

**Green Committee, Town of East Haddam
Regular Meeting
River House
7:00 P.M. Wednesday, July 2, 2008**

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the East Haddam Green Committee was called to order at 7:10 P.M. by Chairman Ken Simon.

A. Attendance:

Regular members present: Ken Simon, Martha Hansen, Roger McNelly, Yvonne Rubin, Sue Staehly, Richard Watson, Toni McCabe

Alternate members present: Allen Compagno, Nancy Gieseey

Regular members absent: Jennifer Peacock, Jon Russell, Jonathan Morris

2. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of 6-11-08 minutes

The minutes of 6-11-2008 were reviewed. Nancy Gieseey moved to accept the minutes as presented. Toni McCabe seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Member's Reports

A. Allen Compagno – Mark Walter, First Selectman

Allen Compagno met with Mark Walter who was well-informed and would like to begin green/conservation efforts with the Public Works Department.

Mr. Compagno suggested:

- The town should begin by focusing on energy conservation
- Energy audits should be performed on the municipal buildings. Craig Clark of Northeast Utilities will work with the township on conservation, giving a presentation first and then recommending steps the town can take.
- The town's recycling program should be assessed to see how much financial benefit the town receives from it. Mark Walter is currently analyzing the program.
- The town should encourage carpooling; 12,000-14,000 cars cross the East Haddam Bridge every day. Most people in town commute to work.
- The town should promote its parks and outdoor activities – bike riding and races, hiking, water activities, etc.
- The town should encourage more Farmer's Markets (approach Balleks?); the Rathbun Library Farmer's Market is sold out very early.
- The town could benefit by becoming a center for the performing arts, much as Old Lyme is a center for visual arts.
-

Action: Ask Craig Clark if he is available to do a presentation at the next Committee meeting on August 6 (Allen Compagno).

B. Jon Russell & Roger McNelly – Fred Thum, Public Works Director

Roger McNelly spoke with Fred Thum, who is interested in using biodiesel in the town vehicles. Roger uses synthetic oil in his own truck and gets better gas mileage; perhaps the town vehicles could do the same. Synthetic oil only requires changing every 35,000 miles.

Action: Meet with Fred again and asked him to talk with Public Works employees and get ideas and suggestions from them (Roger McNelly).

C. Dick Watson- Ellen Solek, Superintendent, EH Public Schools, & Bob Carroll, Business Manager

Dick Watson met with Ellen Solek and Bob Carroll. They want very much to improve the energy efficiency of their offices, but are limited in what they can do.

- The offices are rented (approx. 2,000 sq. ft.), and are in an older building with an unknown amount of insulation.

- The building has baseboard oil heat; the oil is purchased in a buying pool by the town.
- The central air conditioning unit is 10 years old and will need to be replaced soon.
- The windows are old, they would like to replace them with energy-efficient windows but don't have the money.
- Waste is picked up by a contractor.
- The well water is not good, so the office staff (7 people) uses bottled water.
- They are replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents as the bulbs burn out.
- All the office equipment (7 computers, printers, fax machines, etc.) is turned off at night and when not in use.
- The building has a new Energy-star hot water heater.
- The offices used 14,560 kWh of electricity last year.
- The offices will eventually move into the old Middle School when it is renovated.
- Ms. Solek is enthusiastic about the possibilities of using solar and/or wind power on school campuses.
- The possibility of using the Vo-Ag classes to support a Community Garden or Edible Schoolyard program was discussed.
- The Cromwell (CT) Schools Green Initiative was also discussed.

D. Yvonne Rubin & Alex Rubin- Linda Dadona, HS Principal

Yvonne Rubin reported that Linda Dadona is on vacation and will not be available until July 21.

Action: Meet with Linda Dadona (Yvonne Rubin, Alex Rubin).

E. Sue Staehly & Martha Hansen- Jason Peacock, MS Principal, Cindy Mello, ES Principal

Sue Staehly reported that Jason Peacock will be available the week of July 7, and Cindy Mello will call her when she has time.

Action: Meet with Jason Peacock and Cindy Mello (Sue Staehly, Martha Hansen).

F. Nancy Giesey – Joanne Roszniak, Senior Center

Nancy Giesey prepared a report on her interview with Joanne Roszniak. The primary goal of the Senior Center is to provide social/recreational, educational, health-related, economic/financial, and transportation services to the age 50+ population of Moodus and East Haddam.

Building information:

- Finished in September 2003, the building is about 3,000 sq. ft. and was designed by architect George Fellner.
- It is open Mon.-Fri. 8 AM -3 PM, except for town-recognized holidays.
- The Director's Office has a desk, phone, computer, printer and file cabinets.
- The Multipurpose Room holds 96 tables & 160 chairs for lectures. It is used for exercise classes (Pilates & Tai Chi) and to serve lunch. 320 meals were served in the month of June.
- Meals on Wheels are delivered by volunteers 5 days a week.
- The Activity Room is used for Mahjong, quilting, crafts, cards (Setback) and has a large storage closet.
- The Billiard Room has a billiard table available for play or practice.
- The Exercise Room has four kinds of exercise machines and a TV.
- Computer classes are offered in the Computer Room on Tuesday mornings at 10 AM and 11AM. Help is available to research family trees.
- The Men's and Women's restrooms are handicapped-accessible, clean and bright.
- The Kitchen has a Travlser refrigerator and freezer, a Southbend 6-burner gas stove with a grill, two ovens, six sinks, and a Hobart dishwasher. A pantry and janitor's closet are nearby.

