

**MEETING MINUTES FOR:
Town of Aurora Climate Smart Community Task Force**

MEETING DETAILS

Project Manager: Luke Wochensky, Town of Aurora Councilman

Date: 8/21/2024

Time: 6:00pm

Location: Town of Aurora Municipal Building, 575 Oakwood Ave. East Aurora, NY

ATTENDANCE

Present: Luke Wochensky- Town of Aurora Councilman; Ray Wrazen - Town of Aurora Councilman; Claudia Newton- ACES Representative; Susan Russell- ACES Representative & Village of East Aurora Zoning Board; Steve Bjella- Village resident; Michele Bjella- Village Resident & member of Citizens Climate Lobby

Present via Zoom: Annika Safford - Village resident & Student at University of VT, Sustainability & Marketing Program;

Absent: Nicole Morris-McLaughlin- Village resident; member of ACES; Jeanne Beiter- Senior Program Manager for Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper & Village of East Aurora Planning Board; Lori Borowiak- Village resident; Sharon Bachman- in advisory role from Cornell Cooperative Extension; Visitors: Robin Drake- Grant Writer

I. CALL TO ORDER - 6:08 PM

II. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. Introduction of Robbyn Drake - Grant Writing professional, Robbyn Drake has been hired by the town. Robbyn has an extensive background in environmental work, (Buffalo Niagara Water Keeper among other green credentials), grant writing and advocacy for environmental causes. Robbyn reports that a DEC Grant available in Round 9 for next year, will open for applications in May, 2025. This grant up to \$600K/50/50 match can include town staff work to meet match criteria. It is a specific grant for communities in the CSC program. Actions PE 6 and PE 7 actions are of particular interest as the grant can fund planning and implementation projects. Luke stated that comprehensive plan with climate component (PE 6/PE 7) is part of funding process with Erie County but grant could still be considered for implementation of projects. Robbyn also spoke of potential funding plans for JP Nicely Park- invasive species funding to combat Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. 3 biocontrols (insects that eat the adelgid) are proposed. Robin met with Supervisor to discuss grant options, one of which is EPA funding for Great Lakes Region under forest protection category. She will also get a quote from ECOS to do assessment (\$250) of the health of the Hemlocks at the park. Grant application is due on 9/18. Tight time frame. No match required.

2. **Minutes Taker** - Luke reports that Jennifer Caulkins from the Town will be doing the minutes moving forward.

3. **Solar campaign** -

- There was a front page article the week of 8/15 in the EA Advertiser about the Solar Campaign. It was a great boost for publicity, although it brought to attention that many of the sign-ups haven't completed their applications. Sue asked if Brad from Power Market could be asked to provide insights into why people have not finished their applications, ie, have people changed their minds, is there a problem with customer service, etc.
- Sue emailed Brad to ask if the new promotional palm cards that he promised to prepare with the revised web address are ready, but he hasn't replied. We need those palm cards before we can do either of the below items.

A) Tabling event at the EA co-op.

B) ACES has volunteered to highlight the solar campaign at the Taste of East Aurora table and distribute the palm cards. (This year's Taste of EA is on Saturday, 9/7)

- Two potential customers contacted Sue because they had problems with the webpage not working. This is the same website link that has been advertised on our website and in the EA Advertiser.
- During Brad's presentation at the Senior Center he had a graph which showed how a Town letter to all residents promoting the campaign significantly boosted sign-ups compared to towns that did not send a letter. The towns that achieved their goals of 160, all shared in common a letter from the Town. Luke and Ray will work with Brad on the town letter revisions.

4. **Social Media/logo/website/etc.** - goal is one post per week. Idea: new mower purchase; tabling events for community solar campaign. Luke requests that everyone please contribute ideas to send to Anika for posting.

5. **Silver Status Certification** – Luke

A) Comprehensive plan RfP update - LaBella & Associates is the approved contractor. A focus on climate issues will be integrated.

B) Meeting with **Jason Kulaszewski**, UB Regional Institute, Clean Energy Coordinator- 8/21 meeting at 1pm. Jason will meet to discuss path to Silver and how to move forward, creating a road map.

6. **Clean Energy Community Goals:** Luke-

A) **Use of Funds Received** - Time is up for the first 10K grant and Heat Pump decision for library could not be made due to cost and time considerations. (Air Source Heat Pump estimates from 3 contractors came in from \$175-\$180K.) The decision was made to use the funds to contribute toward the purchase of an EV Zero Turn Mower for Highway Dept. Remaining fund ideas: Explore geothermal heating system to replace current failing system for the library. Representative from NOCO will be submitting geothermal estimate on Friday, 8/23/24. Two additional quotes will also be sought. Using the funds to purchase an EV pick-up truck for the Highway Dept is a back-up option if replacing the heat system for the library is financially impractical.

B) **Free NYSERDA Energy Audit** - to be conducted at the Senior Center on 8/26. \$100 energy audit is being explored for library.

III. OPEN DISCUSSION - N/A

IV. CLOSING REMARKS- N/A

V. ADJOURNMENT - Meeting adjourned at 7: 12 pm

Minutes submitted by: Susan Russell