



TOWN OF HARPSWELL

HARPSWELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 21, 2024 4:30 PM

MINUTES

APPROVED

6March2024

Open Meeting: 4:31 PM

- Present: Mary Ann Nahf, Deirdre Strachan, Wendy Batson (via Zoom), Tony Barrett, Jamie Hark & Jenny Zagariello,
Absent HCC member: Nancy West,
Ex-officio members: Planner, Mark Eyerman & Sel. Jane Covey
Guests: Laurie Manos, Abby Westberry, Courtenay Snelling & Bob Gaudreau
- Minutes: Deferred voting on the 2/7 minutes due to last minute changes. Will approve at next meeting.
- Announcements: Jane offered some clarification on the groundwater concerns discussed at the last meeting. Some argue that STR's (Short Term Rentals) have less impact because they are used mostly or only during the tourist season (which has grown into spring and fall months) rather than year-round. In some instances (? how many) this strains existing water supply that affects neighbors when they are occupied. The STR Task Force does not have the data to draw any conclusions on the impact of STRs on groundwater. Anecdotal data suggests that people are staying longer — not just summer, but also shoulder seasons, almost near full-time rentals.
- Affordable (Attainable) Housing Working Group - Courtenay Snellings (and Bob Gaudreau later).
In 2022, the Selectboard established a working group to examine housing issues in Harpswell. Target population (generally people from Harpswell) include the working waterfront, young families, teachers, tradespeople, caregivers, service workers and the elderly. After 18 months of feedback from meetings & surveys (over 500 responses), a draft report and recommendations have been developed. Gentrification, Cost of land and cost of construction are the main concerns raised. Many people Identified more flexibility in Town ordinances and subdivision rules.
Specific recommendations:
 - Establish a Town Housing Committee
 - Create and support more rental housing with rent that is attainable
 - Provide reasonable opportunities for the building of attainable homes
 - Explore home-sharing and other programs that will allow elders to remain in their homes
 - Encourage the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in non-shoreland areas to provide year-round rentals and/or family housing
 - Make town-owned land available for cluster-style housing for small homes and small multifamily units, a portion of which shall be required to be attainable and which shall be restricted by easily enforceable covenants.

QUESTIONS:

—How about utilizing existing housing? Yes, that is encouraged.

—How about ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)? There will be recommended ordinance changes to encourage ADUs in the non-shore land areas.

—The draft report does not mention Hamilton Place, the Brunswick Housing Authority/Town collaboration established ~10 years ago. Deemed a success? Fully subscribed? Should we encourage more like sub-divisions? Bob said that they will cover Hamilton Place in the report.

—No mention of the town-owned land designated for housing in the Mitchell Field master plan? Courtenay said that feedback was not to build in the Upper Meadow as it would detract from recreational use. Tony & Mary Ann pointed out that the designated housing area is near the road next to Pammy's Ice Cream not in the Upper Meadow (which is further towards the water).

Next steps for the working group are to review the draft report with other committees and then the Selectboard and incorporate recommendations into the Comp Plan.

- Carbon Cashback/Carbon Fee & Dividend Update – Tony and Laurie Manos

As part of the introductions at the beginning of the meeting, attendees gave their main climate crisis concerns:

Air Quality, Changing in Ocean Currents. Mass Migration, Storms locally, Impact on built infrastructure, Impact on working waterfront, biodiversity loss, water access changes, Flooding, concerned about inaction, impact on local and global politics, coping with rising waters, Equity for vulnerable populations, lack of political will, impact on marine economy, how to reduce carbon footprint, preventative vs. adaptive & Ocean acidification.

HCC endorsed this proposed federal legislation in 2020 and the Selectboard passed a Resolution that encourages Congress to initiate a revenue-neutral fee on carbon (colloquially known as Cashback Carbon Pricing) on April 2, 2021. Copies of the resolution were passed out. The Carbon Fee and Dividend legislation was not passed in 2021. Although the same bill has been introduced into the current session of Congress (Chellie Pingree is a co-sponsor), it is unlikely to pass this year.

Tony and Laurie want to update the Selectboard and others in Town about the outcome of the legislation (encouraged by the 2021 Town Resolution) and recent developments involving other federal climate-related legislation. They are proposing to work with the HCC to engender more discussion & dialogue in town on global warming solutions.

Laurie reviewed an outline of a presentation on the energy cost savings of the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act. This presentation has a more general appeal and has been well received where it has been given in other towns. This presentation could be given to various groups or forums in town which may then lead to dialogue about possible climate solutions, especially in light of the January storms.

Mark offered that Climate Impact Simulators are useful demonstrations for discussion. Laurie then passed out the En-Roads dashboard, a simulator developed and maintained by MIT. She offered to give demonstrations to groups that want to dive into to more details and explore possible solutions.

Next step is to meet with the Resiliency and Sustainability Committee on March 5 at 4:00PM to continue the discussion.

- Old Business:
Ocean cleanup – QBC (Quahog Bay Conservancy) will run an ad in the March Anchor for volunteers to join them for Storm Cleanup on Saturday, March 23. The Earth Day (Monday 4/22) Town Cleanup on Saturday 4/20 can include marine debris cleanup. QBC plans to participate. Julia at the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust expressed an interest in participating in both days. Both days could be promoted at the March 9 Town Meeting.
- Workgroup to assemble display at Town Meeting on March 9. Meeting on display. March 6 assembly: Jenny, Abby, Tony and Mary Ann agreed to meet to plan for the Town Meeting display next week.
- New Business: None

Notetaker: Tony Barrett

Adjourn: 6:00 PM

Upcoming meetings, 3/6, 3/20