

**Climate Change Council (CCC)**  
**Minutes**  
**July 8, 2021, 7:00 pm**

The meeting was held remotely and was recorded on GoToMeeting and is available for viewing on Pepperell Community Media.

**Members present:** Bob Cataldo, Renee D'Argento, Susan Edwards, Beth Faxon, Ken Hartlage, James Scarsdale (left meeting at 7:25), Jason Veysey, Jessica Veysey Powell, Chuck Walkovich.

**Absences:** none

**Guests:** Tony Beattie, Deb Fountain

The minutes from 10 June 2021 were reviewed. **Motion** to accept the minutes from 10 June 2021: Renee D'Argento; seconded: Jason Veysey; Vote in favor: 8-0, with Jessica Veysey Powell abstaining.

The CCC heard updates from several subcommittees, as follows.

**1) Education and Outreach**

Edwards presented drafts of "rack cards" designed to educate the public about the problems of using pesticides, fertilizers, and de-icers on lawns. Two versions have been created and will be distributed around town.

CCC discussed next steps for the Outreach subcommittee. Some ideas included:

- creating a similar pamphlet to distributed at the Building Department (JS);
- an eco-cable channel (RDA);
- linking outreach more closely to greenhouse-gas emissions in town (e.g., encouraging electric lawn care equipment; a Pepperell Healthy Lawn Challenge; JV). This last was discussed in some detail, including the idea to offer a raffle reward for qualifying lawns.

Beattie suggested the CCC develop a brand image that could be used to signify properties that have healthy yards. He also suggested interacting with students and lawncare companies as a way to extend the CCC's educational reach.

Where will the money come from to fund card printing? Walkovich indicated that the Master Plan Implementation Committee and the Planning Board both have funds to support educational initiatives that implement the Master Plan (such as this one). Beattie mentioned that the Conservation Commission has a budget now which might help with the printing.

**Action Items:**

- Create a 3<sup>rd</sup> category of rack card: a “call to action” card (potentially to encompass a Healthy Lawn Challenge).
- Print rack cards for early fall.
- Roll out the education campaign at the Fall Festival (Sept. 18). Contact the Invasive Plants Committee to coordinate.

## **2) Carbon Storage and Sequestration**

Veysey Powell described the myriad services that forests provide for people and gave statistics on the extent and carbon mitigation functions of Pepperell’s forests. Specifically: Pepperell is about 70% forested. Pepperell’s forests currently store about 1.8 million metric tons of carbon and are predicted to sequester an additional 7,933 metric tons of carbon per year. Every acre of forest standing right now is basically equivalent to taking 8 cars off the road over their entire lifetime.

D’Argento suggested consulting the 2020 Forest Action Plan for additional reference.

Veysey suggested investigating whether property taxes can be used as a vehicle to encourage forest conservation (e.g., offering a lower tax rate to landowners that choose to retain forest cover).

Faxon suggested reading MA Audubon’s “Municipal Solutions for Sequestering Carbon.”

Beattie stated that the town does have requirements for tree planting in the subdivision regulations, but they may not be enforced. He would like to see town properties get more trees (e.g., the town field) .

Discussion ensued about the trade-offs between solar and trees. Beattie suggested that homes that are too shaded can participate in community solar groups. D’Argento indicated that energy consumption is often lower in houses that are shaded.

### **Action Item:**

- Investigate potential to incorporate forest conservation incentive into property tax structure.

## **3) Municipal Aggregation**

Hartlage discussed research he’d undertaken to determine the relationship between energy costs and municipal aggregation. He provided 3 different pieces of evidence indicating that it is typical for users to save money on energy costs while participating in a municipal aggregation scenario.

- a) 18 participating MA towns were able to match or do better than the price of National Grid's basic rate service (over a five year period);
- b) a 2018 UMASS study reached the same conclusion; and
- c) RI Department of Public Utilities commissioned National Grid to address the same question and NationalGrid said aggregation was less expensive for participating towns in MA.

Why? Largely has to do with the length of contracts: aggregators can have variable contract lengths and therefore lock-in better rates more easily.

Next steps were discussed, specifically whether anything should be presented at fall town meeting. No decision taken yet, but was some consensus that nothing should be presented unless the CCC is (more) thoroughly informed.

**Action Items:**

- Investigate what issues / questions have arisen with other towns that are aggregating for energy supply.
- Prepare a powerpoint presentation with consolidated information from all the research on aggregation.

Hartlage opened the meeting for additional topics and/or public comment.

1) Walkovich stated that he would like the CCC to assist him in undertaking an outreach campaign to further educate the public on the need for maintaining dark, night skies. A discussion ensued about what this might involve and potential efficacy.

**Motion** for the Climate Change Committee to take on Dark Skies Education: Chuck Walkovich; seconded by Susan Edwards. Voted in favor 8-0.

2) Beattie described the first meeting of the Regional Climate Change Council, a new entity initiated by the Pepperell Selectboard and sponsored by Ed Kennedy, Sheila Harrington, and Lorie Trahan. There was a very positive response with 10 towns and multiple civic organizations participating. The regional council is ironing out logistical details about leadership and goals.

3) Cataldo asked about next steps for solar initiatives.

**Action Item:** Hartlage is arranging a meeting with the Town Administrator and the Dept. of Public Works to discuss restarting the landfill solar project.

**Motion** to adjourn: Jessica Veysey Powell; seconded by Renee D'Argento. Voted 8-0 to adjourn at 8:50 pm.