Major Equipment:

- Heat is provided by a hot air gas heater (Itron Sentinel).
- There are 4 Rheem air conditioners on a timer.
- There is recessed lighting in the ceiling.
- There are blowers in the ceilings for air circulation (fans won't fit).
- The electric company was changed last year to save money.

- The building has good insulation, but the doors are drafty.
- The Center has 2 dumpsters: one for garbage & one for paper. They need one for plastic.

Operations:

- There is one car used 20 hours a week for taking people to doctor’s appointments or treatments.
- There are two buses used for:
 - 1) Transporting seniors who don’t have transportation (mostly from Oak Grove to lunch at the Center and back)
 - 2) Taking seniors grocery shopping, to the bank, and on errands on Tuesdays and Thursdays
 - 3) Taking seniors on (monthly) secret shopping trips and to the casino
 - 4) Taking seniors on recreational trips and trips planned by the Senior Club
 - 5) Taking seniors to the foot doctor when they make their appointments for the same day
- The Director’s office paper and printing ink are purchased locally and come out of Senior Center budget (they bought 1 case of paper 1 ½ years ago and are still using it).
- The Center buys paper, plastic & Styrofoam cups, and plastic plates and utensils which are used to serve lunch.
- The lawn had to be replaced when rain washed the soil into the storm drains, materials were purchased from Shagbark and Ballek’s. Vo-Ag students, Boy Scouts and students doing community service helped replace the lawn.

Green Efforts:

- The light bulbs have been changed to energy-efficient bulbs.
- Energy-efficient thermostats have been installed for the gas heater and the air conditioners.
- Weatherization repair has been started on the Multipurpose Room doors and entry doors.
- The Boy Scouts helped to start a compost pile.

A discussion took place about the best way to get “green” ideas from people. The group agreed that it would be best to ask municipal management personnel to meet with their employees first and then have committee members meet with management. Committee members could also ask management for permission to speak directly with employees.

The landfill, waste management and recycling were discussed.

Action: Ask Mark Walters about town regulations regarding the landfill and if a helipad has been installed in the former Community Garden space (Ken Simon).

4. New Business

A. Green Noise

There was a discussion about the problem of “green noise” which is caused by so much talk about energy conservation, bulbs, bags, etc. that people become overwhelmed and stop listening. The committee would like to focus on one major program or improvement that will make a big splash and cut through the green noise. Right now people are very concerned about the rising costs of gasoline, heating oil, and electricity.

There is a communication problem in East Haddam, which does not have a newspaper with good circulation throughout town. There are several small papers which circulate in different areas, so the committee will need to use all of them to get the word out. The committee will publicize its efforts in the East Haddam Events magazine (published 4 times a year) which goes to every household in town, but needs a way to communicate more frequently. The committee will also have its own website.

B. Carpooling/Ridesharing

There was a discussion about carpooling, since so many people work out of town. The town would be able to get information on driving and criminal records, but would need a way to connect people willing to carpool. There are existing websites for ridesharing, but it would be better (for security purposes) to have a way to limit participation to East Haddam residents. Ridesharing parking lots are also needed. Would it be possible to use the Senior and Vo-Ag buses for local trips? There may be a requirement that a certain percentage of the riders be seniors or students, respectively.

The Carpooling plan has 4 components:

- A way to connect people with each other
- A safety vetting procedure for liability and insurance purposes
- Parking areas
- Publicity

Action: Investigate existing websites for carpooling/ridesharing (Yvonne Rubin).
Find out about town insurance and liability insurance (Ken Simon).
Find out about Vo-Ag bus availability, ridership requirements (Toni McCabe).
Find out about Senior bus availability, ridership requirements, insurance (Nancy Giese).
Find out about available areas for parking (Sue Staehly).
Publicize the carpooling/ridesharing program (Dick Watson).

C. Community Gardens, Farmer's Markets

The committee would like the town to encourage Community Gardens and more Farmer's Markets. There was a Community Garden near Oak Grove but it is inactive now. The local Earth Charter group (ECCoLoV) sponsors a Community Garden at The Sanctuary on Bogel Road and has some room to expand. The state has only a 3 day supply of food in the supermarkets in the event of some sort of disruption (natural or manmade disaster, trucker's strike, gasoline supply problem etc.) so it is important to have as many local growers as possible. Ballek's Garden Center may be considering starting a Farmer's Market. Roger McNelly looked into liability insurance for small growers and found that it was either unavailable or prohibitively expensive, probably due to the recent salmonella problem with tomatoes and past problems with e-coli contamination. Liability problems could stand in the way of increasing the numbers of small, local growers.

5. Audience of Citizens - none

6. General Discussion

A. Review of Any Handout Material

Ken Simon distributed information from the following websites:

- Courant.com - info on energy-efficient systems, tax breaks and rebates
- Onething.com – Connecticut's energy-saving advice initiative
- Energysavers.gov – government website with energy-saving tips

Although we are all dealing with legacy systems, they are still worth analyzing and improving.

B. Other

The Rathbun Library's next speaker in the Friends' Fridays at 5:30 series will be Christine Woodside on July 25. She will be speaking about energy conservation and living frugally. She has published a book titled "Living on an Acre". Contact the Rathbun Library at 873-8210 for more information.

The next meeting will be held on August 6, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.

7. Adjournment

Dick Watson moved to adjourn at 9:20 P.M.; the motion was seconded by Toni McCabe. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Hansen
Secretary