

Town of Freeport

Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board

Date: Monday, March 11, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: Town Council Chambers, 30 Main Street, Freeport, Maine

In attendance:

Mandy Macpherson (Co-chair), Bob Stevens, Jim Reinertsen, Megan Shore, Susana Hancock, Kristen Dorsey

Meddy Smith (Sustainability Coordinator)

Minutes

- **BEGIN MEETING 6:30 PM**

- **APPROVE MINUTES:** 5 min

Bob made a motion to approve the Minutes of 2/26/24, Kristin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (6/0 – 1 absent)

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN TIMELINE: 5 min

Meddy reported that she requested the item to announce the CAP completion be on Council's 4/2 agenda/ planned for in 'other business', that they consider a workshop to discuss and ask questions, and that an item to take formal action be on the later April meeting (4/23). After the initial presentation/scheduling meeting we should have a clearer idea of the final schedule.

Meddy will work with the Town Manager to finalize the timeline.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN DISCUSSION: 65 min

The following changes to the Plan were discussed and confirmed with discussion notes in italics.

Proposed New Actions:

- (5.1.7) Launch an accessible, widespread, and branded outreach campaign for homes and businesses on opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials.
 - *This was discussed by FSAB previously after feedback from Town Manager.*

Proposed Amendments to Existing Actions:

- (1.1.1) new Implementation note (from Meddy)
 - Use [Maine Clean Communities Municipal EV planning](#) resource
 - Complement policy with streamlined permitting and inspection processes
- (2.1.1) new Implementation note (from Mandy)
 - prioritize crosswalks and traffic calming measures
- (2.2.1) Update zoning and develop dedicated funding to enable high-density development, **attainable housing**, and mixed use areas in line with Smart Growth principles and transit-oriented development (TOD).
 - *Susana noted that attainable housing is a term that goes beyond the widely used phrase and qualifier 'affordable housing'. In this case, attainable refers to housing that is created, available, and affordable for those who need housing now, rather than fitting into AMI ranges. This term is more responsive to the current needs of more lower-income households.*

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- (3.1.1) Continue and expand Electrify Everything! as a comprehensive community outreach, education, and incentive program to aggressively encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy, **and energy storage**.
 - *It was noted that it will be important to not lose the goal of the existing program which is to promote heat pumps and electrification and transition away from fossil fuels. In order to better capture this, the Goal 3 language will be amended to reflect that because to relates to all actions under that goal (i.e., transition off of fossil fuels).*
- (3.1.1) new Implementation note (from stakeholders)
 - Track the Home Energy Score program once released by the State and explore ways to increase transparency of efficiency for residential and multifamily buildings at point of sale
- (3.1.2) new Implementation note (from Meddy)
 - Promote existing Residential PACE program
- (3.1.3) Pilot an energy benchmarking program with businesses that could phase into an Energy Benchmarking Policy **or voluntary initiative, and promote commercial energy audits and deep-energy retrofits**.
 - *There was general agreement that leaving this action open to be a voluntary program is the best way forward, given the restraints recommending a policy provides. This also leaves it open to supporting non-Town benchmarking initiatives.*
- (3.1.3) New implementation note (from public comment)
 - Evaluate mechanisms for data transparency with consumers/residents
- (3.2.1) Develop phased-in requirements paired with incentives for on-site renewable energy generation and storage, EV-ready, renewably-powered heating, and **high efficiency standards** in new construction and major renovations.
- (3.2.1) New Implementation Note (from Meddy / stakeholders)
 - Explore Sustainability Checklist and performance-based zoning for flexible requirements in mitigation and adaptation building factors
 - *Jim noted that this phrasing leaves it open for the Town to explore the best-fit mechanism for integrating requirements*
 - Phase in new stretch code iterations starting with incentives for opting-in
- (6.1.2) new implementation note (from stakeholders)
 - Enhance staff capacity to pursue funding and complete impounded stream crossing upgrades
 - *Meddy understands that the main barrier to maximizing upgrades to stream crossings is the time it takes for staff to administer the grant and complete the project, rather than pursue the funding. Members discussed altering this action to focus on the ‘enhance staff capacity to complete ...’ and move the funding into parentheses.*
 - *Jim noted that the lack of grantwriting capacity has been brought up and should be incorporated in the document more explicitly. Board members think this should fit in the ‘building momentum action list’. An attendee mentioned that another valuable year one action could be based on what Harpswell does, which is to do pre-work/data collection to create a bank of shovel-ready projects for grant applications. The Board agreed this would be an important first step and ongoing process.*
- (6.1.2) new implementation note (based on comments from Town Manager)
 - Explore adopting MS4 standards to apply town-wide
 - *Need to define MS4 in the implementation note*

