin, Joe Pato (Select Board), Mark Sandeen (Select Board), Suzie Barry (Select Board), Mary Hutton (Mothers Out Front), Ricki Pappo (Lexington GWAC), Charles Hornig (Planning Board), Gerry Paul, Nancy Sofren, and Mark Connor (Tree Committee); Dan Kovetz (Noise Advisory Committee), Chris Stratford, Lin Jensen

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm. Todd referenced the opening statement requested by the Town Clerk, and all members responded that they could hear.

1. Minutes. The minutes of January 26, 2021, were approved as written.
2. Public Comments and New Business. Todd asked if there were any public comments or new business, and there were none.
3. Review of Hartwell Rezoning. Todd walked the committee through his presentation on the current drafts of Articles 44 and 45 and how they differ from previous versions and the building team's recommendations. This included requirements for EV chargers and charger-ready wiring in parking lots and the by-law's requirements relative to LEED and LexLEED and the issue of which standards might be permitted by the AG and which might not.

Considerable discussion followed. Jeff noted the distinction between planning and certifiability with respect to LEED standards. Celis asked about the LexHIP standards, and Dan replied that those were the most important standards for us as a town. Todd attempted to summarize the discussion on this point by saying that we prefer language similar to what was in Article 16 in the fall to what has appeared in the latest bylaw draft. Hope was expressed that the Planning Board would keep the hearing open for at least another week to consider these and other issues. At this point, Cindy, Dan, and Celis left the meeting (along with Charles) to attend the Planning Board meeting.

4. Tree Committee Town Meeting Articles 32, 33, and 34.

- Gerry Paul, chair of the Tree Committee, walked the committee through Article 32, after which the committee voted unanimously to endorse the article.
- Mark Connor explained the first part of Article 33, which focuses on improving data collection for setback trees during demolition and major renovation and the town's ability to analyze both compliance and town-wide trends. The committee voted to endorse Motion 1 under Article 33 unanimously.
- Gerry then walked the committee through the second part of Article 33, which requires landowners to report removal of trees greater than 12" even when they are otherwise not subject to the bylaw, again to provide the town with better information on trends in tree removal. There is no permit required, no fee, no penalty for failure to comply, and 100% participation is not expected. The committee voted unanimously to endorse Motion 2 under Article 33.
- Finally, Nancy Sofren presented Article 34, which increases the fees in the bylaw and alters the formulas to discourage the removal of large trees and to provide incentives for planting of shade trees as opposed to ornamentals, recognizing the outsize value of large shade trees. The committee voted unanimously to endorse this article.

5. Noise Advisory Committee Town Meeting Article 28. Dan Koretz, chair of the Noise Advisory Committee, provided a brief summary of Article 28, which would reduce hours, place season limits, and place noise limits on gas-powered leaf blowers and would prohibit their use by commercial landscaping firms beginning in 2024. Dan admitted that the Noise Advisory Committee dropped the ball on outreach to landscapers and is reaching out. He pointed out that the committee views its proposal as middle ground, with much more restricted limits in place in several nearby municipalities, including Cambridge, Brookline, and Newton. Several SL committee members spoke in favor of the proposal for its reductions in both noise levels and air pollutants and their concomitant impacts on both worker and public health. Visitor Chris Stratford, a landscaper, voiced concerns, particularly with the lack of outreach, and suggested that the NAC postpone the article until more extensive outreach could be undertaken. Celis, having returned from the Planning Board meeting, expressed concern for the economic impact on landscapers and their employees. After further discussion, it was voted to endorse the article by a 5-1 vote (Paul had left the meeting).

6. Sustainability Director Report.

- Stella referred to her circulated written report, touched on some highlights, and mentioned that she and Todd will be giving the Select Board a sustainability update at their March 8 meeting (procurement policy; green fleet policy; overview of EV charging rates, comments in tandem with other communities about the state's 2030 climate plan, and Todd's electric school bus report).
- Stella requested feedback on her draft application for a student position.
- Stella also presented her draft priorities list for 2021, assembled with input from the various committee working groups. Everyone agreed to review the spreadsheet, and each team will have a conversation with Stella before the next meeting to flesh it out further.

7. Mass Save. Todd asked if Mass Save can provide aggregate numbers on home energy assessments being conducted in Lexington.

8. Energize Lexington. Ricki announced the soft launch of the Energize Lexington website. (They will do a more publicized launch after Town Meeting, but don't want to detract from the focus on Article 29.) Their tentative goal is 3500 households and 30 million pounds reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; feedback welcome. There is a lot of content, much of it personalized for Lexington. Ricki encouraged everyone to sign up, as they need to build participation. She also noted that there is an opportunity to participate in teams for community building.

9. Clean Heat. Cindy reported that she and Archana presented Article 29 to the Select Board the night before, they have been conducting lots of outreach, and have been receiving lots of support and some useful feedback. There has been some tinkering with the appeal procedure in response. She noted that people are always worried about change, and the team needs to continue to be responsive to and support the development community. A second public event to address concerns is being planned for March 18.

Next Meeting: The committee will meet next at 6 pm on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. [Subsequent to the meeting, a special meeting was called for 6 pm on March 2.]

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Wyman