

Recycling and Renewable Energy Committee

Minutes from 24 October, 2013 at 10am
Judge Welsh Room, Provincetown Town Hall

Attending: Lydia Hamnquist, Laura Ludwig, Carla Anderson, Jen Rumpza. Tom Donegan, Selectman; Gloria McPherson, Town Planner; Sharon Lynn, Town Manager

Carla motioned to accept the minutes from the last meeting as-is. Lydia seconded the motion; the motion passed with all in favor.

Plastic Bags –

Tom mentioned sailing this summer and seeing plastic bags in the water. Concerned about the number of shopping bags floating in the ocean, he brought up the notion with the Selectmen this summer and everyone seemed to be on board with a ban or levy.

Discussion about the prevalence of plastic in town, on beaches etc. Most existing Massachusetts regulations exclude the compostable or “biodegradable” plastic bags, neither of which do what they say. Our concern is the single-use bag, not so much the heavier-mil bags (like Marine Specialties uses).

Want to encourage business owners to invest in re-usable bags as a way of marketing their business. Lydia has spoken to the VSB about getting funding to purchase cloth bags, which the town could sell to the businesses.

Laura suggested that there are a number of models around the world that we could examine with an eye to what might work here. Jen thinks Provincetown should be a model for other towns, show visitors what could be done elsewhere. It’s very important here because we are surrounded by water.

If we mandate that businesses can’t use single-use bags, they have to have other options. The owner will have to invest in something different.

Cannot overlook the role that take-out businesses have here. Even if the food is put in a cardboard container, it’s often bagged in plastic.

State mandate will address stores over 4000 sq ft; Gloria says that is a large footprint in most communities, but here in town there are only 3 businesses larger than that.

Components of town-wide single-use plastic article:

- ban single use plastic bags
- don’t exempt biodegradable and compostable bags
- provide some options for businesses of re-usable bags
- address take-out food and retail alike (town-wide regulation)

If reusable bags were provided to everyone on the bus and ferry, that would begin the conversation process. Marketing to the bus companies is largely through VSB, so they could provide a bag to everyone who arrives by bus.

Whatever we come up with, if approved, would become a by-law. Licensing branch of town would enforce the by-law.

The town should buy them in bulk and make them available to the businesses. It would be great to have VSB funds for that purchase. Storage is a concern, but there are possibilities at various buildings (Marine Specialities warehouse, above the fire station, Stop n Shop, etc.).

Jen will call around to screen printers to see what the cost would be to have a logo imprinted, so that we can present that to the store owners as an option. We understand that businesses have very little opportunity to make their money, so we'd like to make sure it's as streamlined as possible for their benefit.

Sharon Lynn arrived 10:30.

Carla summarized -- We need to create some language for town counsel on this issue. The real issue is plastic in the harbor and on the beaches. It's deadly to marine life. We also don't want to see them in the trees. We want to set an example for other seaside towns, and we know many have already taken similar actions.

Discussion about paper vs. plastic – for the argument here, paper bags are certainly an option; however, they do take more energy to produce. We wouldn't be banning paper bags, but we also want to present other options.

Sharon will ask Town Counsel for sample language from other towns, which we could consider. She spoke to Gregg Corbo, the attorney at Kopelman and Page who represents the town through the BOH, and he would be willing to come to the meeting and/or be on a conference call about this subject. We'd like counsel to create the language and then bring it to town meeting. It would be a BOH regulation, as it's under their purview.

We have a responsibility to assist the smaller business owners to make the change. Paper bags would still be an option, which is an easier transition.

We need to create a program to assist the process, e.g., WELCOME TO PROVINCETOWN. PLASTIC BAGS ARE BANNED HERE. PLEASE BYOB. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE ALREADY, YOU CAN GET ONE FROM THE FRONT DESK.

Condo owners, retail stores, hotels, guest houses, restaurants, and take-out businesses (coffee shops) all need to have the information on the Program.

Town Recycling Bin Stickers –

With Carla's encouragement, Laura submitted a grant application to the Local Cultural Council for funding for artists to paint the town trash cans (10/15/13). It is unlikely that we will get the

full funding requested, but we want to make the trash cans consistent w/ the recycling bin stickers.

Lydia recommended that Carla talk to Rich about the trash can project; she will forward the LCC application to him and let him know what we are hoping to do with the trash cans. The idea is to clarify the difference between trash cans and recycling bins. Both are green, and it's not clear as to what goes in them.

There is inconsistency within our town as to how recyclables are handled, such as businesses that have a private hauler who doesn't take paper.

It was agreed that we should go ahead and order stickers for the recycling bins. We need to get the images finalized to get the final estimate. Lydia will ask one of her boys for the images.

Next Year's Budget

David Gardner sent around the budget to Lydia, and it's for the same amount of money (\$2,750). He requested that we approve the budget. Lydia moved to do so, and Carla seconded it. All were in favor; motion passes.

RREC website

Lydia has been working with Lynne Martin (in the MIS department) recently, and will review some changes to the main web page. Meetings will be "each month as scheduled." Members will be listed according to their term ending. Typos will be corrected. Quick links should connect to a concise description of Ptown's Single-Stream Recycling Program. Jen will look over the site and create a new link for streamlining the info and increasing the site's utility.

Lydia motioned to accept the changes we discussed here at the meeting, Jen seconded and all were in favor of submitting them to Lynne.

Lydia will ask David or Lynne about whether it's ok for our committee to have its own Facebook page, which would assist us in keeping the town informed as well as reduce the workload on the town's web manager.

Set the next meeting:

Thursday, November 7, at 10am

Agenda to include:

- Attorney's input on plastic bag article
- Streetlight update
- New Business

Carla motioned to adjourn; Lydia seconded and all were in favor.
Meeting was adjourned at 11:35pm.