

DRAFT

Hartford Climate Advisory Committee

Special Meeting, September 1, 2021

Erik Krauss called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. The meeting was held at Harford Town Hall, Room 312, and remotely via TEAMS platform.

Present: Committee members Erik Krauss, Courtney Williamson, Lucas Gilbert, and Jack Spicer; Town Staff Lori Hirshfield, Selectboard Liaison Michael Hoyt, Climate Action Plan Team Member Carolyn Hooper, and Conservation Commission Liaison Mary Hutchins.

Additions/Changes to the Agenda: Erik suggested adding to the top of the agenda a round of introductions to Michael Hoyt, as this is his first meeting in the role of liaison to the committee. All members agreed and introduced themselves.

Discussion on the Resolution Implementing the Climate Action Plan: Erik began a discussion on the draft Resolution. He met with the Town Manager and Chair of the Selectboard to discuss the resolution. Both responded to the Valley News reporter, who wrote an article on the Resolution published approximately Saturday, August 28. During their discussion, concerns were raised about the draft Resolution, generally including: parts of the resolve statements seems to go into work product areas and seem to be too detailed for directives to the Town Manager from the Selectboard; no feasibility assessment has been performed to ensure the Town Staff can implement as would be directed; staff have time and space constraints to take up priorities in the plan; the newly hired environmental sustainability coordinator has not yet started.

Additionally, some positives were discussed, including that the resolution offers opportunity to recommit the Town to its goals and make bold declarations, also offers opportunity to improve regional collaboration. The bottom line seemed to be that other Town priorities must be considered, the Town should not promise more than it can deliver, and the Town needs time to get people on board.

Erik opened the discussion up for comments and responses to concerns raised with the draft Resolution. Jack began by pointing out that the feedback is hard to square away with the language of the resolution and the overall aim of the resolution, which is to set the baseline for the Town's implementation of the Climate Action Plan by developing an internal implementation plan by the end of the year, establishing annual tracking and reporting processes, encouraging collaboration with stakeholders, and investigating funding mechanisms. Courtney agreed and pointed out that many of the concerns raised are about achieving carbon neutrality for the Town and are not specific to the baseline directives in the resolution.

Courtney also pointed out that the Sustainability Coordinator will be coming into a project with clear directives and the support of the committee if the resolution is adopted prior to their start date. Lori appreciated the role of the advisory committee and offered from the staff perspective some of the coordination and inter-workings that are part of pursuing implementation of the plan. Carolyn pointed out that when it comes to implementation there will be generalized anxiety and that is reasonable given the foreseeable impact on day-to-day activities. Erik said there aren't too many roadmaps to follow so there will be anxiety about it and there cannot be an expectation that we will get everything right.

Erik said that timelines were a major concern raised as well. He responded that his expectation was that the Board's job is to reconcile differences in expectations and had the ability to make amendments or not pass the resolution or table it for a later date after amendments were made. Michael mentioned he was looking forward to our next meeting and thinks that it would be helpful if we explained to the Selectboard what the resolution does and does not do and framed it as the start to implementing a climate action plan the selectboard already passed. Thinks speaking directly about the resolution will ease some concerns and that it's important to take reasonable steps to make sure it's implemented properly. Lori reiterated that staff are coming from a position of partnership and trying to balance what it will take in terms of Town resources.

Erik said that the resolution is on the Selectboard agenda for September 7. Erik asked whether to change resolution. Jack said that without specific feedback tailored to the resolution, he would not even know how to change the resolution. Courtney agreed and said that in presenting the resolution we should follow Michael's advice as well as let the Selectboard know that they have the power to edit this document before passing it—it is their resolution. Erik suggested keeping the dates in the resolution and explaining how we arrived at the dates and why, reminding the selectboard that they have all the power to make the decisions here.

Jack agreed to present the resolution and will work with Erik to make sure they are on the same page. Erik added that the Environmental Sustainability Coordinator has been hired but must relocate before they are on staff. Next meeting will be about where we go from here.

Jack moved to adjourn, and Courtney seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:02 pm.

Jack Spicer, Clerk