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- (7.1.3) *The group discussed the feasibility of this action, namely that the Town may not be in the position/have desire to pursue funding and own/steward more public land. This action can be amended to reflect that the Town should collaborate with community partners (FCT) to accomplish conservation goals.*
- Strategy 8.2
 - *The Board discussed how groundwater fits within this strategy and how to broaden it to include other forms of agriculture and bio-based economies. The group agreed that adding ‘natural working lands’ to the strategy would support the intention. Kristin noted that an implementation note could include assessing working lands/farms for vulnerabilities to climate change, similar to action 8.3.3 that focuses on working waterfront and coastal economies.*
- (8.3.2) new Implementation note (from stakeholders)
 - Aim to restrict rebuilding in floodplain areas or areas that will regularly flood given climate projections
- Delete “schools” from EV strategy 1.1

To confirm:

- Alternative terms for Sustainability Lending Hub (5.1.6)
 - *The board discussed variations for the term, but reached consensus that this could be decided during implementation. The important components for this action would be ensuring that the proposed hub is considered to be at the transfer station and that it is a resource for education, outreach, and creative ideas related to waste.*
- (Plan edits) new language for lands and waters callout, several small edits to implementation considerations (FCT)
- Mandy’s suggested language changes
- Kristin’s comment on urgency language
 - *Meddy noted that while the Plan needs to reflect the urgency of the climate crisis, there is climate communication research that supports using ‘future generations’ language is motivating to some people. Finding the balance is key.*
- Bob’s statement
 - *Bob brought forward a statement that could be included on page 9 of the CAP:*
 - The Climate Action Plan addresses what we can do to reduce the contribution of local activities to the warming of the earth and to mitigate and lessen the impact of its consequences. What we do locally to be meaningful requires that the nation and the world turn away from the use of fossil fuels. Our hope is that the Climate Action Plan will help us realize that and join others outside our borders to help make that happen.
 - *Board members agreed that this statement helps strengthen the narrative in the Plan that we are contributing to a larger common good and that the Town is part of larger systematic change to transition justly off fossil fuels.*

Mandy made a motion that the Plan be adjusted by Meddy as discussed and brought forward to Council by FSAB. Susana seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (6/0 - 1 absent)

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Quick Win Advocacy Actions

Susana brought forward two distinct but related items: the fossil fuels nonproliferation treaty and the state divestment resolution, which were previously discussed. If Town Council endorsed both these efforts, they would join other communities in demonstrating support for efforts to transition away from fossil fuels. The group noted that these two actions could be 'quick win's and should be in the draft CAP as actions under a new goal/strategy in Public Health and Resilient Communities. These actions can be led by FSAB as advocacy items and having a new goal that refers to 'beyond our borders' will be valuable for future updates to the Plan.

Susana made a motion that FSAB recommend these items to Council after she makes final tweaks.

Meddy noted that to be brought forward with the CAP to council on 4/2 they would need to be submitted by 3/21. Meddy to ask Town Manager her thoughts on bringing these together with the CAP or waiting.

Bob moved in favor of recommending these items to Council (date pending), Jim seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (6/0/1 absent)

- **The board adjourned at 8:35 PM.**